Assessing Vocabulary & Grammar

(FORM-FOCUSED ASSESSMENT)

-12th Lecture-

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Grammatical Competence

Grammatical competence: the knowledge of rules of phonology, lexis, syntax, and semantics.

1. **Grammatical forms (the structures of a language):** Form is both morphology, or how words are formed, and syntax, how words are strung together; both morphology and syntax are concerned with the linguistic accuracy of Language.

2. **Grammatical meanings:** the literal and intended messages that the form conveys. It is concerned with the meaningfulness of the language used.

3. **Pragmatic meaning (use in a given context):** The pragmatic or implied meaning results from the appropriate language choices a learner makes during a given communicative event.

Designing Assessment Tasks
1.   Selected Response
(language (or nonlanguage) input from one word to several sentences)

1.   Multiple-Choice Tasks

- **The most common selected response tasks.**
- **Very popular, especially in standardized testing environments.**

Advantages:
- **easy to administer and score**

Disadvantages:
- **difficult to create,**
- **can promote guessing and**
- **do not represent authentic language use**

a.   Grammatical Form

Carson: Did you see the movie Star Wars: The Last Jedi last week?
Ethan: Yes, Mary loved it, and _____.
- A. I loved too
- B. I do
- C. do did I
- D. so did I

- **Focus:** form not meaning
- **Score:** (1) right or (0) wrong

Designing Assessment Tasks
1. Selected Response

b. Grammatical Meaning

Yuko: Do you have plans for tonight?
Christina: Not really. _____
Yuko: Thanks, but I have a final paper
      to write.
  A. How about you?
  B. Need any help?
  C. How about a movie?
  D. Need to work?

- **Focus:** meaning not form
- **Score:** (1) right or (0) wrong

c. Grammatical form and Meaning

Jeff: Are you visiting your family this
      year?
Sonia: I don't know._____ ; it
      depends on the airfares.
  A. I didn't
  B. I may be
  C. I might
  D. I had to

- **Focus:** form and meaning
- **Score:** (1) right or (0) wrong

Designing Assessment Tasks
1. Selected Response

2. Discrimination Tasks

Test-takers have to:
(a) recognize a response, and
(b) choose among contrasts or opposites, such as true/false, right/wrong, etc.

Example: Choose the correct picture, A or B, to match the sentence below.

(Gender recognition)

A   B

She delivered it to him

3. Noticing Tasks or Consciousness-Raising Tasks

Test-takers are asked to indicate (underline or circle) that they have identified a specific language features.

Directions: Underline *would* when it is used to refer to the habitual past. Circle it when it refers to the present or future.

I remember a time when we would write letters using pen and paper as a form of communication. We would write them to say thank you after we received a gift for our birthday or to say we enjoyed spending time after my grandmother visited us. We would even write letters to our friends. I wouldn't expect today's children to write letters but would expect them to still communicate their thanks and appreciation

Designing Assessment Tasks
2. Limited Production
(the test-taker's response represents only a limited amount of language production)

1. Gap-Filling Tasks

Grammatical form

I _____ a book right before I go to sleep. Recently, I have been reading biographies. I _____ the biographies of Charlie Chaplin and Mahatma Gandhi, and for the past few nights, I _____ about Oprah Winfrey.

Correctness criteria:
(simple habitual present tense, "read"; past tense, "read"; present perfect, "have read"; and past perfect continuous tense, "have been reading").

2. Short-Answer Tasks

Grammatical form and meaning

Directions: Read the following paragraph, then answer each question below in a sentence or two.

As technicians, teachers must apply the best of the tools of their trade to a threefold process of diagnosis, treatment, and assessment of learners in the classroom. They must initially account for communicative and situational needs anticipated among designated learners, then diagnose appropriate curricular treatments for those learners in their context and for their particular purposes.

Question 1: What is meant by "tools of their trade"?
Question 2: What is one example of a "treatment"?

Designing Assessment Tasks

2. Limited Production

3. Dialogue-Completion Tasks

Grammatical form and meaning

Directions: Fill in blanks with one or more words that are grammatically correct in the conversation.

Mayumi: How was your trip to Los Angeles?

Karina: It _____ .

Mayumi: I knew you would enjoy your visit! So, what did you do?

Karina: I _____ Disneyland and Universal Studios.

3. Extended Production

(test-takers produce larger amounts of language **that elicit authentic language use**)

*Typical five-point scale for evaluating grammatical knowledge

Level	Description
0	No evidence of grammatical knowledge
1	Limited grammatical knowledge
2	Some grammatical knowledge
3	Broad grammatical knowledge
4	Complete grammatical knowledge

* A rating scale (rubric) is often used in assessing open-ended responses.

