

Overview of Common Evaluation Methods

(Adapted from Free Management Library: http://www.managementhelp.org/evaluatn/fnl_eval.htm#anchor1585345)

Method	Description	Purposes	Advantages	Challenges
Questionnaire	Series of written questions administered to individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Gain insight into learner attitudes, outcomes about the program. -Elicit stakeholders' perceptions of outcomes. -Judge program performance. -Assess changes in program practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Can be completed anonymously. -Non-threatening -Inexpensive and easy to administer. -Easy to compare and analyze data. -Can be administered to large groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Not suitable for collecting in-depth info. -Does not get whole story. -Might not generate careful feedback. -Wording can bias respondents. -Requires careful writing and sampling. -Impersonal. -Response rates.
Interview	Interactions with individuals to gather extended responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Gain insight into attitudes and perceptions. -Capture and describe complex processes like learning or teaching. -Elicit stakeholders' expectations and needs. -Understand learner experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Elicit full range and depth of info. -Develop relationship with interviewee. -Can be flexible, tailored to interviewee. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Training interviewers, conducting interviews, and transcribing can be expensive and time-consuming. -Data analysis is complex -Results may not generalize -Interviewer can bias interviewee responses
Focus Group	Group interaction directed and moderated by a facilitator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Gain insight into group perception of learning -Identify and understand needs and expectations of group. -Elicit group attitudes towards program. -Focus evaluation questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Can be efficient way of getting breadth and depth of information. -Can be used with wide range of topics, individuals, and settings. -Can convey key information on program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Training moderators, conducting sessions, and transcribing can be expensive and time-consuming. -Data analysis is complex. -Results may not generalize across individuals.
Observation	Systematic observation using protocols, check-lists, ratings, and field notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Understand context, activities, people, and interactions. -Identify needs and areas of improvement. -Understand complex processes like teaching and learning. -“see” what people “say” and “do”. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -View operations as they are occurring. -Adapt to events as they unfold. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Can be difficult to interpret seen behaviors. -Can be complex to categorize observations. -Observer can influence behaviors of observed. -Can be expensive and time-consuming.
Document analysis	Examination of program-related documents (e.g., syllabi, learning outcomes, webpage)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Examine trends, patterns, and consistency in program. -Identify gaps in curriculum. -Gain insight into program and its history. -Preliminary study for other methods (surveys, interviews, etc). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Provides comprehensive and historical information. -Does not interrupt routine of a program. -Information already in existence. -Few biases about the information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Documents or materials may be incomplete or missing. -Data is restricted to what already exists. -Does not evaluate current staff or client opinion, needs, or satisfaction. -Can be time consuming.
Case Studies	Intense investigation of a program, class, individual using multiple methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Document what actually happened. -Track perceptions, attitudes, behavior. -Understand individuals' needs & expectations -Identify obstacles to program implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Fully depicts an individual's experience in a program, a class, etc. -Powerful means to portray program to outsiders. -Can generate thorough understandings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Time-consuming to collect, organize, describe, and analyze. -Represents depth of information rather than breadth. -Multiple methods require training
Assessment	Systematic gathering of information about student learning (e.g., portfolios, OPI, in-class tests)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Examine student achievement of outcomes. -Ascertain extent to which programs meet goals. -Understand student progress within program. -Judge program effectiveness. -Feedback to teachers, students, admin. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Can compare students' performance to each other (NRT). -Can assess the degree of student achievement on a priori set goals (CRT). -Can direct teaching and encourage learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Developing reliable, valid, and practical language tests is difficult. -Time consuming to create meaningful assessment rubrics and criteria. -Scoring can be labor, training intensive. -Good understanding of various assessment tools are needed to match them to purposes.

Methodology Resources

TOOLS & GUIDES

Foreign Language Program Evaluation Project (FLPEP) site: <http://nflrc.hawaii.edu/evaluation>

QUESTIONNAIRES

Recommended text:

Brown, J. D. (2001). *Using surveys in language programs*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Example L2 evaluation:

Iwai, T., K. Kondo, D. J. Lim, G. E. Ray, H. Shimizu, & J.D. Brown. (1999). *Japanese language needs analysis 1998-1999* (NFLRC Network #13). Honolulu: Second Language Teaching & Curriculum Center, University of Hawai 'i.

Useful website:

http://www.engin.umich.edu/teaching/assess_and_improve/handbook/indirect/surveys.html

INTERVIEWS

Recommended text:

Kvale, S. (1996). *InterViews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Example L2 evaluation:

Pawan, F., & Thomalla, T. G. (2006). Making the invisible visible: A responsive evaluation study of ESL and Spanish language services for immigrants in a small rural county in Indiana. *TESOL Quarterly*, 39(4), 683-705.

Useful website(s):

Preparing an interview protocol: http://oerl.sri.com/module/mod6/m6_p1.html

Administering interviews: http://oerl.sri.com/module/mod7/m7_p1.html

FOCUS GROUPS

Recommended text:

Krueger, R. A., & Casey, M. A. (2000). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Example L2 evaluation:

Dassier, J-L. P., & Powell, W. (2001). Formative foreign language program evaluation: Dare to find out how good you really are. In C. C. Maurice (Ed.), *The Odyssey Continues: Dimension 2001*. Selected Proceedings of the Joint Conference of the SCLT and SCFLTA (pp. 91-110). GA: Valdosta State University.

Useful website:

<http://ag.arizona.edu/fcs/cyfernet/cyfar/focus.htm>

OBSERVATIONS

Recommended reading:

Richards, K. (2003). Observation. In K. Richards, *Qualitative inquiry in TESOL* (pp. 104-171). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Example L2 evaluation:

Llosa, L., & Slayton, J. (forthcoming). Using program evaluation to inform and improve the education of young English language learners in U.S. schools. *Language Teaching Research*, 12(4).

Useful website:

<http://learningstore.uwex.edu/pdf/G3658-5.pdf>

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

Recommended reading:

Miller, G. (1997). Contextualizing texts: Studying organizational texts. In G. Miller & Dingwall, R. (Eds.), *Context and method in qualitative research* (pp. 77-91). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Example L2 evaluation:

Purpura, J. E., & Graziano-King, J. (2004). Investigating the foreign language needs of professional school students in international affairs: A case study. *Working Papers in TESOL & Applied Linguistics*, 4(1), 1-33.

Useful website:

<http://www.utexas.edu/academic/diia/assessment/iar/teaching/plan/method/doc-analysis.php>

ASSESSMENT

Recommended text:

Brown, J. D. (2005). *Testing in language programs* (revised, 2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall Regents..

Example L2 evaluation:

Delett, J. S., Barnhardt, S., & Kevorkian, J. A. (2001). A framework for portfolio assessment in the foreign language classroom. *Foreign Language Annals*, 34(6), 559-568.

Useful website:

Comprehensive list of outcomes assessment practices in Higher Education: <http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/assmt/resource.htm>

CASE STUDIES

Recommended text:

Duff, P. (2008). *Case study research in applied linguistics*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Example L2 evaluation:

Stephens, P. (2005). Adult EFL program development: Facilitators and impediments. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Capella University, online. .

Useful website:

<http://www.dhs.ca.gov/tobacco/documents/eval/ProgramEvaluation.pdf>