Assessment Based Language Education by Dave Hopkins, 2015

Assessment Based Language Education (ABLE) means planning lessons according to the outcomes of the student's learning. What is the student expected to do that shows they have learned? What is new here is putting the definition of behavioral outcomes up front in the lesson planning process. We need to pay more attention to how learner behavioral outcomes reflect what is taught and how it is taught. This is critical during the lesson as *formative* assessment, and at the end of a lesson sequence as *summative* assessment.

A. What is the student doing? Matching cards on the board.

B. What is the student doing? Describing a fruit.

The essence of Assessment Based Language Education (ABLE) is the focus on what the student does to apply what is being taught. As long as teachers and administrators continue to focus on what the teacher does, there is little hope that we can add to the database of the connection between learning and teaching. As Diane Larsen-Freeman puts it,

> *Whether or not students take advantage of the opportunities that we present to them, either explicitly or implicitly, to learn is beyond our control. We know that students don't learn because we teach…but we must act as if they do.* (Larsen-Freemen, 2003)

Larsen-Freeman's point is well taken. We don't actually know what the student is learning, and we are left making assumptions that what we do "influences" student learning.

> *It is more accurate to say that teaching clearly 'influences' learning, but it does not make learning happen.* ("A Dilemma of Prediction," Donald Freeman, Meaningful Action, Arnold & Murphy, 2013)

The bottom line is that what the student does, behavioral actions that we can see or hear, provide the only available evidence that learning has occurred.

Current planning practice

What we have now is:
1. How to teach?
   - Determined by principles & beliefs
2. What to teach?
   - Determined by syllabus & texts
3. How to assess?
   - Determined by what's available

Current practice follows a sequence something like - *how to teach* based upon our experience, knowledge and teacher education; *what to teach* based upon the content and materials supplied in our textbooks; *how to assess* the students based upon our own or administration provided achievement tests. I would suggest this process is psychologically driven by our need to know, what we are going to do tomorrow. Our planning process starts with Number #1, what am "I" going to do?

Method - how to teach?	→	Content - what to teach?	→	Assessment - how to assess?

There is a logical flaw in this approach given that what we do (how we teach) does not determine what the outcomes will be in terms of the student's learning. The predominance of teaching methods as the approach to language teaching has been prevalent for 50 years or more. As Donald Freeman says, "Teaching methods persist because they predict outcomes; they also provide materials for teacher education." (Freeman, A Dilemma of Prediction, Meaningful Action, 2014)

> *At its core, however, the problem of teaching methods does not lie in how they are carried out; rather it is a problem of expectation - no method will lead to student learning in every circumstance, all of the time. Fundamentally, this is because teaching does not cause learning; a particular method does not lead to specific learning outcomes under all conditions.* (Ibid, p 279)

This is true even in the so-called 'post method' era since we have inherited this preoccupation with *how* from our predecessors and our collective experience. In "Beyond Method" Kumaravadivelu calls them "Macro Strategies for Teaching."

1. Maximize learning opportunities
2. Facilitate negotiated interaction
3. Minimize perceptual mismatches
4. Activate intuitive heuristics
5. Foster language awareness
6. Contextualize linguistic input
7. Integrate language skills
8. Promote learner autonomy
9. Raise cultural consciousness
10. Ensure social relevance

However, the focus is still on the teacher. Perhaps some reorientation is needed. How about putting these "macrostrategies into the learner's perspective. The learners will be able to:

