Turnarounds to Transfer

By Jennifer Eddy

Quite often when a teacher asks a question and changes it, even slightly, from how the concept was originally taught, a student will say, “You never taught us this or we never learned this.”

Experience with typical testing creates learners accustomed to plug in, memorized answers, therefore expecting to be assessed exactly the way they were taught. The danger here is a learner that will not be able to demonstrate the flexibility required when faced with new situations or deal with real-world contexts that are often ambiguous and require critical thinking and a repertoire thoughtfully engaged. Teachers still ask students to fill, drill, and repeat, focusing on individual items rather than the concept that created the item.

When prompted exactly as they were taught, students might fill in the space. However, they cannot use the language with complexity and variation as opposed to just cued, fill-in, memorized orrote responses. Transfer requires inference and negotiation of meaning, not just collecting facts, repeating a skill and completing a drill. Without transfer, the language learner forgets, misunderstands a concept or only knows it in the rigid, predictable context in which it was taught. Transfer involves using materials the student may not have used before and solving a problem with complexities or variables. If students understand the concept, it should not matter if the teacher poses it differently or suggests different variations on the same. Unfortunately, most students when faced with a problem, posed slightly differently, cannot solve it, recognize it or reach out transfer, the language learner forgets, without transfer tasks, the learner will not be able to demonstrate the flexibility required when faced with new situations in the real world and real contexts.

Transfer is defined as using knowledge and skills in new and unanticipated situations different than how they were originally learned, on one’s own, without many cues or supports (McTighe, J., & Wiggins, G. 2005). In the curriculum design model, Uncovering Content: Assessment Design Aligning Performance and Transfer (2006/2007), Understanding by Design is aligned with the World Readiness Standards (1996/2013), unfolding cultural perspectives with recursive themes along the lifespan within the three communicative modes assessing for Transfer. Using a language appropriately in a given culture requires high adaptability, tolerance of new situations and contexts, dealing with incomplete information and problem-solving without cues. Assessment tasks that most closely meet these criteria will be your best evidence of true performance. Teachers need to create these tasks for the learner as transfer will not occur by chance and never from drills alone. Communication is not only proof of transfer but proof you need transfer. Transfer requires performance and negotiation of meaning, not just collecting facts, repeating a skill and completing a drill. Without transfer, the language learner forgets, misunderstands a concept or only knows it in the rigid, predictable context in which it was taught. Transfer involves using materials the student may not have used before and solving a problem with complexities or variables. If students understand the concept, it should not matter if the teacher poses it differently or suggests different variations on the same. Unfortunately, most students when faced with a problem, posed slightly differently, cannot solve it, recognize it or reach out transfer, the language learner forgets, without transfer tasks, the learner will not be able to demonstrate the flexibility required when faced with new situations in the real world and real contexts.

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Performance Tasks in the Three Modes Should Assess for Transfer

START with the End in Mind

 Turns around Transfer

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thing relevant and culturally appropriate. In Turnarounds to Transfer, teachers design a collection of tasks toward the summative performance goal but go beyond the classroom by designing tasks to develop broader sets of skills and thinking associated with the content. Transfer is a measure of the extent to which students can use the information from the classroom in real-life settings. Teachers must assess for transfer, particularly in the pre- and post-assessment of learning in the classroom, in order to measure proficiency in all forms of communication.

**Turnarounds to Transfer**

**START with the End in Mind**

- **Source**
  - **Task**
  - **Role**
  - **Transfer**
  - **Tip**

- **Move away from text**
- **Give students a role and audience**
- **Complexity and variation**
- **Value beyond the classroom**

Dr. Jennifer Eddy is a frequent presenter on Backward Design and works with schools and districts on curriculum and assessment. Dr. Eddy is on the Editorial Board and team leader for STARTALK, a national initiative for critical languages. She recently presented for the School of Education at Arizona State University on performance assessment and transfer. She is currently finishing Planning for Performance: Designing your Program in Advanced Language Programs (PAL), a joint publication with the Center for Language Resource and Uncover Content: Design for Performance, a webinar series published by Better Chinese.

**REFERENCES**


**Eddy, J. (2012).** When designing new tasks in the three modes, always assess for transfer, particularly in the pre- and post-assessment of learning in the classroom, in order to measure proficiency in all forms of communication. They help the learner to self-assess and adjust. Remind them of the summative performance goal at the end of the unit or course, so that they know every formative task you do moves them closer to transfer.

- **TSA**
- **SAA**
- **AAT**
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