

ACTFL Research SIG Paper Presentations: Focus on Practice

DIG Into Data: Enhancing Language Curriculum with Diagnostic Insights



ACTFL 2025, New Orleans

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Storytime



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Allergy Test



You can't solve a problem that
hasn't been diagnosed

BYU's Language Environment



- 60% students speak a 2nd language
- Majority learn language in 18-24 month missionary service
- Largest classes are the 300 level, post-mission class
- BYU teaches 84 languages
- Spanish largest language department (approx. 1,000 students every fall and winter semester)

What is the LASER (Language Ability Self-Evaluation Resource)?

- Self-assessment diagnostic tool designed to help students evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their language proficiency
- As students improve in their ability to self-assess, they will improve in their ability to grow and develop their language proficiency.
- Self-assessment followed by OPIc Testing allows for language calibration
- OPIc diagnostic grids provide guidance on what to work on



laser.byu.edu

Advanced Grid

ADVANCED FUNCTIONS

If does not fully meet criteria for Advanced Level, what features does speaker need to improve?

Can narrate and describe in all time frames.

Speaker needs to improve:

- ☐ Description in present time
- ☐ Description in past time
- ☐ Description in future time
- ☐ Narration in present time
- ☐ Narration in past time
- ☐ Narration in future time

Speaker's narrations show problems in:

- ☐ Logical sequencing
- ☐ Verb forms
- ☐ Person markers

Speaker's descriptions lack:

- ☐ Clarity
- ☐ Detail

Can consistently produce connected discourse of paragraph length.

Speaker produces mainly:

- ☐ Words and phrases
- ☐ Sentences
- ☐ Strings of sentences
- ☐ Connected sentences
- ☐ Skeletal paragraphs

Speaker exhibits problems with the word order of:

- ☐ Phrases
- ☐ Sentences
- ☐ Paragraphs

Speaker's use of cohesive devices:

- ☐ Not used
- ☐ Used inaccurately
- ☐ Repetitive

Can speak about a variety of topics, including current events.

Speaker needs to expand and improve vocabulary:

- ☐ Lacks breadth of vocabulary
- ☐ Uses words from other languages
- ☐ Uses false cognates

Can deal effectively with an unanticipated complication.

When confronted with unanticipated complication, the speaker:

- ☐ Struggles, but succeeds in addressing the situation
- ☐ Attempts to address, but is unable to successfully resolve the situation
- ☐ Demonstrates no linguistic ability to address the situations

Speaker should improve:

- ☐ Knowledge and use of communicative devices

Can be readily understood by speakers not accustomed to non-native speakers of the target language.

Speaker needs to improve...

Fluency:

- ☐ Rate of speech
- ☐ Fluidity (halting)
- ☐ Connectedness

Grammar:

- ☐ Morphology
- ☐ Syntax
- ☐ Cases
- ☐ Prepositions
- ☐ Agreement

Pragmatic competence:

- ☐ Lacks strategies to compensate for weaknesses

Pronunciation:

- ☐ Articulation
- ☐ Pitch
- ☐ Stress
- ☐ Intonation

Intermediate
High and
Advanced
Low Ratings

Superior Grid

SUPERIOR FUNCTIONS

If does not fully meet criteria for Superior Level, what features does speaker need to improve?

Can state and support opinions on a variety of topics.

Speaker needs to:

- ☐ Present point of view clearly
- ☐ Present well organized supporting arguments
- ☐ Elaborate on arguments
- ☐ Handle the topic at the issue level (to speak outside the self)

Can speculate and present hypotheses.

Speaker needs to:

- ☐ Speculate and present hypotheses
- ☐ Use grammatical constructs that signal hypothetical discourse
- ☐ Elaborate in the hypothetical mode

Can participate in and develop a discussion on topics of personal and current interest in extended discourse.

Speaker needs to:

- ☐ Broaden range and precision of vocabulary
- ☐ Correctly formulate high frequency compound/complex structures
- ☐ Employ a variety of cohesive devices and discourse strategies
- ☐ Increase discourse from a paragraph to extended treatment of the topic

Can deal with linguistically unfamiliar topics or situations.

