



***"I can't come to the words":
Assessment Guiding
Flexible Course Design***

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Presentation Outline



Washback Revisited



The JTAC Predicament Revisited



The OPI+ Revisited



OPI+ for JTACs: Lessons Learned



The OPI+ Guiding Flexible Course Design



Washback & JTAC Revisited

Washback

- Co-dependent relationship between teaching and testing, each should inform the other.
- Effective use of positive washback helps minimize construct under-representation and construct-irrelevant difficulty (Messick, 1996).

The JTAC predicament

- NATO SLP requirement for non-native speaker JTACs is 3332 iaw STANAG 6001.
- Disconnect between assumed ability to function in a language for specific purposes (LSP) environment based on performance on a general language proficiency (GLP) test.



The OPI+ for Norwegian JTACs

The OPI+ revisited

- The OPI+ integrates professional content domains in the standard OPI, demonstrating how linguistic functions in GLP level descriptors can reliably be elicited within the frame of specific-purpose target language use (TLU).

The present study

- Small-scale study
- Explore OPI+ format
 - improved results?
 - face validity?
- Hybrid test developed



Example of JTAC OPI+ L2 elicitation – picture description



Test taker no. 5

- 22 years old, OR-2
- 3 years of service
- not yet deployed
- high school diploma
- 1st language Norwegian

Yes. Yeah, I think I've seen that room before – I see two guys in military uniform – they both are – eh – wearing – eh – headphones, they're looking on some kind of wide screen, with mountains and blue heaven. Eh... yeah, there is a road going – eh – or maybe a river – or a roads, and on the top of the hill, there is – or not on the top, but like in the middle of picture - is some black smoke, I think, coming up towards the sky. Eh... Yeah, we have summits and mountains – eh – eh – yeah, there is trees - some trees, I'm not sure what we have – like the big part in the middle, if there is just a field or if it's maybe water – eh – yeah, and the two guys on the picture, they are sitting on – on their knees, eh, both are looking on the screen, there is at least two –eh – iPads or something – eh – right down there the – the big widescreen. Eh... yeah.



Example of JTAC OPI+ L3 elicitation – abstract matter (mil)



General
proficiency



Military English



Hitherto
unknown
potential
released?

— *What consequences might new appearance regulations such as these have for the military's image?*

That both [*genders*] are allowed to wear make-up? Eh – I think if – eh – I don't know if it has something to say, but – eh – yeah, I don't want my guys, in my unit, to wear make-up, because it would look weird, and I think if you are in the... Yeah, maybe it sounds weird, but I think it looks weird if mens in uniform would wear make-up and – and you should look – I don't think maybe you would make an - so professional, I guess, but – eh – yeah, that could be sad also, because people are different, and at the same time, if a man wants to wear make-up – eh – he should be allowed, but... I can – I think in the military, in a soldier, maybe you should – if I met a guy with make-up, eh, during a fight out there, I would probably choose him in front of – eh – the guy without make-up, and – just because of – maybe he looks tougher, the guy without... I don't know.



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Assessment test taker no. 5, iaw STANAG 6001 (holistic)

Candidate *can*

- narrate and describe
- give directions and instructions
- use basic grammatical structures
- combine and link paragraphs

However...

- L2 approach to L3 tasks
- topics never lifted to abstract level
- (fairly) limited lexical range
- perceived fluency better at L2

Demonstrated limited comprehension at L3,
but lacked the linguistic resources to formulate
appropriate responses at that level





The JTAC OPI+ Lessons Learned



L2 tasks worked well - and were seemingly closer to JTAC TLU



Participatory listening – very relevant for JTAC TLU. Should be further explored by testers and raters.



L3 military context tasks generally elicited more language from L2 candidates, and made L3 candidates talk faster (WPM/SPM).



Test takers did not speak at a higher level when test content had a military flavour.



When the linguistic functions tested are the same, context does not seem to significantly matter.



Nevertheless – and with a view to face validity...



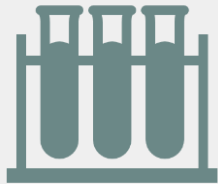
JTAC OPI+ *Face validity*

The majority of JTAC test takers **agreed**

- Speaking about military contexts
 - was easier (66%)
 - was more interesting (55%)
 - made them feel more relaxed (90%)
 - Good mix of topics in test (100%)
 - The full range of their English speaking ability had been tested (66%)
- *
- But: split on the question of the relevance of test content and tasks to their work.



I can't come to the words – where to go from here?



In our JTAC sample, one in four test takers was rated L3 (N=28).



JTACs need English language training to reach STANAG L3 in speaking.



How might OPI+ testing guide course design?



Flexible Course Design

Gap Analysis

- Identify whether there is a learning or performance gap by comparing current and desired states
- Are current capabilities aligned with mission requirements?
- If there is a gap, specifying the nature of the gap to understand how to best close the gap or align the current and desired states
- Determine potential solution(s)
- If training is best solution to close the gap, a training needs assessment is required to support training development.

Specified Training Need

- Increase alignment of curriculum to capability requirements
- Curriculum should focus on developing required capabilities
- Minimize negative impacts of “teaching to the test” by aligning *curriculum* with the required capabilities



Flexible Course Design

Specified Assessment Need

- Increase alignment of metric to capability requirements
- Test should measure examinees' ability to conduct individual tasks related to enduring capabilities
- Minimize negative impacts of “teaching to the test” by purposely aligning assessment with the required capabilities (i.e., create positive washback)

Operational Gap

- A gap exists between how an Operator **needs** to use language and how an Operator's language ability is **trained**.
- A gap exists between how an Operator **needs** to use language and how an Operator's language ability is **assessed**.
- Need a curriculum and aligned assessment which answer the question: Are SOF operators **ready** to use the target language to accomplish their unique missions effectively?

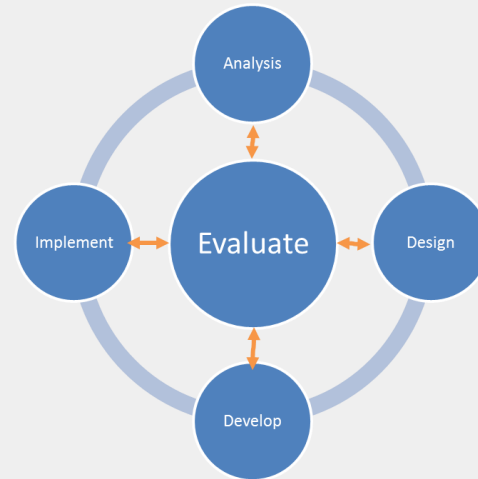


Flexible Course Design

Modular Course Design

- Curricular Design Focus
 - Grammatical
 - Notional
 - Thematic
- Instructional Approach
 - Communicative
 - Task-Based

ADDIE Model



Flexible Course Design Informed by OPI+

JTAC Example

- Operational Gap
- Can Do's
- Compensation Strategies
- Non-Compensatory Elements
- Fill in the Gaps

Plan of Instruction (POI)

- Narrow Scope of POI
 - Linguistic Functions
 - Content/Context Domains
- Balanced Levels of Input/Output
 - Instruction
 - Performance/Assessment



Reading list

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