1. **Maximize learning opportunities** from the teacher, peers and the larger English language community through active and creative participation. This would be demonstrated by the learner's initiative in engaging in the learning process through responses and questioning.
2. **Negotiate interactions** through active involvement in clarification, confirmation, comprehension checks, requests, repairing, reaction, and turn taking. The learner should show freedom to initiate talk, not just react and respond to it.
3. **Interpret the teacher's intentions** for classroom activities in terms of their relevance, communicative value, structural nature and lexical meaning. Note that as we turn these "strategies" upside down, they begin to sound very complex in the learner's terms.
4. **Interact intuitively** with core language context and co text sufficiently to activate self-discovery and initiate communicative use. That's a tough one, but simply means that the learner needs to trust the teacher and the learning context sufficiently " to give free play to those creative principles that humans bring to the process of language learning."
5. **Notice and activate** language structures and lexis awareness and use. Rutherford (1987) called this "consciousness raising," and means that the student shows language awareness through controlled practice and creative use of the linguistic features of the lesson.
6. **Integrate language** into a personal context that has meaning for the learner. While the teacher must draw out the connections between language and the life experience of the student, the learner needs to personalize this context in terms of her/his own experience.
7. **Demonstrate integrated skills** through use of language for speaking, listening, reading and writing. There is little doubt that these skills overlap in the learning process, but it is critical that the learner demonstrate the connections between skills in practice.
8. **Act with autonomy** in language learning and interactional exchanges. This is all about who makes the choices, and the more choices that the student is able to make, the more sustainable their language learning development.
9. **Demonstrate cultural awareness** through interest, curiosity and empathy with the native language community. This would be demonstrated through learner initiation of explorations into the L2 culture.
10. **Socially relevant language performance** would be indicated by the learner's ability to clarify why the language is being learned, and how it fits into the local society as demonstrated by communicative interactions.

It is evident that putting Kumaravadivelu's macro-strategies in the learner's terms places a burden upon the student. It also shows us as teachers how much we need to know about our students to effectively plan language learning experiences. Looking at the macro-strategies from the learners perspective emphasizes the usefulness of the ABLE approach, in other words, looking at what we want the student to do or say as the starting point in the lesson planning process.

Turning the planning process on its head

We might be advised to look first at what we want in terms of learner outcomes. What do we want the students to be able to DO that they can't DO now?

1. What do we want student to be able to DO?
2. What content will be needed?
3. How can this best be taught?

What do we want the student to be able to do? Writing performance outcomes means - Evidence that you can see or hear. Results defined by the following criteria:

1. What will they do? (*talk, write, show, match…*)
2. How will they do it? *(pairs, groups, walkabout,…)*
3. With whom? *(students, teacher, partners…)*
4. To what degree of accuracy? *(60%, 75%, 90%...)*

A definitional note here - generally speaking there is no difference between lesson objectives and learning outcomes. Some educators choose to make a distinction between "objectives" or "aims," which the teacher has for the lesson, and learner "outcomes," which define what the student will be able to do in response to the objectives. This may be a useful way for the teacher to reflect upon their lesson plan, and provide feedback to the students. I have a preference for *outcomes* since this seems to focus on the results of the lesson, which may or may not be linked with the objectives of the teacher.

Using SMART Objectives

Most teachers are aware that they should have clear lesson objectives. Many teachers are not clear that the objectives should be written from the perspective of the students in terms of something that is demonstrable. Of 75+ classes observed in a major international EAP program, only a few teachers wrote student outcomes for their lessons that would meet the SMART criteria.

Lesson Outcomes in SMART terms will be:

- SPECIFIC. What is the leaner expected to DO that will show that learning has taken place?
- MEASURABLE. Something that you can SEE or HEAR that might be measured for fluency and accuracy.
- ATTAINABLE. A language behavior that is within the reach of your students.
- RELEVANT. Language use that is appropriate to your learners' motivation, expectations and context.
- TIMELY. Language use that is appropriate to the lesson time frame - i.e. that can be achieved in the time allowed.

The bottom line is, If you don't know where you are going, how will you know if you get there?

Here are some examples of SMART Objectives for language lesson planning.
The student will be able to:
- Speak with a partner on topic as overheard by the teacher.
- Answer/ask questions with teacher or other students in groups.
- Write definitions of vocabulary listed on the board.
- Complete dictation by filling in blanks correctly of completing sentences.
- Match words with meanings in the text.
- Find words of the same meaning in a text.
- Complete a multiple-choice test with 70% or better accuracy.
- Point to correct pictures when given a description.

The key to writing useful student outcomes is the use of action verbs, which we can see or hear in the classroom.

Action Verbs

The student will be able to…

Say	Write	Show
• Speak • Tell • Converse • Describe • Sing • Pronounce	• Spell • Fill in • Draw • Trace • Color • Label	• Act • Role play • Charade • Point • Mime • Gesture

TASK: Can you add verbs to these lists?

Reverse engineering the process

Assessment - how to assess? → Content - What to teach? → Method - How to teach?