Speaker needs to:

- ☐ Broaden range and depth of precise vocabulary
- ☐ Reduce L1 or L2 interference
- ☐ Develop discourse strategies

Can speak the language without patterns of error that disturb or distract the native listener.

Speaker needs to improve fluency:

- ☐ Rate
- ☐ Fluidity
- ☐ Connectedness of expression

Eliminate patterned errors in grammar:

- ☐ Agreement
- ☐ Verb formulations
- ☐ Case
- ☐ Prepositions and Prepositional phrases

Eliminate patterned errors in syntax:

- ☐ Word order (Complex/Compound Sentence)

☐ Dependent and Subordinate clauses

Improve pragmatic competence:

- ☐ Increase range of sophisticated discourse strategies to compensate for weaknesses or shortcomings

Improve pronunciation:

- ☐ Articulation
- ☐ Pitch
- ☐ Stress features
- ☐ Intonation

Broaden the range of active, retrievable vocabulary:

- ☐ Size of vocabulary
- ☐ Range of topic areas
- ☐ Precision of vocabulary

Improve sociolinguistic competence:

- ☐ appropriate forms for formal and informal situations

Advanced
Mid and
Advanced
High Ratings

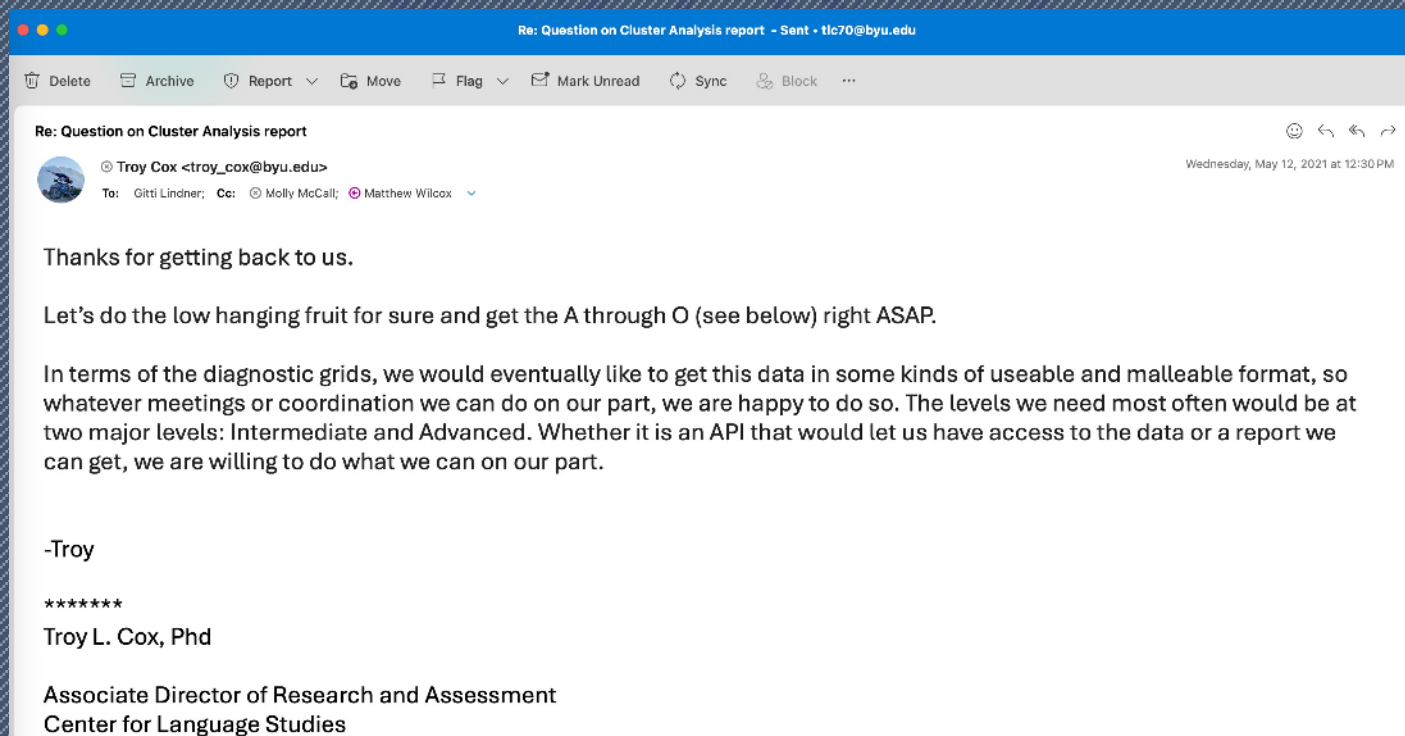
Recommended Calibration Instructions for Instructors

