

- **Can you give us please some examples or samples of reverse design approach?**

One clarification: We use the term **reverse** design instead of **backward** design because it resonates with the idea of “**reverse** engineering” curriculum from outcomes and assessments. Wiggins & McTighe (2005) are the most commonly cited reference to “backward design”, but the idea of outcome-based education has been around since the publication of Bloom’s Taxonomy (1956) and the work of Bloom, Bruner, Glaser, Skinner—among countless others. Wiggins and McTighe, 60 years later, reiterate what Bloom started: “Though considerations about what to teach and how to teach it may dominate our thinking as a matter of habit, the challenge is to focus first on the desired learning from which appropriate teaching will logically follow” (p. 14).

The essential concept of reverse design is that you begin designing curriculum after you have identified the learner outcomes your curriculum is supposed to reach. Our assessment-driven component argues that you should also know how you are going to assess learner performance of the outcomes.

As you can imagine, this is different than planning a curriculum, and only when you are teaching or when you come to the end of your teaching, deciding what and how you will assess or test. We contend, and our research supports this contention, that instructors can make more intentional decisions about what to teach and how to teach it, if they know what the learner outcomes are and how the outcomes will be assessed. For those reasons, our approach begins with an assumption that learners are going to function with the language in the real world where it is used. Next, we use the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines to identify outcomes. Third, and this is unique to our approach, we work with instructors to design their own proficiency assessment.

When all of that is done, we turn to the design of curriculum. As noted above, instructors can make more intentional, deliberate choices about curriculum when they know what the targeted outcome is, and how it will be assessed.

- **We need to know about some instances of reverse design approach, please give us some examples.**

Here is an example of our approach, using the Speaking skill for a first-year German course. We will go step-by-step, using our approach, and illustrating how that will impact decisions instructors make about the curriculum:

1. First of all we are going to teach German with the goal that all of our learners are going to use German in the real world where it is spoken, i.e., Germany, Austria or Switzerland. Are all the students going to do that? Probably not. But we are going to teach for that purpose because it is more compelling to my students (GenZ students especially want real world skills).

Curricular impact: it lets the program tie what we do in the classroom to how they would use it in the real world; we need to give them opportunities to use language in the classroom the way they would in the world; many of the activities we do should look and feel like real world communicative exchanges.

2. Next we will use the ACTFL Guidelines to identify the Speaking level we want our learners to reach, based on what we know about teaching German, our learners, the materials we will use. That level is Intermediate Low, for the first-year German at the University of Chicago. The assessment criteria for Intermediate Low are:

- the ability to create with language (i.e., not use memorized material)
- the ability to carry on a face-to-face conversation
- the ability to ask and answer questions
- the ability to speak in sentences
- to talk about familiar, everyday, personal topics
- to function in familiar settings (i.e., not formal or professional ones)
- to be comprehended by people who are used to communicating with someone who is learning the language

Curricular impact: These criteria suggest the types of materials and activities we need to provide our learners with; we need to teach beyond this level in order to sure they all reach this level; we will preserve class time for communicative activities and have them do drill and practice as homework whenever possible; what types of grammar and vocabulary learning best support these outcomes? How will we think about allowing for student error when we know they will make errors in the real world, but also need to gain accuracy in the classroom.

3. The third step is designing a test to assess Speaking at the Intermediate Low level. There are many, many ways to do that!! Here are two examples, and the impact they would have on our curriculum.

Speaking test 1: We'll provide our students with a list of questions pitched at the Intermediate level and 2 role plays. They need to prepare their answers and role play responses, make a recording, and upload it so I can review it.

We hope you can see how much conflict and misalignment there is with this type of test and the intended outcomes? This test will encourage the students to prepare/memorize their answers. But in the Intermediate speaking criteria, we know that we want to see them create with language. You can also see that this type of rehearsed language is different from the unrehearsed communicative activities we do in class (even if they are scaffolded). This test design demands a different type of teaching.

Speaking test 2: We'll do a threshold OPI (Oral Proficiency Interview) limited to the Intermediate level (we won't probe above Intermediate). This test is a good measure of our identified outcomes and criteria. The OPI is designed to test the criteria at each level. The test will have a warm-up, 2-3 Intermediate questions, and a role play. Students won't know these in advance, but everything we will have done over the nine months of teaching should prepare them.

4. Now it's time to think about our curriculum. Since we know what we're testing for Speaking (the Intermediate Low level), what the criteria are (see above), and how we will test them (with an abbreviated OPI) we can think very deliberately about how we will teach, what materials we will use, what students will do in class and outside of class – all of the thousands of choices we must make, as instructors. Not only do we want to prepare them to do well on the proficiency

assessment, it is our job to be accountable to the students. It is our job to design a curriculum that brings them to that level. Also, at the end of the course, we cannot only tell them their grade, we can tell them what they can do when get to Germany, Austria, or Switzerland!

- **Is reverse design being used to represent the backward design approach (Wiggins/McTighe)?**

As mentioned above, our reverse design model is similar to Wiggins/McTighe, but adds assessment literacy and hands-on assessment design and development as essential components.

- **Can you please share with us samples of reverse design, examples, where was it use, any research about it.**

An article, “Building a Sustainable LCTL Community of Practice through Assessment-Driven Reverse Design” can be found using the link.

- **Is this approach used in Chicago only?**

We have worked with over 200 individuals in the past 8 years and believe many are using this approach.

- **Could the panelists please discuss their views on the impacts of AI use on the environment?**

That question goes beyond the scope of this Webinar, we believe. But it is an important element of the issues around AI.

- **How about developing critical thinking, if AI is used in the classroom.**

If critical thinking is a goal of one’s curriculum, then the question to ask is: How can I best utilize AI to create demanding activities or assignments that promote critical thinking?

- **What type of professional development should be delivered to instructors/teachers and administrators so that they can use AI successfully without compromising the content?**

During the webinar we tried to make a case for using our own approach. In general, one needs to have a meta-view of curriculum in order to make the micro decisions. One needs to know what outcomes have been identified, and how the outcomes will be tested, to think about how instruction to deliver the skills needed to demonstrate the outcomes can best be designed. At that point, decisions about the use of AI are no different than decisions about the use of a given textbook, or a new instructional technology app. Will its use enhance my instruction? Will its use make it possible for me to bring my learners to the outcomes I have identified more effectively? It’s a similar set of questions, and a similar set of contexts. As we argued in the webinar, we believe the stakeholders should be provided the AI literacy training before demanding informed choices from them or mandating any policies for them. We also, believe, these trainings should be

accessible for all and are as important as investing on the AI resources and infrastructure themselves.

- **Are there any plans to make the AI Literacy course accessible to instructors from other institutions?**

Please keep an eye on our website for Summer mini-seminar offerings!

<https://www.languages.uchicago.edu>