The Integrated Performance Assessment (IPA): Connecting Assessment to Instruction and Learning

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Abstract: *This article reports on* Beyond the OPI: Integrated Performance Assessment (IPA) Design Project, *a three-year (1997–2000) research initiative sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education International Research and Studies Program. The primary goal of the project was to develop an integrated skills assessment prototype that would measure students' progress towards the Standards for Foreign*

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Language Learning in the 21st Century (National Standards, 1999, 2006). A second goal of the project was to use the assessment prototype as a catalyst for curricular and pedagogical reform. This paper presents the Integrated Performance Assessment (IPA) prototype, illustrates a sample IPA, and discusses how classroom-based research on the IPA demonstrated the washback effect of integrated performance-based assessment on teachers' perceptions regarding their instructional practices.

Key words: *integrated skills assessment; performance assessment; standards-based instruction; standards-based learning; washback effect*

Language: *Relevant to all languages*

Introduction

Over the past several decades, language teaching in the United States has dramatically evolved from a discrete-point, grammar-driven approach to one that focuses on communication and performance-based use of language.[1] Great strides have been made both in second language acquisition (SLA) research (Donato, 1994, 2004; Ellis, 1994, 1997; Lantolf, 1994, 1997; Swain, 1995; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986; Wells, 1999) and in application of this research to classroom teaching practices (Lee & VanPatten, 2003; Lightbown, 2004; Omaggio Hadley, 2001; Shrum & Glisan, 2005). The *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* (National Standards, 2006) have provided a focus for K–16 language teachers concerning the goals of classroom instruction. Accordingly, in "standards-based instruction," learners develop the ability to communicate in another language, gain knowledge and understanding of other cultures, connect with other disciplines and acquire information, develop insight into the nature of language and culture, and participate in multilingual communities at home and around the world. Further, the *ACTFL Performance Guidelines for K–12 Learners* (ACTFL, 1998) have enabled elementary and secondary teachers to understand how well their students perform across benchmarks of language development described as Novice range, Intermediate range, and Pre-Advanced range, based on the length and nature of their learning experiences. These two national endeavors have served as catalysts for bringing about new ways of envisioning classroom instruction according to standards-based goals.

While progress continues to be made in strengthening classroom instruction, change in assessment practices has been much slower to occur. According to Wiggins (1998), "the aim of assessment is primarily to *educate and improve* student performance, not merely to audit it" (p. 7). Accordingly, current research in assessment argues for a closer connection between instruction and assessment. In other words, assessment should have a positive impact on teaching and learning practices (McNamara, 2001; Poehner & Lantolf, 2003; Shohamy, 2001; Wiggins, 1998).

Although current research suggests new paradigms for assessments, virtually no assessments have focused on measuring learner progress in attaining the standards while capturing the connection between classroom experiences and performance on assessments. In response to the need for standards-based assessments that connect to classroom practice, ACTFL received federal funding to design an assessment prototype that would measure students' progress in meeting the national standards. The purpose of this article is to present the prototype called the Integrated Performance Assessment (IPA); illustrate a sample IPA; and show how classroom-based research on the IPA has demonstrated the washback effect of integrated performance-based assessment on teacher's perceptions regarding their instructional practices.

We believe that the IPA holds much promise not only for assessing student progress in meeting the standards, but also for connecting standards-based classroom instruction and assessment practices in a

seamless fashion, so that both continually intersect in order to impact teaching and learning alike.

Reconceptualizing Assessment Practices

In an attempt to characterize progress that the field of language teaching has made in the area of assessment, it is necessary to differentiate between current research in language assessment and actual assessment practices in language classrooms. Recent work in language assessment has focused on (1) the design of performance-based and authentic tests, (2) sharing of performance criteria and exemplars with students before the assessment, (3) the role of feedback in assessment to improve learner performance, and (4) the use of assessment information to improve instruction and learning (McNamara, 2001; Poehner & Lantolf, 2003; Relearning by Design, 2000; Wiggins, 1998, 2004). Performance-based and authentic assessments have been suggested as effective formats for assessing students' progress in meeting the standards since they require goal-directed use of language, use of multiple skills or modes of communication, and integration of content (Liskin-Gasparro, 1996; Wiggins, 1994, 1998). In performance-based assessments, learners use their repertoire of knowledge and skills to create a product or a response, either individually or collaboratively (Liskin-Gasparro, 1996). Typically, learners respond to prompts (complex questions or situations) or tasks and there is more than one correct response. A performance-based assessment that mirrors the tasks and challenges learners will face in the real world is considered to be authentic (Liskin-Gasparro, 1997; Wiggins, 1998).[2] According to Wiggins (1998), an assessment is *authentic* if it:

- is realistic by testing the learner's knowledge and abilities in real-world situations, or those that occur outside of the classroom context;
- requires judgment and innovation on the part of the learner;
- asks the learner to "do" the academic subject by carrying out work within the discipline instead of reciting, restating, or replicating through demonstration what he or she was taught;
- replicates or simulates the contexts in which adults are "tested" in the workplace, in civic life, and in personal life; these contexts involve situations that have particular constraints, purposes, and audiences;
- assesses the learner's ability to efficiently and effectively integrate a repertoire of knowledge and skill to negotiate a complex task; and
- allows appropriate opportunities to rehearse, practice, consult resources, and get feedback on and refine performances and products. (pp. 23–24)

Authentic assessments aim to improve learner performance and enable teachers to reduce the gap between the classroom communication that they value and the grammatical knowledge that they often continue to assess in a vacuum (CLASS, 1998; Wiggins, 1998).