- LASER Completion & Reflection
- OPIC Completion & Reflection
- Lifelong Language Learning Plan from LASER & **OPIC Diagnostic Grids**

Difficulties with Diagnostic Grid for Programmatic Use

- Too many variables (up to 26) for it to be easily reportable
- We had to manually download each student's grid as a PDF
- We had to manually enter the grid into a spreadsheet
 - (Let's be honest-I made my students do this 😊)
- Subject to data entry errors
- Too Expensive (Time and Money) to do programmatically

May 12, 2021



Advanced Diagnostic Grid Grouped by FACTs

Advanced Diagnostic Grid Key

Function: Description	Function: Narration	Function: Situation With a Complication	Accuracy: Grammar	Accuracy: Pronunciation	Accuracy: Other	Content (Not recorded on grids)	Text Type: Word Order	Text Type: Cohesive Devices	Text Type
Description in present time	Narration in present time	Struggles, but succeeds in addressing the situation	Morphology	Articulation	Rate of speech	Lacks breadth of vocabulary	Phrases	Not used	Words and phrases
Description in past time	Narration in past time	Attempts to address, but is unable to successfully resolve the situation	Syntax	Pitch	Fluidity	Uses words from other languages	Sentences	Used inaccurately	Sentences
Description in future tense	Narration in future time	Demonstrates no linguistic ability to address the situation	Cases	Stress	Connectedness	Uses false cognates	Paragraphs	Repetitive	Strings of sentences
Clarity	Logical sequencing	Knowledge and use of communicative devices	Prepositions	Intonation	Lacks strategies to compensate for weaknesses				Connected sentences
Detail	Verb forms		Agreement						Skeletal paragraphs
	Person markers								

Superior Diagnostic Grid Grouped by FACTs

Superior Diagnostic Grid Key

Function: Support an Opinion	Function: Speculate and Present Hypothesis	Function: Discussion in Extended Discourse	Function: Linguistically Unfamiliar Topics or Situations	Accuracy: Grammar	Accuracy: Other	Content: Sociolinguistic Competency	Content: Pronunciation	Text Type (Not present on Grid)
Present point of view clearly	Speculate and present hypotheses	Broaden range and precision of vocabulary	Broaden range and depth of precise vocabulary	Agreement	Rate	Size of vocabulary	Articulation	
Present well organized supporting arguments	Use grammatical constructs that signal hypothetical discourse	Correctly formulate high frequency compound/ complex structures	Reduce L1 or L2 interference	Verb formulations	Fluidity	Range of topic areas	Pitch	
Elaborate on arguments	Elaborate in the hypothetical mode	Employ a variety of cohesive devices and discourse strategies	Develop discourse strategies	Case	Connectedness of expression	Precision of vocabulary	Stress features	
Handle the topic at the issue level (to speak outside the self)		Increase discourse from a paragraph to extended treatment of the topic		Prepositions and Prepositional phrases	Increase range of sophisticated discourse strategies to compensate for weaknesses or shortcomings	Appropriate forms for formal and informal situations	Intonation	
				Word order (Complex/ Compound Sentence)				

