Learner Activity

Evaluate an Activity for Interaction

This tool is designed to help you assess interaction for a single online activity so that you can clarify your intentions for that activity, and your intentions for a collection of activities across a module, course, and program. The answers you provide in this assessment will be neither right nor wrong on their own – the end goal should be a robust offering of interaction that is comfortable and useful for language learners.

The purpose of this survey is to assess interaction associated with an activity as a result of technology choices. As a reminder, all online activities for language learners should:

- include clear instructions

- connect to learning objectives and outcomes

- allow enough time for learners to participate fully while using their target language

Once you have completed designing your online learning activity, complete the assessment survey at the end of this document. Use the answers to help you to refine your activity design, plan further

activities, and make more suitable technology choices. These questions can also help you to shift your mindset to consider interaction in a digital environment as it differs from face-to-face classrooms.

> **"Use this tool to help you refine your activity design, plan further activities, and make more suitable technology choices."**

Starting on the next page is an explanation of each question and why it is important in an online language learning context. The survey follows at the end of this document.

Explanation of Questions

1. WHICH LANGUAGE SKILLS ARE USED IN THIS ACTIVITY?

Depending on the goals of your activity or course, this answer will help you find a balance in the target language skills that your planned activities are supporting. Ensure, as you would in a face-to-face classroom, that the language requirements of the activity are properly scaffolded. Learners will also need multiple opportunities for practicing throughout the activity.

2. IS THE ACTIVITY SYNCHRONOUS OR ASYNCHRONOUS?

Generally, due to the overwhelmingly asynchronous nature of online learning, online language learners will crave more synchronous activities to develop their speaking and listening skills. This question can raise your awareness of the amount of synchronous activity that you have planned for your learners.

3. ARE YOUR LEARNERS FAMILIAR WITH THE TECHNOLOGY USED IN THIS ACTIVITY, OR IS IT NEW TO THEM?

If you are planning to introduce new technology throughout the course, asking this question can serve as a reminder to allot time for orientation and training for the unfamiliar technology. You should also consider if you are providing enough diversity and variety in the media you are selecting, and if your technology choices are consistent. For example, if you are using an audio-based technology for this particular activity, are your learners already familiar with a similar technology that you have previously used in the course?

4. DOES THE ACTIVITY INCLUDE AN ORIENTATION OR WARM-UP TIME?

Depending on the activity, it may be useful to provide time for the facilitator to introduce the technology and activity or to model what participation in the activity will look like. Some language may also need to be introduced and understanding confirmed.

5. WHICH TYPE OF INTERACTION DOES THIS ACTIVITY INCLUDE?

A balance in the types of interaction throughout a course is ideal. As well, assessing the types of interaction may provide an indication of the types of presence that you are encouraging and the types of support that you may need to provide. For example, an activity that is high in student-student interaction might require a facilitator to monitor activity to keep learners on topic and guided in the right direction. See the COI website for more on types of interaction.

6. IS FEEDBACK FROM THE FACILITATOR INCLUDED AS PART OF THIS ACTIVITY?

Direct feedback may not always be necessary for every activity; however, a course with low levels of feedback may leave learners without any direction for improvement. This question can also help you to think about assessment and which learner behaviors are observable in an online environment.

7. DOES THE ACTIVITY INCLUDE INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION CONTENT?

Language and culture are strongly connected. Language learners will benefit from instruction that is supplemented by Intercultural Communication content.

> "Pockets of down-time throughout an activity will give learners a chance to process language, confirm understanding of vocabulary, and ask questions."

8. IS TIME FOR REFLECTION BUILT INTO THE ACTIVITY?

Pockets of down-time throughout an activity will give language learners a chance to process language, confirm understanding of new vocabulary, and ask questions as they interact. You may need to plan for reflection time throughout an activity if the content or the technology is new to your learners.

9. DOES THE ACTIVITY INCLUDE TIME AT END FOR QUESTIONS, REFLECTION, OR VOCABULARY REVIEW?

Time at the end of an activity can also help learners to solidify what they have experienced and relate it to their own context. You can plan guided reflection or provide learners with a take-away sheet of vocabulary or key points, for example.

