Building a Better Test

- Developed for the NRCAL Professional Development Seminar (July 20-24, 2015) by James Hussar, Associate Professor of Spanish and Portuguese, CSUF

Session Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- List and explain the features of a well-designed test.

- Create contextualized convergent and divergent test activities in small groups.

Skills Assessment

Best Practices

- Assess all communicative skills (listening, reading, writing and speaking) as well as cultural understanding.

- Complement traditional paper-and-pencil tests with "authentic assessment" (portfolios, oral proficiency tests, task- or project-based performance assessments)

- Design integrative test items (i.e. items that test more than one point at a time).

- Contextualize test questions.

- Balance convergent and divergent test activities.

Unrelated single sentences or phrases

Convergent (one possible answer)

Divergent (open-ended; multiple possible answers)

Discrete-point or integrative format scored by discrete points

Global comprehension items (editing, transforming, summarizing, creating in L2)

Sequential, naturalistic discourse

Examples from Omaggio Hadley

- 396
- 402-403
- 411-412
- 416-417
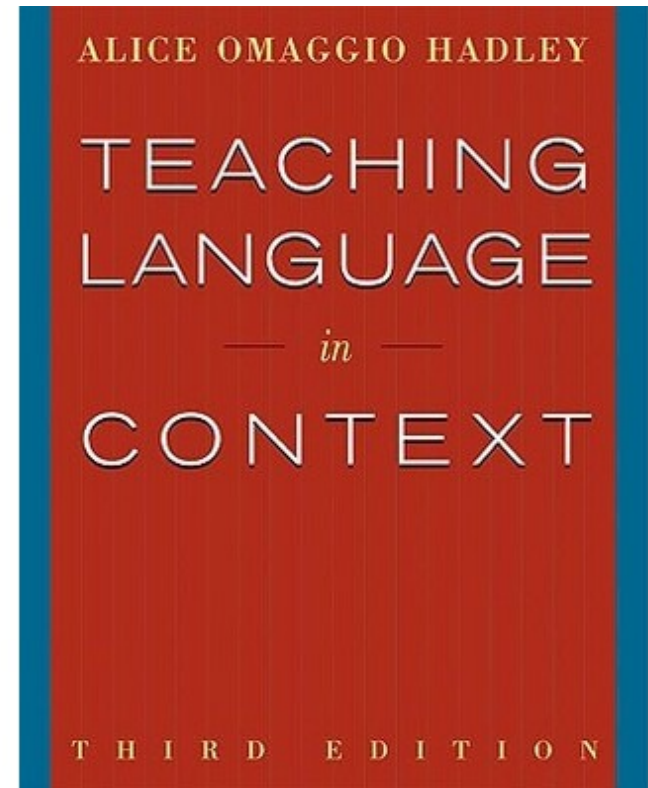
Building a Better Test (adapted from Omaggio Hadley p. 430)

Step 1: Take inventory (list grammar, vocabulary, discourse, culture content for the unit).

Step 2: List skill areas (listening, reading, writing, speaking, cultural understanding).

Step 3: Distribute test content among skill areas.

Step 4: Create or find level-appropriate, discourse-length texts (stories, dialogues, paragraphs) that include the features you've identified for each part of your exam.

Step 5: Ask a colleague to proofread the draft of your exam.

Make-It, Take It

- In small groups, design one convergent and one divergent test activity. Use the target language and provide English translations.