August 2024 Launch Date

The screenshot displays the 'BYU' web application interface. The top navigation bar is dark blue with the 'BYU' logo on the left and search, notification, and user profile icons on the right. A left sidebar contains a user profile for 'troy CLS' and a list of navigation items: 'Dashboard', 'Database', 'Awaiting Approval', 'Language Certificates', 'Qualtrics Reports', 'LASER Database', and 'Diagnostic Grids' (which is highlighted). Below the sidebar, there is a section titled 'Need More Features?' with an 'Admin Backend' button. The main content area features a 'Diagnostic Grids' panel. This panel includes a 'Test Type' dropdown menu set to 'OPlc', a 'Language' dropdown menu, and a 'Date Range' section with two date input fields containing '04/03/2024' and '04/03/2025'. To the right of the 'Diagnostic Grids' panel is an 'Additional Resources' button with a hamburger menu icon. At the bottom of the panel are two buttons: 'Upload CSV' and 'Generate Reports'.

How to disseminate the information...

- Series of Seminars
 - Introduction: The Reality of the Multilevel Classroom
 - Moving students from IH to AL
 - Moving students from AL to AM
 - Moving students from AM to AH
 - Moving students from AH to S

The Reality of the Multilevel and Diverse (Linguistic Profiles) Classroom

OPIc Diagnostic Grid Activity

Each person has an OPIc diagnostic grid from a different examinee from a test that was administered within the last year.

Part 1 (12 minutes)

Imagine the student has come to visit with you during your office hours and wants advice on what they can do improve.

What advice would you give them?

- Review the grid and jot notes. (3 minutes—Think)
 - What do you like about the grid?
 - What do you find confusing or obtuse?
- Get with a partner and together share what you noticed from your grid (5 minutes—Pair)
 - What level was the interview?
 - What were the strengths?
 - Weaknesses?
- Large group discussion (5 minutes—Share)

Part 2 (8 minutes)

The grids that were distributed to the LARC participants are in the same ratio that would exist in a hypothetical post mission class.

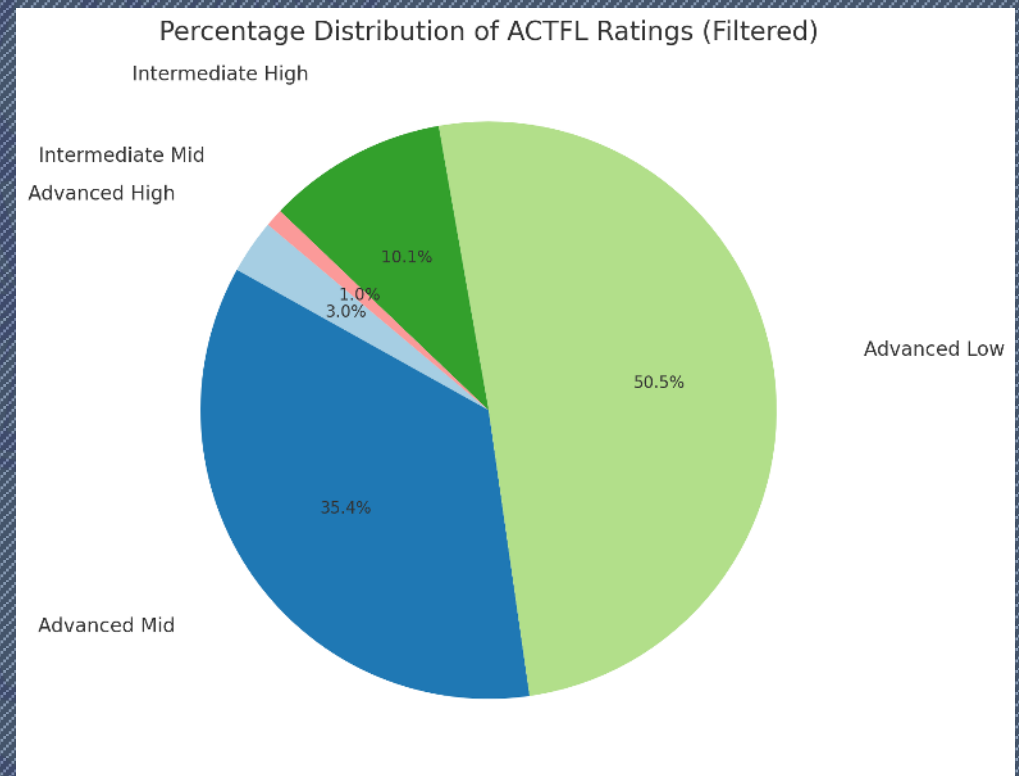
- Stand up and get in a circle based on the order of lowest rating to highest rating (2 minutes)
 - The lower ratings will be on the long wall side of the room with the lowest rating at the front.
 - The higher ratings will be on the window side of the room with the highest close to the carved chair.
- Get in groups of 3 or 4 people that have the same rating as you have (AL, AM, etc.) (6 minutes)
 - Compare your grids.
 - How similar are the strengths and weaknesses?
 - How might you structure assignments so that your students can progress to the next level?
- Return to your seats