The old adage, *if you don't know where you are going, you won't know how to get there,* seems to apply here. In an ideal situation, the learner outcomes would drive the whole process. We would decide what content would best lead us to these outcomes, and then what methods would lead us to the desired results. In reality, this is far from a linear process. Most likely teachers will have lesson content material, textbooks, that answer the "what to teach" questions. The dichotomy between content and method is no where near as clear as might be imagined, and there is no question that any given material might be taught in a variety of ways. The definition of learner outcomes, and how the student is going to be assessed, may be of some assistance in choosing the core input materials. However, the choice of these materials may suggest certain learning methods, approaches or techniques.

Varieties of learning outcomes

It is important to recognize at this point that there are two kinds of learning outcomes to be considered, communicative skills and language skills. Assessment can be based upon both.

Communicative skills would be functions like:

- *Ordering a meal,*
- *Talking about the weekend,*
- *Buying a bus ticket.*
- *Talking about friends*
- *Planning a weekend*
- *Taking a trip*
- *Comparing items*
- *Bargaining in the market*
- *Asking directions*

Language skills would be those skills needed for proficiency as might be tested on exams. Both are valid outcomes, and deserve equal treatment. What language skills might indicate predictable success in meeting the technical requirements in proficiency testing? Some of the language skills that are often defined are:

- Guessing meaning from context
- Predicting lexis to fill in sentence gaps
- Matching words and definitions
- Categorizing lexis in various ways
- Grouping words in different contexts
- Grammar functions like - subject/verb agreement, determiner use,
- Predicting answers from questions
- Phased listening skills - recognition to main idea to details
- Reading skills - paragraph form and functions

Further *language skills* include*:

Writing accurate sentences
- Using prepositions correctly
- Using correct word forms
- Using correct phrasal verb
- Using correct adverb particle with phrasals
- Using correct preposition with adjective/verb
- Using correct article

- Using connecting words for contrast and similarity
- Using transitional expressions to show connections
- Using appropriate word to connect clauses
- Using adjective clauses correctly
- Using gerunds appropriately
- Using infinitives correctly
- Choosing the correct modal

Linking sentences

- Using connecting words for contrast and similarity
- Using transitional expressions to show connections
- Using appropriate word to connect clauses
- Using adjective clauses correctly

Clarity

- Using parallel structures
- Using clear pronoun reference
- Making sure the verb is easy to find

*Topics from AmEnglish Writing in English, online study program

The language skills relate to test taking are both prescriptive and technical in nature. They sound pretty much like the "grammar" driven lessons we know. That does not make them any less valid as functional outcomes for our lesson planning process. It does come across as almost antithetical to the "fun English" promoted by the communicative language approach. It is no surprise that students in many communicative courses fail to perform adequately on standardized proficiency tests. Most good textbooks address language skills, and these activities fall under the "study" category of the "Engage," "Study," "Activate" paradigm.

In Assessment Based Language Education the learning outcomes are placed at the beginning of the lesson planning process, and include both *communicative skills* and technical *language skills*. Good texts do this, usually in the table of contents, but some put them right up front at the beginning of the unit where they should be. We are left to wonder if the authors actually set the outcomes, the communicative skills and language skills, first, or, added these after setting the content and activities? At least they have brought the outcomes to the front, so that the learners will be aware of the reasons for the lesson and how they will be assessed.

A Textbook example of ABLE (QSkills, Oxford University Press)
Consider the following page from a current textbook.

Notice that the "Language Skills" and the "Learning (Communicative) Outcomes" are right up there on the first page of the unit. The opening page also supplies focus questions for pairs and groups to preview the lesson. "Critical thinking" is also mentioned. The next step for the teacher is to determine how they are going to translate these learning outcomes and language skills into classroom activities.

While the lesson content and the main activities are provided by the text, the lesson plan and sequence remain to be adapted by the teacher.

Communicative outcome (communicative skill)

- To use appropriate eye contact, tone of voice and pauses to tell a funny story to your classmates.

