

Smith College Teaching Arts Luncheon
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New Tools for Authentic Assessment

Jessica Bacal (Wurtele Center for Work & Life)
Janie Vanpee (French Studies)
Joseph Bacal (Educational Technology Services)

Today we will share how a faculty member, administrator and educational technology staff member developed an integrative curriculum, designed to get students thinking about their own cross-cultural experiences and to self-assess their language skills.

The collaboration evolved from the interests of Janie Vanpee, director of Smith's Global Studies Center and Translation Studies Concentration, who wanted concentrators to develop their own "European Language Portfolios." (The European Language Portfolio, or ELP, is used across the EU to assess language skills and cross-cultural fluency.)

Professor Vanpee worked with the Wurtele Center and ETS, and together they created a set of curricular tools to engage students in talking and writing about the evolution of their cultural competence. They also built a WordPress plugin that allows students to self-assess language-learning within an “exportable” digital rubric, and to include multimedia proof of their levels of proficiency.

The end product is a curriculum and digital tool that guides students in a kind of "authentic assessment," easily-adaptable to any set of academic goals.

Triad Interviews (Based on the work of Melissa Peet, University of Michigan)

Note: This is an accelerated version of the exercise, 3x faster than when we work with students!

1. **First, decide who is going to time these interviews. That person needs to take out a phone or watch to get ready to time them.**
2. There should be 3 minutes for the speaker, and then 1 minutes of feedback.
3. Then, you should rotate roles so that EACH OF YOU has a turn in EACH ROLE.

Speaker – For 3 minutes, talk about your experience and respond to any questions from the interviewer.

Interviewer – Ask questions and offer observations, listening to help the speaker unpack the experience and to articulate the most pivotal moment or moments of the experience.

You might ask, for example:

- What was the most vivid moment? Can you describe it as if you were describing a scene in a movie? □ What were you doing, and how were you feeling?
- What impact did the experience have on you? On others? □

Don't give advice.

Don't refer to yourself in any way; don't say, "That reminds me of a paper that I wrote!" □

Don't ask future-oriented questions, like, "So do you think you'd ever want to do that kind of research?"

Notetaker – Write notes about key words, a recurring theme, a particular strength, capacity, knowledge area or skill area on the part of the speaker. (See list of examples below.)

When the speaker has finished telling their story, both the interviewer and notetaker should share their insights and see if they resonate with speaker's perspective.

Which of the capacities or skills below are evident in the storyteller's experience? (Please add new ones to this list!)

Smith College Essential Student Capacities

1. Critical and analytical thinking
2. Creativity, curiosity and innovation
3. Ability to draw upon and convey knowledge
4. Resilience and resourcefulness
5. Self-awareness as a learner
6. Ability to engage with communities and ideas across difference

Additional skills and capacities

- Ability to see multiple perspectives
- Close looking□
- Community engagement□
- Cultural sensitivity
- Cultural understanding□
- Curiosity□
- Doing what needs to be done, even when it's outside of my "comfort zone"
- Ethical practice□

- Facilitating communication between people with different interests□
- Forging connections across difference□
- Interest in global connections and in thinking cross-culturally□
- Interest in origin and meaning□
- Interest in methods of interpretation□
- Interest in themes of race and class□
- Interpreting data/information□ □
- Persevering through mistakes to learn□

Links to the Smith student portfolios shown today are below.

Important: Choose “Login with Shibboleth” rather than entering your username and password.

<https://sophia.smith.edu/portfolios/sbsmith/>

Sawnie Smith ‘17

“In order to illustrate my relationship with Portuguese as a Spanish speaker, I have developed a metaphor. Imagine Spanish and Portuguese were identical twins. You have been best friends with Spanish for many years, without ever having met their twin. Nonetheless, you can anticipate Spanish’s every word; you recognize the rhythm of their voice, the lines of their palms, and the shape of their teeth. One day you are introduced to Portuguese. As they stand side-by-side with Spanish, you are able to decipher small differences between the two . . .”

<https://sophia.smith.edu/portfolios/ethompson/2016/04/04/language-assessment/>

Eleana Thompson ‘16

“... hyperbole (in soap operas) allowed me to track the emotions of the story. Seeing the old man yelling angrily at the teenage boy and girl, paired with the fact that the young girl was holding her stomach, gave me an “aha!” moment one night- her father must be angry that his daughter is pregnant and he does not approve of the match!”

<https://sophia.smith.edu/portfolios/kgaskin/>

Kayla Gaskin ‘17

“How do you explain race and the weight it carries in a language that lacks racial terminology? How do you communicate your racial experience when your level of fluency isn’t high enough?”

<https://sophia.smith.edu/portfolios/spereira/2016/03/23/intertwining-two-languages/>

Stephanie Pereira ‘16

“The challenge was my comfort level with the Spanish language. I knew how to speak it but I was never comfortable speaking due to personal shame and perfection. I was born in America, so I have a little bit of an accent when I speak Spanish. The majority of my family was born in the Dominican Republic, so I had a fear of being judged by my family because they would say that I have become too ‘Americanized.’ This led me to have a low confidence level when I spoke the language.”

<https://sophia.smith.edu/portfolios/twilt/category/translating/>

Tiffany Wilt '17

Translation Bash

“When Translation Studies Professor Janie Vanpee invited me to participate in the Translation Bash at Boston University I expected to throw together a translation and uneventfully compare it to the translations of a few other undergraduate students.’

But that assumption was definitely wrong. When the event started I was sitting a windowless room surrounded by about 30 other people over the age of 30. Introductions revealed why; every single person in the room had at least a master’s degree. Many had PhDs, some were professors, and all were working on becoming professional translators (if they weren’t professional translators already).”

Why is it so fun to be right? As pleasures go, it is, after all, a second-order one at best. Unlike many of life’s other delights — chocolate, surfing, kissing — it doesn’t enjoy any mainline access to our biochemistry: to our appetites, our adrenal glands, our limbic systems, our swoony hearts.

¿Por qué está tan divertido estar correcta? Por todos los placeres, es, después de todo, al mejor uno del segundo orden. A diferencia de muchos de las delicias de la vida — chocolate, surfear, besando — no se disfrute algún acceso directo a nuestra bioquímica: a nuestros apetitos, nuestras glándulas suprarrenales, nuestros sistemas límbicos, nuestros corazones desmayos.

¿Por qué es tan divertido estar en lo cierto? Si de placeres hablamos, este es, después de todo, un placer secundario en el mejor de los casos. A diferencia de muchos de los otros deleites de la vida (como el chocolate, el surfear, el besar) no goza ningún acceso directo a nuestra bioquímica: a nuestros apetitos, a nuestras glándulas suprarrenales, nuestros sistemas límbicos, nuestros corazones desfallecientes.

<https://sophia.smith.edu/portfolios/gzutrau/2016/03/23/mandarin-self-assessment/>

Gabbi Zutrau '16

Mandarin Self-Assessment

“This is me interviewing a friend in China on her opinions about environmental destruction and China’s market economy.”

