

## **Assessment Rationale**

Assessment in the classroom has two roles: to evaluate the efficacy of instruction and to demonstrate students' growth towards course objectives. In order to accurately measure students' abilities, growth, and the effectiveness of instruction, assessment must correspond with classroom goals, curricula, and instruction. This project incorporates authentic assessments in the form of portfolios, self-assessments, and rubrics. My elementary Alutiiq language classes are elective classes that are provided twice a week. I do not assign grades for the students' report cards. The purpose of assessment for these classes is to inform my lesson development and teaching, and to provide feedback to students about their growth.

### **Authentic Assessment**

Long-established educational tests like Norm Referenced tests, such as the SAT, and Criterion Referenced tests, such as the Alaska Standards-Based Assessment (SBA), are generally multiple-choice tests. The usefulness of multiple-choice tests as a primary measure of student achievement has been called into question (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996, p. 1). O'Malley and Pierce (1996) offer alternatives to traditional tests and explain that authentic assessments represent the experiences of the learner in the classroom and real-life settings. Authentic assessments reflect a student's learning, achievement, motivation, and attitude.

Authentic assessments display both content and consequential validity (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). Content validity means that what students are being tested on correlate to what they have been taught. In order to make sure assessments demonstrate content validity, one must see to it that the content of the assessment and objectives being

assessed corresponds with the curriculum and objectives being taught in the classroom. In my family unit, I assess the students on the vocabulary that has been taught in this unit and assess the projects that they complete as part of the unit. Consequential validity means that the results of an assessment are being used to improve teaching methods to promote learning. To assure that an assessment has consequential validity, one must examine the way in which the assessment data will be used to benefit the teaching and learning process and how it will benefit the student. Since I do not assign grades for my elementary Alutiiq language students, the purpose for all of my assessments for this project is to inform my teaching- let me know if the way that I am presenting the lessons is effective, and if we need to spend more time on a given lesson- and to provide feedback to the students.

Cultural validity means, to the extent possible, aligning your curriculum and classroom practices to the cultural values and practices of your students. Sharon Nelson-Barber and Elise Trumbull (2007) state that maintaining linguistic and cultural congruence between home and school, educating students in their heritage language, and using local knowledge and culture in the curriculum will improve the academic performance of indigenous students (p. 133). My digital story rubric assessment demonstrates cultural validity as it links to the ability to introduce oneself in Alutiiq. Proper introductions are a vital element to indigenous cultures including Alutiiq. It is essential to identify who you are, and who and where you came from. The heart of my family unit is the Alutiiq personal introduction. This unit and the culminating project, the digital story, which is assessed using the digital story rubric, aligns with several of the Alutiiq Cultural Values: Our heritage language, family and the kinship of our ancestors

and living relatives, and ties to our homeland (Alaska Native Knowledge Network, 2013). The digital story rubric assesses the learners' ability to use the heritage language to speak about themselves, their family members, and where they come from.

According to Hughes (2003), unreliable, or inaccurate tests do not measure what they were intended to measure. Consequently, a student's true abilities are not reflected in the resulting score. An example of inaccurate testing practices is testing oral language skills using a multiple-choice test. A more accurate assessment of oral language skills would be to ask the student to perform an oral task relevant to the content being assessed. Tests lack reliability when there is an issue with the interaction between the person being tested and the test features (Hughes, 2003). An example of this is when a test has unclear instructions or ambiguous questions. Tests can be unreliable when there is subjectivity and a lack of consistency or consensus in scoring.

Rubrics lend themselves nicely to Task-Based Language Learning. When assigning a "task" or project for students to carry out, a rubric can communicate expectations to the students and help ensure consistent scoring once they are completed. Using a scoring rubric or scale can help to ensure the reliability of authentic assessments. A holistic rubric contains each expectation at each level increasing the demand at each subsequent level. An analytic rubric separates the expectations into component pieces. For example, on an analytic writing rubric, a student may receive a separate component score in the areas of organization, use of conventions, and sentence fluency; while using a holistic rubric, the student would receive one over-all score that takes into account their ability to organize, use conventions and their sentence fluency. The difference between the two types of rubrics is the degree of control the student has over each domain. The

analytic rubric tends to be more clear and explicit in the expectations for each level of scoring available. The student should know exactly what is expected of them to receive a particular score in any given area on the rubric. In order to ensure inter-rater reliability, and therefore reliability in the assessment, raters must receive training on the rubric and given opportunities to practice and discuss using the rubric with other raters.

My project focuses on encouraging interaction and engagement in distance elementary language learners. The authentic assessments I chose to use include portfolios, rubrics, and self-assessments.

The first authentic assessment measure I implement is a portfolio. Portfolios are a great way to show growth and progress at different intervals over time. They can also promote ownership of learning (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). Students are encouraged to value themselves as learners through the portfolio process. Using portfolios, the instruction in the classroom and the assessment of the student come together, confirming the content validity of the assessment. In this project, students compile a digital portfolio of the projects they complete over the course. There are required pieces to the portfolio, such as the story podcast and digital stories that they create, as well as an opportunity for the students to choose items they would like to include. The portfolio process promotes ownership in learning and accountability towards course objectives. This idea of accountability is important for my project as the students are not graded. By allowing students to choose some items to include in their portfolios, I am affording them agency in their learning process and in the way they want to demonstrate that learning. I am ensuring content and consequential validity by assessing the students' overall progress using artifacts aligned with our learning objectives that they produced during the units for

this class. The assessment pieces are aligned with the course objectives and activities (content validity) and I used the information gained from these assessments to help make decisions about instruction for the course (consequential validity). This assessment is reliable because the students have a Portfolio Summary Sheet that acts as a checklist for the assessment. The students are scored consistently using this checklist.

The second type of authentic measure I use is a rubric. Rubrics help both the teacher and the learner in the instruction and assessment process. Criteria for each performance level must be precisely defined in terms of what the student actually does to demonstrate a skill or proficiency level. The criteria are made public and known in advance of the assessment. Rubrics lend themselves nicely to Task-Based Language Learning which include projects or performance assessments in my project. I include an adapted digital media rubric found at [rubistar4teachers.com](http://rubistar4teachers.com) for use with the digital story projects that incorporates guidelines for the Alutiiq language content of the project as well as production elements. By providing this rubric to the students, they have a clear idea of the expectations for their projects. They will know what it will take to receive a proficient score (3) in areas such as vocabulary, complete sentences, information, oral presentation, and presentation. If students are motivated to receive an advanced score (4), they know that they will have to include all of the family terms covered in class as well as bring some terms that were not included during class, such as aunt or cousin. They also know that they have to stretch their language use to include some complex, complete sentences.

Lastly, I use self-assessments in my project. Self-assessments help to gauge the motivated and strategic efforts of students to achieve goals. These assessments integrate

cognitive abilities of the students with motivation and attitudes towards learning (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). I begin by having students set learning goals for themselves. Some examples of goals that the students set for themselves were: Count to twenty in Alutiiq, learn how to sing "Cama'i Unwarpak", and talk in sentences. We revisit these learning goals and reflect on progress made towards the goals. We also employ rating scales (four-point scales) to help students measure their current levels of proficiency on stated objectives and growth towards those objectives. Students gain an understanding of where they are and what they need to do to reach proficiency on stated objectives.

## References

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