Sub routines are not mentioned here but could include:

- Speak in pairs and make notes about the title and the picture
- Provide answers to the Ts questions or write on board
- Follow teacher model of "what makes you laugh" discussion in pairs
- Brainstorm joke ideas and bring to board
- Offer to teacher for the board
- Practice telling a joke with a partner
- Tell jokes to another pair and critique each others voice, eye contacts and pauses
- Present jokes to class in pairs
- Students discuss in pairs "Why the joke is funny?"
- Critique each others presentations

Language skills:

- Listening - listen for specific information
- Vocabulary - synonyms
- Grammar - simple present to informal narrative
- Pronunciation - simple present 3rd person /-s//-es/
- Speaking - using eye contact, pause and tone of voice

Notice that the language skills defined here are limited and somewhat general. That is probably important as we move on to the assessment phase of the lesson activity. More detailed assessment would require written testing, which is an option, but not included in this lesson plan. For the purposes of this elaboration, the student outcome behaviors are sufficient in terms of the classroom activities.

Outcomes to Activities

Activities as determined by outcomes.

1. SS will discuss & write notes about picture in trios
2. T will elicit answers to WB
3. T will model, "What makes you laugh?"
4. SS will discuss in pairs
5. T will elicit joke ideas to WB
6. SS work in pairs to practice telling a joke of their own
7. Pairs critique each other for tone of voice, pauses and eye contact
8. Pairs present jokes to class
9. SS will discuss in pairs, "Why is it funny?"
10. Class gives feedback based on outcome, "Use appropriate eye contact, tone of voice and pauses to tell a funny story to your classmates.

The lesson has:
- Stated the activation outcomes of what the student will be able to do
- Defined the language skills needed
- Determined the teacher actions that lead to student outcomes
- Predicted the learning outcomes
- Posed the key contextual questions
- Suggested previewing discussion questions
- Introduced the critical thinking involved - *What makes something funny?*
- Collected ideas for funny stories
- Provided focused pair practice
- Activated language use through presentations
- Provided students with appropriate feedback
- Defined formative points and summative assessment

Outcomes to activities grid
The communicative skills outcomes determine the activities that will be employed to reach the objective. The activities below are sequenced by the paradigm *engage>>study>>application*. It should be obvious that the "activities" are the direct consequence of the communicative skills and language skills set as outcomes for the

lesson. Note that the "Student Outcomes" column states the formative and summative assessment points for the lesson.

Student Outcomes	Teacher Actions	Class Activities
1. Speak in pairs and make notes about the title and the picture	Models focus Qs for SS activity with TT>TS>SS	SS talk about the picture while the T monitors and coaches
2. Provide answers to the Ts questions or write on board	Elicits answers from pairs for focus Qs	Focus Qs are asked after SS discussion and elicited to board
3. Follow teacher model of "what makes you laugh" discussion in pairs	Models "What makes you laugh?" ideas and makes notes on the board	Comprehensible input on "What makes you laugh?" to focus SSTalk in pairs
4. Discuss what makes things funny with partner	Monitors Stalk and checks on S's notes	SSTalk explores and personalizes ideas on "What makes you laugh?"
5. Provide joke ideas and bring to board	Elicits joke ideas from pairs, or brings them to board	Joke ideas are shared
6. Practice telling a joke with a partner	Monitors SSTalk and coaches note writing	Student pairs practice telling jokes
7. Tell jokes to another pair and critique each others voice, eye contacts and pauses	Organizes bringing pairs together to practice a critique joke telling	Student pairs practice and critique each other for language, tone of voice, pauses and gestures
8. Present jokes to class in pairs	Organizes SS presentations of the jokes to the class	SS present jokes to the class
9. Critique each others presentations	Directs the critique of joke telling presentations and makes notes on the board	Critique of joke telling and shared notes on board
10. Students discuss in pairs "Why the joke is funny?"	Monitors pairs and coaches note taking	Exploration of what makes the jokes finny in terms of language and presentation

While this may seem repetitive, the point is to define the perspective of the students, the teacher and the overall picture in terms of what is to be done. Note that the first column defines formative assessment, and our summative assessment are the final outcomes #8 - #10 based on the teachers criteria for, "to use appropriate eye contact, tone of voice and pauses to tell a funny story to your classmates."