Authentic assessments feature "transparent or de-mystified criteria and standards" that give learners a clear idea of what is expected of them and how their performance will be rated (Wiggins, 1994, p. 75). These criteria can be presented through the *rubric*, a set of scoring guidelines for evaluating student work (Wiggins, 1998). Rubrics answer the following questions:

- Which criteria should be used to judge and/or evaluate performance?
- Where should we look and what should we look for to judge performance success?
- What does the range in the quality of performance look like?
- How do we determine what score should be given and what the score means?
- How should the different levels of quality be described and distinguished from one another? (Relearning by Design, 2000)

Since rubrics contain the performance objectives, range of performance, and performance characteristics indicating the degree to which a standard of performance has been met, they enable teachers to provide feedback to learners about their progress as well as to evaluate performance (San Diego State University, 2001). Further, they provide some clues as to what good performance might look like even before learners perform an assessment task (Adair-Hauck, Glisan, & Gadbois, 2001; Shrum & Glisan, 2005). Of additional assistance to learners in demystifying performance expectations is seeing exemplars or models of the performance expected, together with the rubrics. (For further details regarding rubrics, see later discussion of IPA.)

Current assessment research also stresses the role of quality *feedback* to learners if assessment is to be used to improve performance, not just audit it (Wiggins, 1998). Shohamy (2001) has reminded us that, in the absence of feedback, the test taker is often "used" by those in power and authority so that their agendas might be achieved, while the test taker receives no personal benefit. In her view, feedback to the test taker is critical if we want tests to serve a more ethical and pedagogical purpose, rather than being used for power and control by test administrators (Shohamy, 2001). In traditional models of assessment, providing feedback was equivalent to giving students their test scores after the test. However, current models stress the importance of providing quality feedback not only *after* the performance, but *during* it (Wiggins, 1998). Feedback that is of high quality is that which is "highly specific, directly revealing or highly descriptive of what actually resulted, clear to the performer, and available or offered in terms of specific targets and standards" (Wiggins, 1998, p. 46). In other words, feedback should provide information about how the performer did in light of what he or she attempted, and further, about how this performance could be improved. Comments such as "Good job!" that are used as the only type of feedback do not go a long way in helping the learner to understand the quality of his or her performance and how to make it better. Compare this comment to

> Your description lacked descriptive details to keep your audience interested. Try to write more complex sentences that include more colorful adjectives and phrases that help the audience to envision what you are describing.

Feedback has a specific place in today's assessment paradigm: It is anchored in the performance descriptions provided in rubrics and performance exemplars that students explore before the assessment is administered, it occurs during and between phases of the assessment, and its effect should be reflected in subsequent performances (Glisan, Adair-Hauck, Koda, Sandrock, & Swender, 2003; Wiggins, 1998). In other words, feedback should play a role in enabling students to improve their performance on future assessment tasks.

In current research in assessment, "alternative approaches to assessment" are being proposed in order to bring about a more direct link between instruction and assessment (McNamara, 2001, p. 343). The use of performance-based authentic assessment formats, models, and rich descriptions of performance expectations, along with feedback to the learner, as described above, work in tandem to connect instruction and learning to assessment. Accordingly, assessment can have a positive "washback effect" on instruction (i.e., it can inform and improve the curriculum and teaching and learning practices beyond the test) (Poehner & Lantolf, 2003; Shohamy, 2001).

Further support for connecting instruction and assessment is offered through the concept of "dynamic assessment," used in recent research to refer to the type of assessment in which the test examiner (i.e., the teacher) intervenes in order to help the test taker improve test performance, in similar ways to how the teacher guides learners in their individual zones of proximal development (ZPDs) in the classroom (Poehner &

Lantolf, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978). By intervening, the examiner teaches the test taker how to perform better on individual parts or items or on the test as a whole. In this model, *ability* is viewed as a "malleable feature of the individual and the activities in which the individual participates" (Poehner & Lantolf, 2003, p. 4). Sternberg and Grigorenko (2002) contrasted this type of assessment with traditional static approaches to assessment, in which the test taker is presented with a series of tasks or items, responds to these items successively without feedback, and typically receives feedback information only by virtue of a score or grade. In the static model, instruction and assessment are often viewed as two separate entities. On the other hand, dynamic assessment—which focuses on interventions that facilitate improved learner performance—offers a potential seamless connection to instruction, since its role is to assist and improve learner performance as well as to strengthen instructional practices.

Although the professional literature abounds in research studies and implications for classroom assessment practices, these practices have tended to lag behind what the research suggests, as illustrated in the widespread use of classroom achievement tests and standardized instruments that still rely on easily quantifiable testing procedures with frequent noncontextualized and discrete-point items (Adair-Hauck & Pierce, 1998; Bachman, 1990; Chalhoub-Deville, 1997; Glisan & Foltz, 1998; Liskin-Gasparro, 1996; Schulz, 1998; Wiggins, 1998). These types of tests do not require students to create and perform communicative and functional tasks with their second language (L2). Consequently, information gleaned from these tests do not inform the stakeholders (e.g., learners, teachers, parents, program coordinators, administrators) as to whether or not our students will be able to perform authentic tasks in the real world. Nor do they indicate students' progress in attaining the National Standards (1999, 2006).

