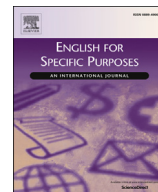




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### Review

**Evaluating second language courses, Dale Griffiee, Greta Gorsuch. Information Age Publishing Inc., Charlotte, NC (2016). xi + 272 pp., US\$ 45.99, 978-1-68123-593-6**

Program evaluation, as it is currently conceptualized and practiced in second language learning literature, is an information-gathering exercise in which the elements of a program (e.g., curriculum, assessments) are studied using a variety of methodologies to triangulate data, the purpose of which is to enact changes (Norris, 2016). Recent work on program evaluation has addressed external forces such as accountability and accreditation, and has generally dealt with larger-scale language programs (e.g., Norris & Mills, 2014). Griffiee and Gorsuch's volume complements a recent wave of program evaluation literature, but without the focus on accountability & accreditation. Rather, this book narrows the focus to a single language class, with the teacher as evaluator.

As noted in the forward by J.D. Brown, this book fills a gap in program evaluation literature by offering a systematic method that can be used to evaluate single language courses. To this end, the authors describe their own contribution to second language program evaluation, the SOAC model, which is comprised of stakeholders, outcomes, assessment, and curriculum. Modular and customizable, the SOAC model offers a practical and useful way for language teachers to evaluate their courses.

The four components of the SOAC model interact with each other, and this interaction provides the starting points for language teachers to identify which aspect of their course they wish to evaluate. Indeed, language teachers are well positioned to identify which component or components of their course would benefit from evaluation. Language teachers may have the sense that some aspects of their course could be improved, and this book provides them with the means of how to design and answer their evaluation questions. The SOAC model is a clear, accessible model for conducting program evaluation, the logic of which will be immediately clear to practicing language teachers.

The book was written for an audience of in-service language teachers, and explanations, examples, discussion questions, and tasks assume teaching experience and familiarity with second language research. It builds upon teaching knowledge and experience as well as knowledge of research. The process of performing an evaluation is compared and contrasted with the process of conducting second language research. Readers with no teaching or research background may find some of the topics slightly abstract, though the authors make every attempt to make the topics accessible even to new teachers.

The book contains ten chapters. Chapters one and two set up program evaluation and the SOAC model, chapters three through nine look at the interaction of two model components and how this intersection of components can be evaluated. At first glance, the titles of chapters three through nine can be slightly disorienting, but the logic of the book comes clear as one begins to read chapter three. Chapter ten offers a tidy wrap-up in the form of a system for reading and critiquing studies of and about evaluation. Chapters include numerous clearly-written examples of how to perform the steps of program evaluation, and each chapter also includes additional sources of and about evaluation.

Chapter one begins with an argument for the book which establishes its place within existing evaluation literature. It defines key terms used throughout the book and establishes the importance and role of assessment within language courses. It explains course evaluation by comparing and contrasting it with research, and by explaining how evaluation questions (EQs) and both similar to and different from research questions.

Chapter two offers a brief tour of four models of second language course evaluation before finally presenting the SOAC model. The review of evaluation models provides context for the SOAC model, and the strengths and weakness of this model can be inferred from the description of other models. Each element of the SOAC model is described, and the context within which program evaluation takes place ("the world") and the object of program evaluation ("the evaluand") are placed within the model.

Chapter three is the first of seven chapters that examine the SOAC model in depth. The chapter focuses on stakeholders and outcomes, in the context of the world, and how outcomes validation can be performed to evaluate this intersection. The chapter describes some of the problems with outcomes, and describes how to perform an outcome validation study. Outcomes validation is performed to ensure that intended course outcomes are clear to stakeholders, that is, that stakeholders' understanding of outcomes is consistent with their understanding of the course purpose. The chapter then presents an example of an outcome validation study using the context of a course for International Teaching Assistants (ITAs).

Chapter four looks at the intersection of stakeholders in the world and how this interaction can be evaluated using needs analyses. It builds upon the previous chapter of outcome validation and describes how to perform a needs analysis. Once outcomes are made clear via an outcome validation study, a needs analysis can be conducted, where learner needs, in the context of the world, are identified by stakeholders. This chapter presents different ways that needs have been defined in education literature and in second language pedagogical literature. The steps of a needs analysis are then outlined, and readers are directed to the reference list of documents *of* and *about* needs analysis.

