Considering the Direction:
Looping Back, Staying Here, or Moving Forward

Transcript for the online video from CSAI – Section 2

Welcome back to the module on Taking Pedagogical Action.

Recall that this module covers these three big ideas. This video will delve into the second one: Considering the direction: Looping Back, staying here, or moving forward.
In responding contingently teachers may consider first: in what direction do students need to move. In analyzing the learning evidence, a teacher may decide that a student or group of students is missing a key, prior building block that is essential for achieving the current Learning Goals and/or have a misconception from their previous learning. In such a situation, the teacher may need to loop students back, with a carefully crafted activity to revisit and build this prior building block before they can move forward with the lesson goal. Recall the example where students were learning to introduce themselves using clan names. The teacher looped back to ensure that a group of students had a solid understanding of their clan structure before moving forward.

The teacher can also consider whether students didn't grasp a concept because a lack of connection to a real world application, a cultural context misalignment, or because of an instructional miscommunication, such as when the instructional technique is not beneficial to Native learners.

Alternately, a teacher may find that students are beginning to understand a target concept or skill but need more time working with it to fully master it. To do this, teachers might engage students in additional practice, such as, by having students do additional work in applying the same concept and/or skill, but in different contexts.

For example, in understanding how to use descriptive words to explain how objects, such as baskets or pots, are made, students could first describe the qualities of the basket they are making and its materials. If their descriptive words were tentative, they could then be asked to describe the making of another familiar object, work of another student or an example from outside the classroom.

To know where students need to go next, whether that be looping back, staying where they are to cement their learning, or moving forward, it is important to have a good sense of the learning progression related to the lesson goal – and for language development. Think of a progression as a learning pathway that takes students from where they are in their learning to the lesson and ultimate goals. By understanding the progression, teachers and students can analyze their formative assessment evidence to gauge where students are in their learning and determine

where they need to go next.

Instructors of Native languages probably will need to create their own progressions. Ideally the progressions would address how students develop from little or no Native language competency to expertise in both listening and speaking. In some languages this will also include reading and writing. On the one hand, developing progressions is very difficult and ideally would be done in collaboration with other language instructors and Native speakers. On the other hand, every time you plan a lesson, you probably have a progression intuitively in mind that guides you to sequence your lessons as you do, from one lesson to the next, and within a lesson, from one activity to the next.

Learning Progressions come in different scales. From the progression of learning within a lesson, to a progression within a unit, to a year-long progression, to the largest progression, which spans from novice to expert. We will start by thinking about building progressions that begin with where students are in their learning to a few steps forward. This will be more of a unit-sized progression.

When developing a language progression, consider from your own teaching experience, what is easiest for students to learn, what is more challenging, and what is the most difficult?

Using a different lens, you can ask yourself, what are the foundational understanding and competencies I want my students to learn? What skills and understandings are dependent on others and need to be learned first?

Once you have this beginning of a structure, consider what building blocks of learning students need to work through in order to progress through the level you've identified as "easy" or "fundamental" for your students. Extend this to include learning that is more challenging, a few steps beyond where students are now.

These building blocks can be translated into language Learning Goals for each lesson and ultimately, should be fleshed out into a series of connected lessons that build on one another through a whole unit. Outlining a series of lessons that progress in difficulty while building on the learning that came before, helps to connect each learning experience, and each lesson, to a larger, language goal.

Having this understanding of how language develops is important because student learning does not occur in a linear, lock step fashion. A learning progression provides the needed structure to guide instructional decisions in relation to ongoing evidence of student learning, whether students need to move forward, stay where they are, or loop back.

Here is an example of how one teacher uses a learning progression.

This example, used with permission, draws on research conducted by the Dynamic Language Learning Progression Project at UCLA.

For this lesson, a teacher has asked her students to explain to one another how they brush their teeth. She also has them recite their explanations to her one-on-one to formatively assess their learning, provide feedback, and set new individual Learning Goals.