There are several reasons why classroom assessment practices still largely reflect a more traditional paradigm of testing. Many school districts continue to use commercially available tests that accompany textbook programs, which still feature easily scoreable, discrete-point test items[3]. Secondly, teachers often find it a daunting task to switch from traditional testing formats, which offer more control for teachers, to more open-ended formats, which may pose challenges in terms of scoring for teachers who are not familiar with this type of assessment. Third, and perhaps of greatest significance, is that many teachers fear that performance-based or authentic assessment requires too much class time; this assumption verifies the pervasive disconnect between instruction and assessment—that is, teachers still view them as separate entities.

IPA Project

Goals of the Project

In response to the prevailing disconnect between assessment research and practice, as well as to address the need for a way to assess learner progress in attaining the standards, ACTFL received a U.S. Department of Education International Research and Studies grant in 1997 to design an assessment prototype, or an *Integrated Performance Assessment* (IPA)[4]. The primary goal of the project was to develop an assessment instrument that would measure students' progress towards the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* (National Standards, 1999, 2006). A second goal of the project was to conduct preliminary research on the effectiveness of this assessment instrument in measuring students' progress towards achieving the standards and the feasibility of implementing this type of assessment in a typical classroom situation. A third goal of the project was to use the assessment prototype as a catalyst for curricular and pedagogical reform. Accordingly, the research design team wanted to investigate if implementation of the IPA would encourage teachers

to modify or restructure their instructional practices to create more effective standards-based learning environments.

More specifically, would IPA training assist teachers on how to create rich instructional contexts that provide a seamless connection between assessment, curriculum, and instruction? Due to the limitations of this paper, this article reports on the ACTFL IPA research project, describes the IPA prototype, illustrates a sample IPA, and shares classroom-based teacher reflections research which illuminates the washback effect (Alderson & Wall, 1993) of integrated performance-based assessment on instructional practices. Information regarding validation studies and language learner performance across the modes will be shared in forthcoming publications.

Participants

A design team of foreign language educators and educational consultants in performance assessment developed the research questions, designed the assessment tasks and rubrics, and provided professional development to the teachers at the pilot sites. Thirty foreign language teachers, designated as ACTFL Assessment Fellows[5], participated in the IPA assessment project (see Appendix A for a complete list of participants). Approximately 1,000 students of Chinese, French, German, Italian, and Spanish, across grade levels 3–12, from six different pilot sites and various geographic regions (including learners from Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Oklahoma, Wisconsin, and Oregon), participated in the three-year project. Field site coordinators were instrumental in facilitating the administrative demands for the professional development workshops, and coordinated the administrative demands for the pilot testing. In addition to professional development regarding the IPA, the teachers also received professional training in conducting the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) or the Modified Oral Proficiency Interview (MOPI).

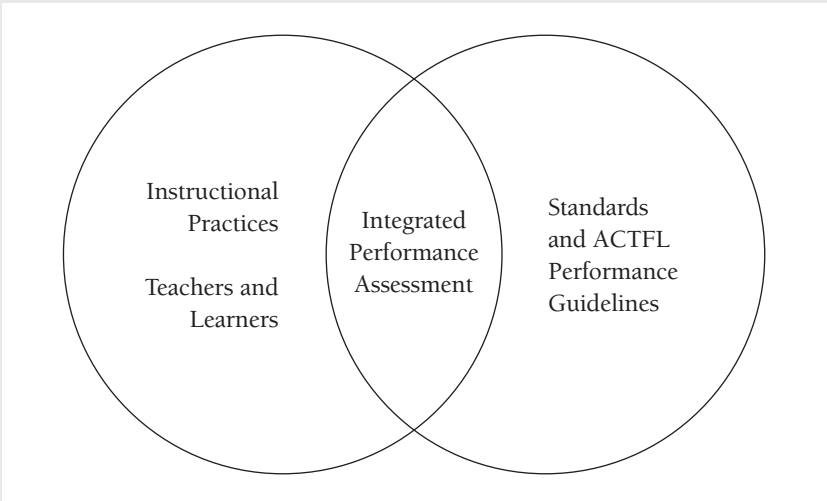
Procedure

During the academic year 1997–1998, the design team collaborated with experts in performance assessment to design the IPA prototype, sample tasks for Novice, Intermediate, and Pre-Advanced levels, as well as the rubrics to evaluate learner performance. During Fall 1998, design team members assisted master teachers in the greater Pittsburgh area and participants of the Wisconsin Standards Institute to conduct field tests of the first iteration of the IPA prototype. Outcomes of field testing and student performance exemplars were incorporated into revisions of the IPA and rubrics and into the pilot training agenda. The ACTFL Assessment Fellows from six different field sites tested the IPAs in the Spring of 1999 and provided feedback to the design team. The original IPA tasks and rubric design underwent continuous modification and revision based on the feedback received from the pilot site coordinators, assessment fellows, and students.