Chapter five looks at curriculum and outcomes, and how course logic can be used to evaluate this interaction. It defines and describes course logic in education and second language pedagogy literature, and offers examples of how course logic has been used in second language program evaluation. The authors then present the steps for performing a course logic study. They introduce the impact model first, which is a graphic representation between inputs and outcomes. Next, the authors describe an organization chart, which focuses on the activities within a course. The authors then illustrate how the impact model and organization chart are used to inform a course logic model. The chapter ends with a brief discussion on how to validate a course logic model.

Chapter six looks at curriculum and stakeholders, and how formative evaluation can be used to evaluate these components in interaction. The chapter begins with a discussion of how formative evaluation is different from summative evaluation, and what information formative evaluation can contribute. The authors then present how to use course logic to perform a formative evaluation by describing how to develop evaluation questions (EQs) and how to use these EQs to plan data collection. Two data collection protocols, one for interviews and one for classroom observations, are given. Examples of how data collected for two different evaluation studies were analyzed is then presented, and the results of data analysis are linked to decision points.

Chapter seven focuses on assessment, in the form of tests and quizzes, and validity. The chapter begins with a discussion about why instrument validation is important for program evaluation. It presents a brief history of validity, which leads to a validity model informed by Kunnan (1998) and Alderson and Wall (1993). The four quadrants of the model, which includes score interpretation, test usefulness, stakeholder values, and social consequences, are then described with the use of numerous examples from evaluation studies. The fourth quadrant, social consequences, receives strong focus as test wash-back is defined and discussed. The chapter concludes with a listing of chronological steps for validating language tests.

Chapter eight continues the discussion about validation that began in chapter seven. It focuses on how to validate classroom observations, interviews, and questionnaires. It revisits key concepts from chapter seven, then explains how they are used in the context of data collected in the form of observations, interviews, and questionnaires. The authors present three sections on how to *plan*, *do*, and *analyze* observations interviews, and questionnaires. Each section contains an impressive table that lists the steps possible at each stage for each data collection type. Within each cell, the authors list studies *of* and *about* evaluation that can serve as examples for the step.

Chapter nine focuses on outcomes and assessment, the interaction of which can be explored via summative evaluation. Although the authors present summative evaluation as something which is typically performed by external evaluators, they argue that this type of evaluation can be informative when performed by teachers, in the form of an exit interview. The authors then present a model for developing an exist interview, and give an extended example of how an exit interview was used in a Spanish foreign language class.

Throughout the book, the authors refer readers to evaluation literature. Thankfully, readers are not left to their own devices to read and use these documents. Chapter ten offers guidance on how to read and evaluate published and unpublished documents *of* and *about* program evaluation and needs analysis. To this end, several tables are provided with questions about what information was provided by articles, to help readers evaluate the quality and thoroughness of these publications. The tables can also be used by readers as a guide for how to write about their own course evaluations.

The book also provides supplemental material. Following chapter ten are four bibliographies: one *of* evaluation, one *about* evaluation, one *of* needs analysis, and one *about* needs analysis. Each chapter contains discussion questions, an application task or tasks, and a list of references. Some readers may struggle to respond to the discussion questions, as their location within the chapter does not always make sense. In some instances the discussion questions were asked before the authors presented information that would help readers answer the questions.

The greatest strength of this book, besides offering a clear way to conduct program evaluation, is the use and organization of external books and studies *of* and *about* evaluation. Each chapter includes references to studies that illustrate the evaluation procedures discussed within the chapter, and several chapters include tables that include citations of studies. These tables link studies to the tools/methods/evaluation questions they explore, the concepts they illustrate, and the components of the SOAC model that they explore (even if the authors of the study did not explicitly use the SOAC model). In addition to the tables, the book includes references at the end of every chapter, four appendices of and about evaluation and needs analysis, and a table for critically reading evaluation literature. The book offers a wealth of information that is neatly organized and clearly presented (in tables, appendices, bibliographies) of and about evaluation that teachers can use as examples of research and to inform their evaluation design. This feature alone makes this book a powerful resource.

If it were nothing else, this book would be an invaluable resource for the tidy and useful way in which program evaluation research has been catalogued. One takes for granted that in subsequent editions of this book, these citations will be updated to include research conducted after the initial publication of the book. This book is a clearly written, accessible method for busy language teachers to evaluate how the components in their course are functioning.

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