Based on the data of all the languages combined, a class of 25 students will have

- 1 student at Advanced High
- 9 students at Advanced Mid
- 12 students at Advanced Low
- 3 students at Intermediate High

Within each of these levels, there are up to 26 different areas students would need to improve on to reach the next level.

- To what extent are your classes structured to allow all students to progress to the next level of proficiency?

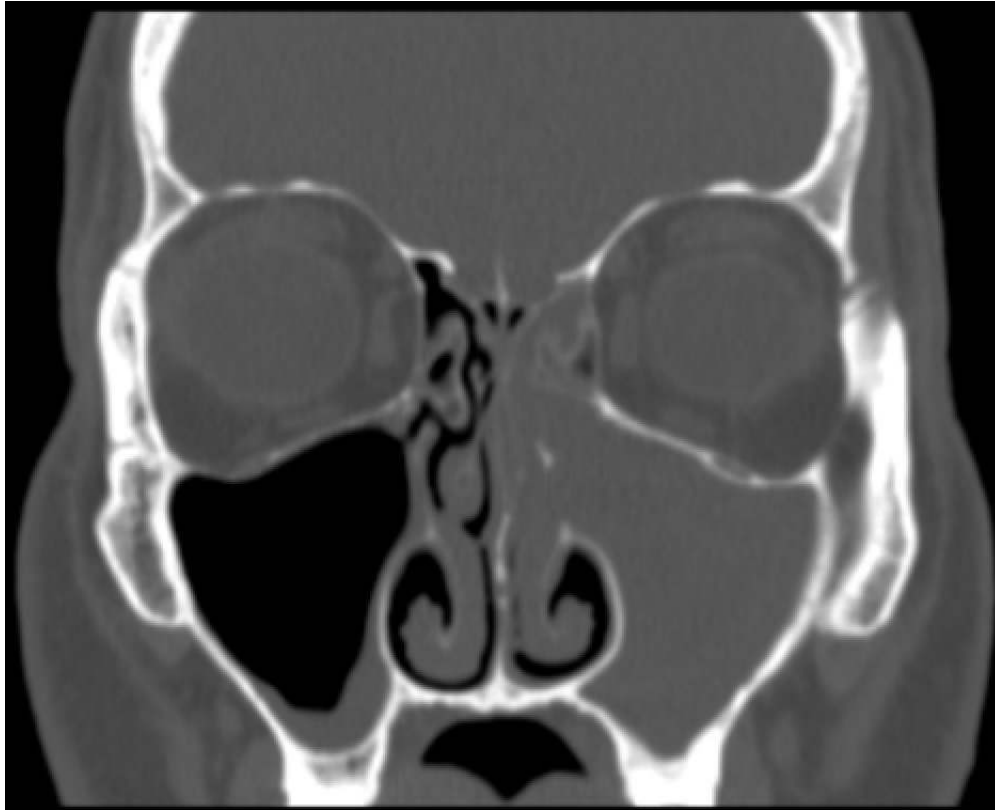


Benefits of Meeting as a Group

- Compare classes and instruction across departments
- Evaluate similarities and differences across languages
- Gain ideas from other instructors
- Brainstorm how to teach a truly multilevel class