The first round of performance samples submitted by the assessment fellows in 1999 revealed that, for the most part, the learners were not interacting interpersonally during the interpersonal communication tasks; that is, the videotaped conversations between pairs of students illustrated that students were simply reading pre-scripted dialogs instead of communicating spontaneously. Therefore, more professional development training regarding the differences between interpersonal and presentational modes of communication, as well as strategies to assist learners in the development of interpersonal communication skills, were provided at the six field sites. In the spring of 2000, the revised IPAs were administered to approximately 445 students across grade levels in five languages (Chinese, French, German, Italian, Spanish). The teachers administered and scored the revised IPAs and submitted to the design team a representative sample of student performance on IPA tasks and scores. The teachers as well as the learners responded to questionnaires concerning the usefulness, benefits, and

FIGURE 1

Integrated Performance Assessment (IPA): Connecting Instructional Practices, Standards, and ACTFL Performance Guidelines



feasibility of the IPAs. The existing versions of the IPA tasks and rubrics reflect revisions resulting from the data collection and validation studies from the 2000 administration and scoring.

IPA Prototype

Moving Beyond Single Skills to Integrative Skills Assessment

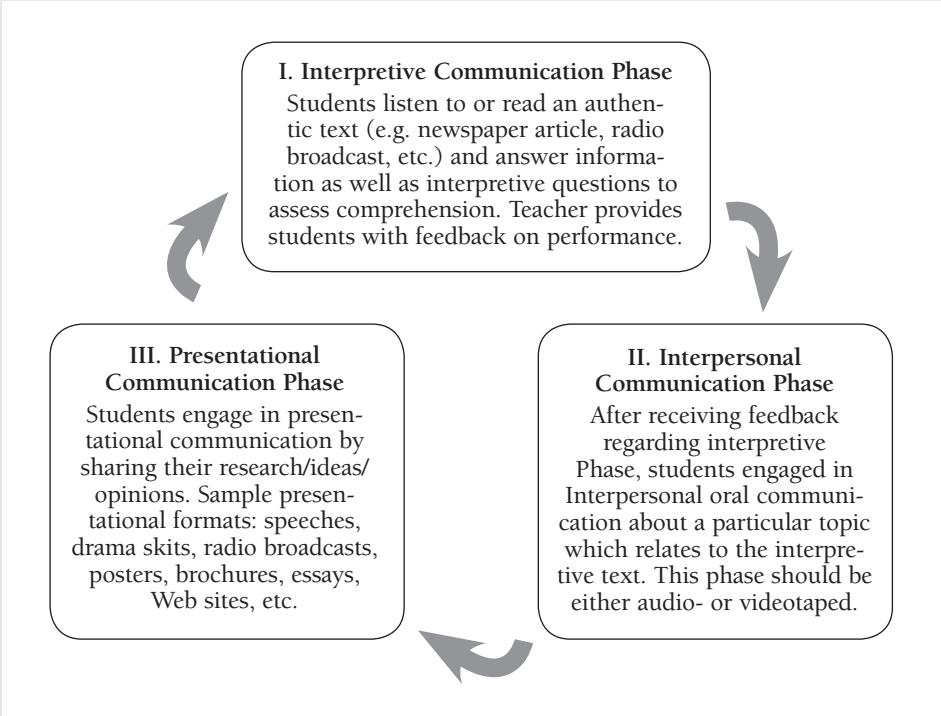
IPAs were designed to assist teachers to begin to respond to questions such as: "Am I assessing performance using standards-based and real-world tasks that are meaningful to students?" "Am I assessing the same way that the students are learning?" "Are the students able to demonstrate survival skills in the target language?" "How can I move beyond isolated, single skills assessment?" "How can I more effectively assess the interpretive skills of my students as they relate to the *ACTFL Performance Guidelines for K–12 Learners*?" "What kind of feedback will improve learner performance?"

The IPA prototype outlines a process for going beyond current practice in foreign language testing which focuses on the assessment of single skills. Taking into account the relationships among skills which occur normally in the course of real-world communication, the IPA prototype is a multi-task assessment which is framed within a single thematic context. Students first complete an interpretive task, then use the information learned in an interpersonal task, and finally summarize their learning with a presentational task. Clear rubrics guide the students' task completion and the teachers' scoring. In short, IPAs were developed to meet the need for valid and reliable assessments that determine the level at which students comprehend and interpret authentic texts in the foreign language, interact with others in the target language in oral and written form, and present oral and written messages to audiences of listeners and readers.

Figure 1 conceptualizes how the IPA can serve as the nexus to connect classroom-based instructional practices with the standards and ACTFL Performance Guidelines. The standards represent content standards that define the *what* of foreign language learning, the guidelines rep-

FIGURE 2

Integrated Performance Assessments: A Cyclical Approach



Source: Glisan, Adair-Hauck, Koda, Sandrock, & Swender, 2003, p. 18.

resent performance standards that define *how well* learners perform at various points along the language learning continuum, and the ACTFL IPAs are the assessment tools that define *how to measure* student progress toward the standards.

As Figure 1 illustrates, the overarching purpose of the IPA is to assist both the teacher and learners to identify the students' strengths across the communicative modes and to recognize which skills need further development in order to meet standards-based goals. Furthermore, the results of the IPA can assist the teacher in restructuring his/her instructional plans to better meet the needs of the learners. In this way, the IPA can enhance instruction, improve learner performance, and contribute to educational decision making.