The ABLE Cycle

Student outcomes are what the learner will be able to do during the lesson process and at the end of the lesson.
Teacher actions are what the teacher will do to initiate and influence the student outcomes.
Activities are what will happen in sequence during the lesson
Assessment can be made by both the teacher and the students in terms of whether the learners were able to do what was prescribed during the lesson sequence (formative) and at the end of the lesson (summative)

```
        Student
        outcomes

Assessment          Teacher
                    actions

        Activities
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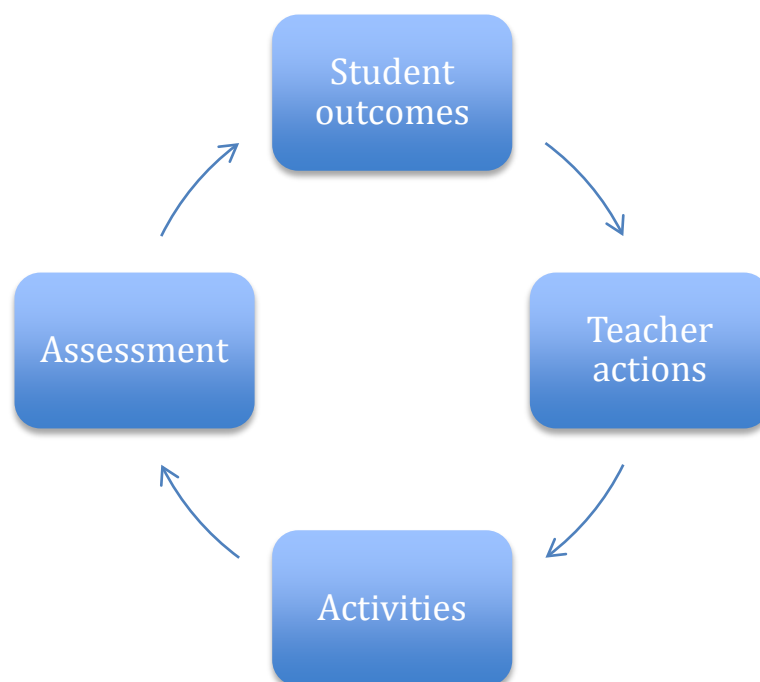
Assessment Based Language Education builds the assessment points into the lesson sequence from the beginning.

ABLE Applied to a Homemade Lesson

Going Places

A: Where are you going?
B: I'm going to <u>the mall</u>.

A: How are you going to get there?
B: I'm going to <u>ride my bicycle</u>.
A: What are you going to do?
B: I'm looking for <u>T-shirts</u>.

Communication outcomes

- To talk about "going places" using where, how and what questions and giving a variety of contextually appropriate responses
    - Use the target language correctly in TS, ST and SS activities
    - Expand vocabulary for use with the language structure
    - Ask & answer SS questions in a freestyle walkabout
    - Complete grid and partial dictation exercises
    - Answer focus questions on reading text
    - Write their own "Going Place" dialogues
    - Perform skits

Language Skills

- Use WHQs WHERE, HOW & WHAT appropriately in Qs & As

- Use the GOING TO construction
- Insert appropriate vocabulary into the dialogue
- Speaking - use the target language in SS interactions
- Listening - fill in grid and partial dictation blanks in pairs
- Reading - discuss and answer focus questions
- Writing - write personally relevant dialogues

Activities as determined by outcomes

1. Model lesson context and language appropriate to students
2. Practice dialogue TT>TS>ST>SS>SSSS
3. Expand vocabulary through SS walkabout with flashcards
4. Provide listening activity with a grid for WHERE, HOW & WHAT...DO
5. Present partial dictation to be completed in pairs
6. Discuss focus questions, followed by reading and answering Qs
7. Students work in pairs/groups to prepare dialogues
8. Skits are mimed and practiced with scripts
9. Skits are presented to groups or class without scripts, but with prompters
10. Skits are peer rated for accuracy and naturalness

Outcomes to activities grid

Student outcomes	Teacher Actions	Activities
1. Engage in the context and lexical modeling provided by the teacher	Model context, dialogue and lexical items	Setting context and modeling the lexis and dialogue
2. Practice the dialogue TS>ST>SS and SS	Models and then TS>ST>>SS>>SSSS speaking practice	TS>ST>SS>SSSS controlled speaking practice
3. Participate in modeling vocabulary items	Models vocabulary expansion items	Vocabulary expansion modeling
4. Practice the dialogue in TS>ST>SS interactions in walkabout	ST>TS>SS handoff with flashcards to practice SS	SS walkabout to practice alternative vocabulary
5. Follow T modeling to complete a grid from audio input	Models grid on board and then provides audio for listening input	Grid listening activity
6. Read and complete blanks in a partial dictation with audio input	Models partial dictation and then provides audio for dictation listening	Partial dictation
7. Discuss focus Qs and then complete after reading activity	Sets context and models KWICs directs SS to discuss the focus Qs	Focused reading

8. Write dialogue with partner	Models writing activity and monitors S writing	Dialogue writing
9. Mime and script read dialogues in practice with other pairs	Models miming the dialogue and directs SS to practice scripting reading UP/DOWN	Mime and script reading practice