The learning progression the teacher is using indicates that word knowledge comes before abilities such as stamina and cohesion in an explanation.

Since her students have been developing basic word knowledge in recent lessons, as well as the use of simple connectors like "and," she now wants her students to understand how to establish cohesion in their explanations by using sequencing.

The Learning Goal for this lesson is to understand how to explain a sequence of steps in an everyday activity.

The Success Criteria are:
- I can explain the sequence of steps I take when I brush my teeth using a variety of time order words.
- I can accurately describe the steps I take when I brush my teeth using topic vocabulary.

The teacher has selected two Success Criteria to ensure students continue their work on topic vocabulary while beginning their new work on cohesion. When she analyzes students' explanations and decides what action to take, she considers if their understanding is emerging, maturing, or consolidated in relation to the Learning Goal and Success Criteria.

Take a moment to read this student's explanation.

As you can see, this student's explanation is at the emerging level. She uses the word "then" a few times to indicate a sequence but does not include a variety of time-order words. Her topic vocabulary is also fairly minimal. In this explanation, it is clear that the student is pointing to parts of her mouth but struggles to explain them verbally, such as in, "brush it right here."
To help this student advance, the teacher will ask her to first focus on including the words: "first" and "next" in her explanation when she practices. The teacher will also loop back with this student to provide more instruction targeting topic vocabulary so that she does not need to rely as much on gestures.

Take a moment to read this student's explanation.

In this student's explanation at the maturing level, he is able to create a clearer sequence of actions using the time-order words: "first" and "then."

To follow up on this lesson, the teacher asks him to include more time-order word variety by incorporating the additional words, "next" and "last". This will enable him to more distinctly specify the sequence of events. To support this further, the teacher also decides to provide the whole class with sentence stems beginning with the words: first, second, next, last, and finally. This student also appears to have a grasp of the topic vocabulary needed to explain his tooth brushing process, specifying parts of his mouth, as in, "the upper side" and "my side teeth." Based on this, the teacher decides that while he needs to continue working on enlarging his topic vocabulary, this student is ready to starting putting the words together in new ways. She will ask him to begin working on another concept in their learning progression which is expanded word groups. When using this language feature, students can start with a noun such as "teeth" and add descriptors to it to create expanded word groups, as in, "the white, clean teeth."

Incorporating this language feature into his explanations will enable this student to efficiently add more detail to his ideas. The teacher will check to see if there are any other students ready for this, and if so, provide a mini lesson for them together.

Take a moment to read this student's explanation.

This student, who's explanation is at the consolidated level, uses a variety of time-order words to demonstrate sequence in her explanation, including "first", "when", "then", and "after." Even though she is at the consolidated level in terms of meeting this lesson's Learning Goal, the teacher feels that this student can still make her explanation better in this area by changing some of the repetitive sentence beginnings from "and then" to different time-order words such as "second" and "next." The teacher asks the student to include these words in her explanation as she continues practicing. In terms of topic vocabulary, this teacher is confident that the student knows enough to communicate herself effectively in this context.

Based on the student's understanding of topic vocabulary and sequencing, the teacher decides that she is also ready to work on expanding word groups. The teacher notes that this student has already started to incorporate them into her explanation with noun phrases such as "each side of my teeth" and "a good amount of time." The teacher decides that this student can specifically benefit from learning to expand her verb groups by adding information about *how* she cleans her teeth, for example, how she brushes, cleans, and rinses.

In each of these instructional decisions, the teacher cross references the evidence of student learning with a language learning progression to determine the most appropriate next step for that student.

Other contexts for this type of lesson that include cultural content goals could be, for example, describing the putting on of dance regalia and explaining the steps in making a pair of baby

moccasins.

Now let's pause and reflect.

Think about the last unit you taught. Did you find that at different points of the unit you needed to loop back, stay where you were, or move forward? Describe what you did and why.

How could a learning progression help in deciding the directions students need to go?

Pause the video a moment to reflect on these questions.

Thank you! You have now completed the second section of the Taking Pedagogical Action module.

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