Structure of the IPA

Taking into account the interconnectedness of communication, the IPA prototype is a multi-task or cluster assessment featuring three tasks, each of which reflects one of the three modes of communication—interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational—as outlined in the *ACTFL Performance Guidelines for K–12 Learners* (1998) and the *National Standards* (1999). Each task provides the information and elicits the linguistic interaction that is necessary for students to complete the subsequent task. The tasks thus are interrelated and build upon one another. All three tasks are aligned with a single theme or content area (e.g., Your Health, Famous Persons), reflecting the manner in which students naturally acquire and use the language in the real world or the classroom. The IPA

is standards-based, incorporating the three modes of communication, and it should include at least one other goal area (e.g., Culture or Connections). In keeping with the standards, the IPAs use authentic documents—texts created *by* native speakers *for* native speakers for the interpretive phase of the IPA (Galloway, 1998). By using authentic documents, the Culture goal area is naturally incorporated into the IPAs.

Figure 2 depicts the structure of the IPA, which consists of a series of tasks for the interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational modes of communication as defined in the National Standards (1999, 2006).

Description of the IPA Series of Tasks

This section illustrates a sample "Your Health" IPA for the Intermediate level.

Overview of Task

Each IPA begins with a general introduction that describes for the student the context and the purpose for the series of authentic tasks for interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational communication. This introduction, shown below, provides a framework for the assessment and illustrates how each task is integrated into the next and leads up to the culminating task, which results in an oral or written product. [Note: Due to the limited scope of this paper, we will be addressing Intermediate-level IPAs only. See Glisan et al., 2003, for Novice and Pre-Advanced level IPAs.]

> You have been given the opportunity of a lifetime to attend an athletic training camp in [foreign country], tuition free! This camp trains young people in all sports from the extreme (snowboarding, bicycle motor cross, roller blading) to team sports of all kinds (basketball to volleyball). You name it, they help you train for it! To be accepted into the camp, all applicants have to convince the admissions office that they have good exercise and nutrition habits. First, you will read about health and nutrition from the perspective of the [language]-speaking world. Then you will discuss your eating and exercise regimen with your partner to compare your nutrition and exercise-perhaps, even get some ideas. You will then write your application letter to the summer camp describing your nutrition and training regimen, convincing them that you are well prepared for the camp and need to be accepted.

Interpretive Task

The interpretive mode of communication includes listening, reading, and viewing skills. Interpretive tasks involve activities such as listening to a news broadcast or radio commercial; reading an article in a magazine, a short story, or a letter; and viewing a film. In essence, interpretive communication is a process of constructing meanings based on the information presented in a written text (reading), oral discourse (listening), or a film (viewing). Assessing this process is challenging, because it involves an array of interrelated sub-skills and their interactions. In reading, for example, the student must be able to extract the context-appropriate meanings of printed words (Adams, 1990; McKenna & Stahl, 2003), as well as integrate them in ways consistent with the morphological, syntactic, and pragmatic rules, in order to uncover sentence meanings (e.g., Fender, 2003). The extracted sentence information is then integrated into a coherent whole, using explicit connective and other organizational devices provided by the author (e.g., Goldman & Rakestraw, 2000), as well as through inference (e.g., van den Broek, 1994). In constructing text meanings, moreover, the student must draw on relevant background knowledge and integrate it with extracted text information (e.g., Koda, 2005).

This complexity of multiple skills is further compounded by the cumulative nature of their acquisition and functional interdependency. As an illustration, in

the absence of successful word–meaning extraction, sentence understanding cannot be achieved and, in turn, lacking sentence-level information, text meaning construction is virtually impossible. Nevertheless, interpretive communication is dependent on two major operations: one involving text information extraction (hereafter referred to as "literal comprehension") and the other entailing integration of extracted text information and prior knowledge (hereafter referred to as "interpretive comprehension"). Accordingly, for the IPA prototype, the interpretive (reading) skills to be assessed are defined as follows:

Literal Comprehension: Extracting Text Information

Word recognition
Identifying individual word meanings

Important words and phrases
Differentiating text words and phrases representing ideas directly related to the text's main theme as opposed to those representing peripheral ideas

Main idea detection
Identifying sentences expressing ideas directly related to the text's main theme

Supporting idea detection
Identifying sentences expressing ideas which support or elaborate on the text's main theme

Organizational principles
Reconstructing the text organization by rearranging text segments

Interpretive Comprehension: Integrating Extracted Text Information and Prior Knowledge

Word inferences
Inferring the context-appropriate meanings of unfamiliar words, based on text information

Concept inferences
Inferring ideas not explicitly stated based on text information

Author/cultural perspectives
Inferring the author's ideological and/or cultural stance based on text information

In each IPA, students read or listen to an authentic text related to the theme of the IPA. To reiterate, authentic texts are documents written *by* native speakers *for* native speakers (Galloway, 1998). The authentic texts used in the IPA project were taken from the popular press such as magazines and newspapers. Prior to performing the interpretive task, students are given the interpretive rubric so that they understand which specific skills in both literal and interpretive comprehension they should be able to demonstrate. Students complete the Interpretive Task in the form of a "comprehension guide," which assesses the targeted level of performance (Novice, Intermediate, Pre-Advanced) as defined in the *ACTFL Performance Guidelines for K–12 Learners* (ACTFL, 1998).