10. DOES THE ACTIVITY INCLUDE THE USE OF AUTHENTIC LANGUAGE AND EXPERIENCE?

This question can help you balance the amount of authentic language experience you are providing for your learners.

11. DOES THE ACTIVITY TAKE PLACE IN AN OPEN OR CLOSED ENVIRONMENT?

While closed digital environments restrict public access to the communication in an activity or course, open environments are more public. Although open environments might be more motivating because messages will be viewable by many people, they might also result in an increase of pressure and stress on your learners and require additional security measures on your part.

12. WILL THE ACTIVITY RECORD LANGUAGE USE, SO LEARNERS CAN GO BACK AND USE THE ACTIVITY AS A REFERENCE?

Conversation that is recorded and distributed (for example, on a discussion board) can be useful for learners because they can always go back and check on language usage. Because of the lasting nature of these distributed conversations, learners may also appreciate activities that do not record their language use and feel a bit more at ease about making mistakes and testing out newly learned vocabulary and phrases.

13. DOES THE ACTIVITY INCLUDE BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE TOPIC?

Background information is not always easy to provide to a group of learners; however, background information can increase the effectiveness of the activity. For more information see the Universal Design for Learning website on providing background information.

14. DOES THE ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHT PATTERNS IN THE CONTENT?

Highlighting patterns in content and language use can help learners retain what they learn more effectively. Being explicit about patterns can foster your learners to recognize patterns in language for themselves. For more information see the Universal Design for Learning website on highlighting patterns.

Evaluate an Activity for Interaction

Use the following questions to assess your online language learning activity for the interaction you expect to take place. Use your answers to help you clarify your intentions for that activity and for a collection of activities across a module, course, and program. No answers in this assessment are good or bad on their own – the end goal should be a robust offering of interaction that is comfortable and useful for language learners.

1. WHICH LANGUAGE SKILLS ARE USED IN THIS ACTIVITY?

- ☐ Reading
- ☐ Writing
- ☐ Listening
- ☐ Speaking
- ☐ Fluency
- ☐ Vocabulary
- ☐ Pronunciation
- ☐ Other _____

2. IS THE ACTIVITY SYNCHRONOUS OR ASYNCHRONOUS?

- ☐ Synchronous
- ☐ Asynchronous
- ☐ Both

3. ARE YOUR LEARNERS FAMILIAR WITH THE TECHNOLOGY USED IN THIS ACTIVITY, OR IS IT NEW TO THEM?

- ☐ New
- ☐ Familiar
- ☐ Not Sure/Mixed

4. DOES THE ACTIVITY INCLUDE AN ORIENTATION OR WARM-UP TIME?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

5. WHICH TYPE OF INTERACTION DOES THIS ACTIVITY INCLUDE?

- ☐ Student-Student
- ☐ Student-Teacher
- ☐ Student-Content

6. IS FEEDBACK FROM THE FACILITATOR INCLUDED AS PART OF THIS ACTIVITY?

- ☐ Yes, individually
- ☐ Yes, as a group
- ☐ No

7. DOES THE ACTIVITY INCLUDE INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION CONTENT?

- ☐ Yes, directly
- ☐ Yes, indirectly
- ☐ No

8. IS TIME FOR REFLECTION BUILT INTO THE ACTIVITY?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

9. DOES THE ACTIVITY INCLUDE TIME AT THE END FOR QUESTIONS, REFLECTION, OR VOCABULARY REVIEW?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

10. DOES THE ACTIVITY INCLUDE THE USE OF AUTHENTIC LANGUAGE AND EXPERIENCE?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

11. DOES THE ACTIVITY TAKE PLACE IN AN OPEN OR CLOSED ENVIRONMENT?

- ☐ Open
- ☐ Closed

12. WILL THE ACTIVITY RECORD LANGUAGE USE, SO LEARNERS CAN GO BACK AND USE THE ACTIVITY AS A REFERENCE?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Partially

13. DOES THE ACTIVITY INCLUDE BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE TOPIC?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

14. DOES THE ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHT PATTERNS IN THE CONTENT?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No