Example of Handout

	2240	1349	145	85	1	12	100	48	186
	All_Langu	Spanish	German	Russian	Korean	Japanese	Portugues	Italian	French
Function: Sitw/Complication Struggles, but succeeds in addressing the situation	91%	91%	98%	97%	100%	100%	78%	88%	89%
Function: Description Description in pasttime	90%	94%	84%	52%	0%	17%	96%	54%	81%
Function: Narration Narration in pasttime	80%	81%	88%	98%	-	75%	70%	88%	89%
Accuracy: Grammar Agreement	80%	73%	55%	61%	-	-	92%	46%	77%
Function: Description Detail	76%	74%	90%	71%	100%	92%	90%	69%	60%
Accuracy: Grammar Prepositions	73%	74%	77%	51%	-	-	95%	33%	44%
Function: Description Clarity	63%	65%	64%	65%	100%	92%	74%	33%	59%
Accuracy: Other Lacks strategies to compensate for weaknesses	63%	67%	64%	25%	-	100%	80%	8%	46%
Text Type Skeletal paragraphs	58%	62%	98%	84%	100%	92%	23%	48%	83%
Function: Sitw/Complication Knowledge and use of communicative devices	56%	57%	68%	15%	0%	0%	84%	8%	46%
Text Type: Cohesive Devices Repetitive	54%	45%	90%	34%	-	58%	92%	23%	17%
Function: Narration Verb forms	49%	52%	56%	33%	-	0%	31%	19%	77%
Accuracy: Other Fluidity	49%	48%	59%	47%	-	0%	41%	52%	70%
Accuracy: Other Connectedness	42%	37%	91%	59%	-	0%	20%	60%	65%
Accuracy: Grammar Syntax	32%	25%	85%	49%	-	-	23%	38%	41%
Accuracy: Other Rate of speech	30%	32%	30%	32%	-	0%	27%	35%	48%
Accuracy: Grammar Cases	29%	31%	91%	66%	-	-	10%	2%	7%
Function: Narration Logical sequencing	26%	25%	67%	12%	-	8%	11%	29%	47%
Function: Description Description in future tense	24%	17%	81%	34%	0%	17%	15%	10%	48%



Diagnostic information is only helpful for those that have been trained.

Trained BYU Faculty (Full-time & Adjunct)

Spanish	19	Armenian	1	Mongolian	1
ESL	14	Cantonese	1	Navajo	1
ASL	12	Croatian (Serbian)	1	Norwegian	1
French	12	Fijian	1	Persian	1
Portuguese	9	Finnish	1	Romanian	1
German	5	French/Creole	1	S'gaw Karen	1
Russian	4	Georgian	1	Serbian (Croatian)	1
Arabic	3	Japanese	1	Swahili	1
Korean	3	Kekchi	1	Tagalog	1
Chinese	2	Malagasy	1	Thai	1
Dutch	2				
Italian	2				
K'iche	2				

More students are taught in more languages by proficiency-trained instructors at BYU than at any other university in the world.

Over 180 faculty, graduate students and affiliates have taken the time to train in proficiency by attending ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview workshops.

These attendees teach 40 different languages—including all ten language majors as well as several indigenous languages—impacting thousands of students.



Conclusion

See the Classroom Clearly

- Diagnostic grids reveal nuanced proficiency profiles.
- Most students fall into Advanced Low or Mid—with varied needs.

Teach to the Level—Then Beyond

- Teachers need to language proficiency training
- Curriculum should support progression in different levels (IH → AL → AM → AH)
- Target functions, accuracy, cohesion, and discourse.

From Frustration to Framework

- Grids are complex—but categorizable and visualizable.
- A roadmap for learners and programs alike.

Access Resources Here