Interpretive Task
Intermediate Level: "Your Health"

> You will read about health and nutrition from the perspective of the [language]-speaking world. Read the article and complete the accompanying "Comprehension Guide."

See Appendixes B and C for the popular press and authentic article in Spanish used for the Intermediate-level "Your Health" IPA, and the corresponding comprehension guide. See Appendix D for the IPA intermediate-level interpretive rubric.

Once learners have completed the comprehension guide and the teacher corrects their responses, the teacher, using the interpretive rubrics, provides useful feedback that informs the students of their

interpretive strengths and which interpretive skills still need to be developed. It is critical that learners understand the content of the IPA authentic article before being expected to move into the interpersonal phase. Therefore, the *feedback loop* plays an essential role in the IPA. The feedback loop assists those students who did not fully comprehend the article to understand pertinent information and content before moving to the next phase of the IPA. The feedback loop also becomes a rich instructional and learning tool, for the teacher is now equipped with critical information which can eventually help the learners to improve their performance on subsequent IPA interpretive tasks. (For a more detailed discussion of the feedback loop, see Glisan et al., 2003.)

Interpersonal Task

The interpersonal mode of communication refers to two-way interactive communication (National Standards, 1999). Although interpersonal communication may be either oral or written, the IPAs that have been developed up to this point feature oral interpersonal communication only. According to Shrum and Glisan (2005), the following characteristics of oral communication make it interpersonal:

- Two or more speakers engage in conversation and exchange of information. Interpersonal communication is spontaneous (i.e., it is not scripted and read or performed as a memorized skit, as is presentational communication). One of the most challenging aspects of an IPA is to engage students in speaking without resorting to a printed script, since they are often given few opportunities to do so in class.
- Interpersonal communication is meaningful and has as its prompt a communicative reason for interacting.
- There is usually an *information gap* (i.e., one speaker seeks information that the other speaker has, or one speaker doesn't know what the other is going to say).
- Since interpersonal communication is spontaneous, speakers must listen to and interpret what each other says.
- Interpersonal communication requires conversational partners to negotiate meaning with one another in order to understand the message. Negotiating meaning involves asking for repetition, clarification, or confirmation, or indicating a lack of understanding as speakers work toward mutual comprehension (Pica, Holliday, Lewis, & Morgenthaler, 1989).

In order to be successful in the IPA, students benefit from classroom instruction that provides them with practice using negotiation of meaning strategies, including the use of conversational *gambits*, or "devices that help the speaker maintain the smooth flow of conversation," (e.g., *excuse me, wait a minute, as I was saying, on another matter*) (Adair-Hauck, 1996, p. 258; Taylor, 2002, p. 172). In each IPA, students exchange information with each other, and express feelings, emotions, and opinions about the theme. Each of the two speakers comes to the task with information that the other person may not have, thereby creating a real need for students to provide and obtain information through the active negotiation of meaning. See below for the sample IPA Interpersonal Task for "Your Health."

Interpersonal Task
Intermediate Level: "Your Health"

You are quite confident that you are going to be accepted into the athletic camp. Interview a classmate to discuss your eating and exercise regimen. Compare your nutrition and exercise practices—perhaps, even get some ideas.

When the videotape begins, say your first name. Talk with your partner

about the regimens you both follow. Ask for examples of what your partner has done in the past month. During your conversation, see how much you both have in common and decide if there are any new habits you can adopt. You will have 5 minutes.

Note: Students do not read any written notes during the interpersonal task. The interpersonal task is a spontaneous two-way interaction.

Prior to the interpersonal task, students review sample videotaped examples of students performing IPA interpersonal tasks, as well as the interpersonal rubrics with the teacher in order to understand the various criteria of interactive speaking performance. (See Appendix E for the Intermediate-level interpersonal rubric.) After the interpersonal task is completed and scored, the teacher, using the IPA rubrics, provides feedback to the learners about their performance (i.e., what the learners were able and not able to do for the interpersonal speaking task). During the feedback loop, the teacher may again need to demonstrate *model performance* in order to solidify the learners' comprehension of the criteria and skills expected of them to meet the standard. For example, if many of the learners are not "maintaining the conversation by asking and answering questions," then it would be appropriate during the *feedback loop* to demonstrate model performance of two learners who have acquired these skills. Assisting the learners to conceptualize why a learner's performance exceeds, meets, or does not meet the standard is essential for improved performance on subsequent interpersonal tasks. This type of performance-based feedback will assist the learner to self-assess and self adjust his/her language performance. As Wiggins (2004), noted: "The more self-evident the feedback to the performer; the more likely the gain" (p. 5).

Presentational Task

Presentational tasks are generally formal speaking or writing activities involving one-way communication to an audience of listeners or readers, such as giving a speech or report, preparing a paper or story, or producing a newscast or video. Presenters may conduct an oral presentation "while reading from a script, they may use notes periodically during the presentation, or they may deliver a pre-planned talk spontaneously" (Shrum & Glisan, 2005). In the IPA, students prepare a written or oral presentation based on the topic and information obtained in the previous two tasks. The written or spoken presentational tasks reflect what students would do in the world outside of the classroom. The intended audience includes someone other than the teacher, and the task avoids being merely an opportunity to display language for the teacher. See below for the sample IPA "Your Health" Presentational Task, which is the culminating activity that results in the creation of a written or oral product.