10. Present skits to class w.o. scripts but with prompters	Organizes SS presentations of skits with prompters	Dialogue presentations
11. Presentations are critiqued and rated by peers and teacher for accuracy and naturalness	Rates dialogues and skits according to set criteria	Summary assessment

Sample of vocabulary expansion cards

Clues:
- ❑ Where are you going?
- ❑ How are you going to get there?
- ❑ What are you going to
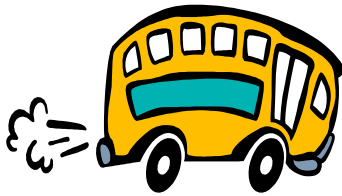
Bangkok
Shopping

Market
Buy fruit

the mall
go to movies

the beach
go swimming

Lesson Models and ABLE

The definition of the student outcomes up front has the advantage of helping the teacher determine the activities needed to reach the learner outcomes desired. I noticed this as I put together this piece since at one point I had planned that the students would do something, which I had not, prepared them for. I planned a grid listening, but had not modeled this activity. It becomes pretty obvious if you are working from the outcomes to the activities.

Review of the ABLE Process

THE BASICS OF ABLE

o What can student DO now?
o What do we want them to be able to DO?
o What's missing? What needs to be taught?

TASK: Discuss using the sample text as a guide.

1. What can the students DO now?
o Can the students:
   o Show or say how they understand the context?
   o State the main idea?
   o Give details?
   o Provide supporting evidence?
   o Add personal examples?
   o Expand upon the article with their own ideas?

STEP #1: ASSESSMENT

- Defining the results – what do we want students to be able to DO
- Writing performance objectives
  - Evidence that you can "see" or "hear"
  - Products defined by the following criteria:
    - What will they do?
    - How will they do it?
    - With whom?
    - In what context? (affective competence)
    - To what degree of accuracy?

  TASK: Write objectives for a reading lesson with the sample text – for example, "The students will be able to show understanding of the context by acting."

STEP #2: CONTENT

Criteria for lesson content: (a reading) If the students are going to meet our assessment criteria the lesson content must be:

1. Appropriate
2. Relevant
3. Engaging
4. Useful

TASK:

1. What level would this be appropriate for?
2. Explain why in terms of the above.
3. Elicit to BB

STEP #3: THE TEACHING

○ Working directly from the assessment objectives you have defined…If the students are going to be able to do this, I will have to get them to…

TASK: Write lesson steps for teaching this text based on the objectives:

Assessment

The outcomes lead us to the assessment stage, but do define what assessment will take place. Looking at what we have already covered:
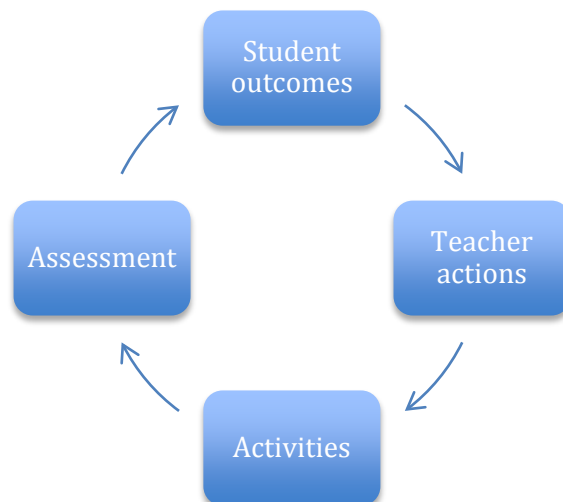
We have covered student outcomes, teacher actions and activities. The final step in the process is the assessment according to the student outcomes. Lets look at how this might happen.

Student outcomes	Teacher Actions	Activities	Assessment technique
1. Engage in the context and lexical modeling provided by the teacher	Model context, dialogue and lexical items	Setting context and modeling the lexis and dialogue	Observation of SS's attention during the input and CCQs
2. Practice the dialogue TS>ST>SS and SS	Models and then TS>ST>>SS>>SS SS speaking practice	TS>ST>SS>SSS S controlled speaking practice	Observation of SS activity and TS & ST accuracy
3. Participate in modeling vocabulary items	Models vocabulary expansion items	Vocabulary expansion modeling	Observation of SS's attention
4. Practice the dialogue in TS>ST>SS interactions in walkabout	ST>TS>SS handoff with flashcards to practice SS	SS walkabout to practice alternative vocabulary	Observation of SS activity and TS & ST accuracy
5. Follow T modeling to complete a grid from audio input	Models grid on board and then provides audio for listening input	Grid listening activity	Written responses
6. Read and complete blanks in a partial dictation with audio input	Models partial dictation and then provides audio for dictation listening	Partial dictation	Written responses
