

Assessment from an Instructional Design and Learning Science Perspective

The field of Classics provides a unique context for studying language proficiency, historical reasoning, and broader 21st century literacies. Our field demands interdisciplinary strategies and new learning models. In this presentation I will discuss several trends within assessment research and design that align well our goals as student-centered teachers and professionals within the Classics field.

Instructional and curricular design begins and ends with defining outcomes and designing assessments. In the Backwards Course Design model, assessments are first thing that is designed before any readings, content or assignments/activities are planned. If we were to examine our assessments (both formative and summative) do they in fact reflect the domain knowledge, inquiry methods, and meta-cognitive strategies that are authentic to field? Perhaps we need to define what are they are in the first place. Once we have identified what these mean in terms of our particular course or program, the larger question is, how do we design better assessments? We can do this by attempting to answer these questions:

- What theories, models and tools can we use to effective assessments?
- How can we manage these assessments (structure, scaffolding, teacher workflow, bringing to scale) and provide better feedback to our learners.
- How can we use student information (data analytics, student reflections, learning artifacts etc.) to drive our teaching practice?

I offer a several design considerations and suggestions for each of the above facets drawing from the research literature within the learning sciences and instructional design. After describing the basic method, tool or principle, I will give a brief description of how it could translate to Classics lesson context.

Broadly defined effective assessments for research should be sound, sensitive and systematic (McAfee, Leong & Bodrova 2004) Sound assessments should align to field/ domain standards and course objectives. They should also be ecologically sound, i.e. align to realistic limitations of your learners, environment and tools. Sensitive assessments are suited to the developmental characteristics of our learners. Systematic assessment is consistently administered according to a clear protocol. This ensures that the data you collect (either from course-to course, semester-to-semester, or across an entire program will yield data that clearly interpretable.

Other models that I will explore include; the Backwards Course Design Model, Dynamic Assessment Method (Poehner & Lantolf, 2005), often used in early childhood language and literacy education, as well as various and methods for assessing historical and multi-modal literacies (Reich, 2009; Puurtinen, Nivala, & Virta, 2003; Wineburg, 1997).

Next, I will explore some non-traditional forms of assessment such as learner created artifacts, group or peer lead inquiry/knowledge building, and learner reflections. Lastly, I will discuss how we can leverage digital tools such as dictionaries or Google maps, implement or borrow design principles and activities from games and apps such as Duolingo and Myhistro, and use and collect data student data analytics to help us understand and evaluate what real learning is happening in our classes.

Bibliography

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