Presentational Task
Intermediate Level: "Your Health"

One requirement for selection to the sports training camp is writing a convincing application letter. Write your application letter to the camp using your research, as well as the findings gathered from your discussion with a classmate. Try to include stories of what you do and have done in the past to keep yourself in the best shape for your sport. Do your best to convince the admissions office that you are more than prepared for the type of training that is offered at the camp.

As in the other two phases, after the presentational task is completed and evaluated, the teacher offers feedback on students' performance.

Evaluating and Improving Learner Performance on IPA Tasks

Performance on the IPA is evaluated through the use of longitudinal scoring rubrics for each task within a specific level (Novice, Intermediate, Pre-Advanced). The rubrics are longitudinal since they reflect the cognitive and linguistic development of the learner over an extended period of time. Performance objectives and the range of performance (exceeds expectations, meets expectations, does not meet expectations) described in the rubrics reflect expectations outlined in the *ACTFL Performance Guidelines for K–12 Learners* (ACTFL, 1998); see Table 3.

TABLE 3

ACTFL Performance Guidelines Expectations for K–12 Learners

Interpretive Tasks are evaluated on students' ability to provide evidence of both Literal Comprehension of the text (main idea and supporting detail detection) and (at the higher levels) Interpretive Comprehension (word and concept inferences, author/cultural perspectives, organizational principle(s) of the text).

Interpersonal Tasks are evaluated on the student's use of language functions, text types, and communication strategies (quality of engagement and interactivity, and clarification strategies), as well as on comprehensibility of the message and language control (accuracy, form, fluency).

Presentational Tasks are evaluated on the student's use of language functions and text types, impact of the message (depth and attention to audience together with use of appropriate vocabulary), as well as comprehensibility of the message, and language control (accuracy, form, fluency).

The rubrics were designed to demystify the criteria and standards by providing learners with a clear idea of what is expected of them and how their performance will be rated (Wiggins, 1994). Moreover, the rubrics were designed as a means for providing effective feedback to learners. Teachers and learners can use the rubrics as guides to identify students strengths and areas in need of improvement. See Appendixes D and E for the interpretive and interpersonal rubrics at the Intermediate level.[6]

In order to improve the learners' performance, and concomitantly improve instruction, the IPA prototype suggests that, first, the teacher and students view sample works or "models" of student performance on standards-based, authentic tasks. Then, in order to assist the learners or apprentices to better understand expectations for their own future performances, the teacher and students review the criteria of the IPA performance-based rubrics, which determine what constitutes performance at each level (i.e., exceeds expectations, meets expectations, or does not meet expectations). Using the rubrics as guidelines, the teacher and students together evaluate which models meet and which ones do not meet the criteria for the standards—and, most importantly, why. "Models set the standards that we want to achieve. They anchor the feedback" (Wiggins, 1998, p. 64).

After the modeling phase, students have time to practice similar theme-based and standards-based tasks before performing an IPA task for assessment purposes. During the feedback phase, the teacher uses the IPA rubrics to provide high quality feedback. Comparing students' performance of these tasks to model performance and providing high quality feedback based on this comparison ensures that the learners have access to the criteria and the standards on which they are being assessed. "Modeling, Practicing, Performing and Feedback" demystifies the assessment process in performance-based language learning. In other words, it answers the students' frequently asked question: "Is this what you want?" (Wiggins, 2004, p. 6). Furthermore, it inte-

grates a dynamic and interactive assessment process that intends to improve both student performance, and in turn, improve the curriculum. (For a more detailed description of the IPA's cyclical approach to second language development, see Glisan et al., 2003.)

Potential Impact of the IPA on Teacher Perceptions, Classroom Instruction, and Learning

As discussed earlier, in current research in assessment, "alternative approaches to assessment" are being proposed in the professional literature in order to bring about a more direct link between instruction and assessment (McNamara, 1997, 2001, p. 343). The use of performance-based, authentic testing formats, models, and rich descriptions of performance expectations, along with feedback to the learner, as described above, work in tandem to connect instruction, learning, and assessment. Accordingly, alternative assessment may have a constructive "washback effect" on instruction and can inform and improve the curriculum, teaching and learning practices beyond the test (Alderson & Wall, 1993; Messick, 1988; Poehner & Lantolf, 2003; Shohamy, 2001). The washback hypothesis also implies that "teachers and learners do things that they would not necessarily otherwise do because of the test" (Alderson & Wall, 1993, p. 17). Likewise, Swain (1985) and Rob and Ercanbrack (1999) stressed the potential constructive washback of the test influence, and therefore, they encourage the creation of tests that will have enlightening effects on language curricula. Morrow (1986) argued that a test's validity should encompass the degree to which the test has a positive influence on teaching and learning. Therefore, a goal of the ACTFL research project was to investigate the washback effect or consequential validity (McNamara, 1996) of the IPA on teachers' perceptions of their instructional actions and practices.