Designing Assessment Tasks
3.   Extended Production

1.   Information Gap Tasks

Directions: Working with a partner, ask questions to find out about the other painter. Then, using all your information, prepare a short report comparing the two famous painters.

Test-Taker A
Claude Monet
Nationality: French
Year of birth: 1840
Style of painting: Impressionist
Well-known paintings: The Woman in the Green Dress; Water Lilies
Year of death: 1926

Test-Taker B
Vincent van Gogh
Nationality: Dutch
Year of birth: 1853
Style of painting: Post- Impressionist
Well-known paintings: The Starry Night; Self Portrait
Year of death: 1890

2.   Role-Play or Simulation Tasks

- **Test-takers take on a role to solve a problem, make a decision, or perform some transaction collaboratively.**
- **The large response tests the test-taker's knowledge of grammatical form, meaning, and pragmatic use**

Problem solving task
Your state is facing a budget cut and the governor's finance committee has to decide how to allocate the limited amount of money. The mayor has called a town meeting to find out what the citizens think. You would like to see money given to an issue you support. Your job is to convince everyone to allocate money to the issue you support.

Assessing Vocabulary

Vocabulary are words.

- They can be:
  1. **Tokens**: all the words in a text. Or
  2. **Types**: only words that are of different forms.

Prefabricated language or lexical phrases: groups of words that have a grammatical structure but operate as a single unit and have a particular function in communication.

Lexical phrases types:

1. **Poly words:** short fixed phrases that perform a variety of functions, like qualifying, marking fluency, and marking disagreement. eg: for the most part, so to speak, and wait a minute.

2. **Institutionalized expressions:** longer utterances that are fixed in form, such as proverbs and formulas for social interaction. eg: nice to meet you, how's it going, etc.

3. **Phrasal constraints:** medium-length phrases that have basic structure with one or two slots that can be filled by various words or phrases. eg. yours truly/sincerely and as far as I know/can tell/am aware.

4. **Sentence builders:** phrases that provide the framework for a complete sentence with one or two slots where whole ideas can be expressed. eg. that reminds me of X, on the other hand X, and not only X but also X.

Assessing Vocabulary

Components of vocabulary ability
1. **Vocabulary in context:** the meaning of the target word has to be viewed within the social and cultural environments.
2. **Vocabulary knowledge and fundamental processes:** such as recognizing linguistic roots to interpret meaning, using context to guess meaning, and even simply knowing the parts of speech to which words belong.
3. **Metacognitive strategies for vocabulary use:** metacognitive strategies that all language users use to manage communication.

Some Considerations in Designing Assessment Tasks
1. **Clarify Your Purpose**
2. **Define Your Construct** (syllabus- based or theory-based)
3. **Select Your Target Words** (high-frequency, low- frequency, specialized words)
4. **Determine Mode of Performance** (receptive (recognition) or productive vocabulary)

Designing Assessment Tasks:
1. Receptive Vocabulary

Vocabulary in a one-sentence context: high-frequency word

He is a very **independent** person.
- A. never willing to give help
- B. hard-working
- C. not relying on other people
- D. good at repairing things

Vocabulary in a one-sentence context: low-frequency word

The **hazardous** road conditions were the cause of many fatal accidents over the weekend.
- A. difficult
- B. problematic
- C. dangerous
- D. complicated

Vocabulary matching exercise

Find the meaning of the following words. Write the corresponding number in the blank.

apathy___
dearth___
catalust__
kernel___
plethora___

1. to impose and collect by force
2. to be an agent of change
3. grain or seed
4. a short time
5. to be insensitive to emotion or passionate feeling
6. excessively large quantity; overabundance
7. lack, scarcity
8. the act or process of change

Designing Assessment Tasks:
2. Productive Vocabulary

Fill in the blank

Directions: Write one word for each blank.

- A swimmer kicks with his legs to _____ his body through the water.
- That restaurant is so popular that you have to make a _____ or you'll be waiting two hours to get a table!
- I needed some medicine, so my doctor wrote me a_____.
- The recent rains have caused rivers to overflow and _____ many areas

Selective deletion cloze

The Montessori method of education, used worldwide today, was developed by Dr. Maria Montessori. She was the first woman in Italy to receive a medical degree, but she found it difficult to practice_____ because Italians at that time were not ready to accept _____ doctors. So she turned to education, working with children who had been _____ away in mental _____because they were considered _____ to learn. Through_____ thoughtful observations, and through her experience with these _____, she developed a_____
of educating them that was so_____ that they were able to pass reading and writing _____ designed for_____ children.

References

- **Brown, H. D. & Abeywickrama, P. (2012). Language Assessment: Principles & Classroom Practices. 2nd Ed. Pearson Education, USA.**

- **McNamara, Tim. (2000). Language Testing. 1st Ed. Oxford University Press.**