7. Discuss focus Qs and then complete after reading activity	Sets context and models KWICs directs SS to discuss the reading focus Qs	Focused reading	Observation of SS engagement in discussion
8. Write dialogue with partner	Models writing activity and monitors S writing	Dialogue writing	Observation of SS activity and written dialog
9. Mime and script read dialogues in practice with other pairs	Models miming the dialogue and directs SS to practice scripting reading UP/DOWN	Mime and script reading practice	Observation of SS practice activity
10. Present skits to class w.o. scripts but with prompters	Organizes SS presentations of skits with prompters	Dialogue presentations	Observation of mime and skits

11. Presentations are critiqued and rated by peers and teacher for accuracy and naturalness	Rates dialogues and skits according to set criteria	Summary assessment	Rating criteria used by both teacher and students

Teacher observation is the predominant technique for formative assessment. It is essential that teachers have a checklist of names and performance criteria to make notes. The "summary assessment" criteria used by both students and teacher must be simple and clear to the students for rating their peers. It might look something like the following.

Description			Significance	
Rating system for classroom speaking and writing activities based upon teacher observations and student peer assessment			Anchoring assessment criteria for consistency and accuracy.	
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
30-40+% correct. Barely understandable but shows some use of target language	50-60+% correct. Significant error and pauses, but mostly understandable	70+% correct. Communication is clear, but still interference from error in grammar and pronunciation	80+% correct. No serious errors, and understanding is clear with appropriate pronunciation	90+% correct. Error unnoticeable, and doesn't detract from comprehension.
Negative			Positive	
Pauses and errors in spoken communication, which might interfere with understanding.			Details and elaborations showing understanding and personal engagement	

This criteria rubric might be further refined with students and use. It would be a reference for a student checklist as below.

Names	1	2	3	4	5

Teachers might expect to see ratings in the 2-3 range in early activities, and perhaps 3-4 range after more practice. If early practice gave ratings in the 3-5 ranges then there is a question if the target language is sufficiently challenging. Ratings in the 1-2

range after some practice would suggest that the content material was beyond the appropriate level for the students.

Getting performance data

The teacher walking around with a clip board or tablet is an obvious data collection technique, but the teacher should be aware of their influence upon the data. It is mostly a question of what the students are accustomed to. If the teacher usually has a checklist in hand, then the influence will be relatively less than if it is used only on occasion.

Presentations, skits and poster work provide good opportunities to collect formative assessment data. Paired interviews with minimal resources are also useful, especially for summative evaluation at the end of a course. In paired interview, a picture can be used to cue the conversation, and pairs get to choose between 3-4 pictures. These interviews can be done in about 5-7 minutes per pair.

Conclusion

Setting objectives for lessons is nothing new. It is not really that new to set these "objectives" in terms of student outcomes. What is new is letting the student outcomes "drive" the process. In other words, "assessment based language education." This means the outcomes determine the activities used to achieve the outcomes as described above, and are the basis for assessment of student's progress and final achievement.