Teacher reflections from follow-up questionnaires revealed that implementation of the IPA influenced the teachers' perceptions regarding standards-based language learning from a number of vantage points. In particular, 83% (19 of 23) of respondents indicated that implementation of the IPA had a positive impact on their teaching, and 91% (20 of 22) reported that the project had a positive effect on their design of future assessments. The following comments reflect the degree to which the IPA project influenced instruction and future assessment plans:

- Reaffirmed effective teaching techniques.
- Made me aware of the different modes of communication.
- Use more standards-based rubrics, those that don't lend themselves to objective grading, so the students will know exactly what is expected.
- Use or used IPA format in my class.
- Pay more attention to all-inclusive projects rather than ones limited by grammar points.
- The idea of the videotape is excellent, for students had the opportunity to discover their strengths and weaknesses.
- Need to do more speaking exercises/tasks.
- Learned how to clearly assess my students.
- Look out for authentic materials/Internet sources to use in this way.
- Incorporate the videotape interpersonal assessment.
- Use more spontaneous and open-ended type situations for them to create and use their language skills.
- Include integrated skills assessments.
- Learned a lot about designing questions for an interpretive task.
- IPA gave me a structure to follow for two-person interviews—a logical application of paired oral practice.
- Will focus more on authentic reading materials and reading strategies.
- IPA informed me to include communication and content areas into my best assessment.

As illustrated from these comments, IPA training helped to raise the teachers' awareness regarding how to modify, change, or refocus some of their instructional strategies to enhance the language curricula. Particularly noteworthy are the teachers' reflections pertaining to how the IPA served as a consciousness-raising technique for standards-based language learning. For example, the teachers cited that the IPA served as a catalyst to make them more aware of the need to integrate the three modes of communication into their lessons on a regular basis, design standards-based interpretive tasks using authentic documents, integrate more interpersonal speaking tasks, use more open-ended speaking tasks, and use more standards-based rubrics to help the students improve their language performance.

Regarding the challenges of integrating IPAs into the curriculum, the teachers reported: the lack of age-appropriate authentic materials; difficulty of preparing learners for interpersonal communication or teaching the students how to communicate and "think on their feet" without pre-scripted dialogues; and difficulty of not being able to convert rubrics into letter grades for their school districts. This latter challenge regarding grades illuminates the depth that the standards and standards-based assessment imply.

Although these preliminary data from the teachers' reflections are promising, one needs to recognize, however, that the teachers' reflections are self-reports and only one piece of evidence regarding washback effect or consequential validity of IPA assessment. Further research studies including classroom observational studies, journals, and follow-up interviews will need to be conducted in order to ascertain if IPA training does indeed prompt teachers to modify and improve their instructional strategies and plans.

Conclusion and Suggestions for Further Research

This article has presented a prototype for measuring student progress towards achieving the National Standards (1999, 2006) while capturing the connection between classroom experience and learner performance on IPA tasks. Teachers' reflections regarding implementation of IPA assessment highlight that IPA training can serve as a consciousness-raising technique to influence or encourage teachers to modify or refocus their instructional plans to better meet the needs of the students. Although the preliminary findings from the teachers' reflections are promising, more controlled, classroom-based IPA studies are warranted in order to answer questions such as: *What is the impact of IPA assessment on language learner perceptions, motivation, and anxiety? After IPA training, do teachers follow through and implement their proposed plans to enhance the curricula? If so, do the enhanced curricula improve learner performance in achieving the standards? Does IPA assessment guide the learners to become more reflective of their own language development? In what ways can IPA teacher training and implementation enhance school districts' efforts regarding portfolio assessment and second language development?* Undoubtedly, the IPA is an area ripe for future research. Further, it has the potential to change the way assessment is designed and implemented in foreign language classrooms.

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Notes

1. For a review of the chronological development of foreign language teaching, see Shrum and Glisan (2005).
2. For sample performance-based and authentic tasks, see Shrum and Glisan (2005), pp. 366–372.
3. In a recent article, foreign language publishers point out that foreign language classroom *practice* has experienced less change in teaching and in materials than the field recognizes, despite the fact that key initiatives have been undertaken by the profession (e.g., proficiency and standards) to develop national *policies* (Dorwick & Glass, 2003).
4. The IPA was developed by ACTFL through an assessment project funded by a U.S. Department of Education International Research and Studies grant, #PO17A970028. The original name of the assessment was the *Performance Assessment Unit (PAU),* which was changed to IPA in order to avoid confusion with classroom units of instruction and to highlight the integration of the modes of communication in the IPA.
5. After school districts had been selected, teachers were identified based on a representation of a variety of languages (Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish), language levels, (I, II, III, AP, etc.) and grade levels. Selection criteria also included a high level of oral proficiency and evidence that the teachers had previous experience in performance-based assessment. See Appendix A for a list of the pilot site coordinators assessment teaching fellows and consultants on the project. This list includes teachers who participated in both pre-pilot and pilot testing.
6. Due to space limitations, only the Interpretive and Interpersonal Rubrics (Intermediate level) are included here. The reader should consult the *ACTFL Integrated Performance Assessment Manual* (Glisan et al., 2003) for the entire set of Interpretive, Interpersonal, and Presentational rubrics.

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APPENDIX A

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