

## **Putting Useful Evaluation into Practice**

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### **1. Definition of program evaluation from the literature**

*“Program evaluation is the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of programs to make judgments about the program, improve program effectiveness, and/or inform decisions about future programming”* (Patton, 1997, p. 23).

*“[a] systematic collection and analysis of information necessary to improve a curriculum, assess its effectiveness and its efficiency, and determine participants’ attitudes within the context of a particular institution”* (Brown, 1995, p. 227).

*“systematic assessment of the operation and/or the outcomes of a program or policy, compared to explicit or implicit standards, in order to help improve the program or policy”* (Weiss, 1998, p. 18).

### **2. Purpose and use of program evaluation**

- Various evaluation purposes: Summative, formative, knowledge generation, empowerment

### **3. Useful to who?**

- Stakeholders: *People who have a stake in evaluation findings; Stakeholders include anyone who **make** decisions or desires information about a program.*
- Primary intended users: *A group or individuals who are in position to make decision about the program, intend to use the evaluation findings to inform their future actions, and are affected by the evaluation outcomes.*

### **4. Characteristics of evaluation that makes evaluation gets used**

Pragmatic, participatory, negotiated, responsive, clear & comprehensible, educational, transformative, manageable, feasible, action oriented, etc.

### **5. Local evaluation showcase: 2 examples (See the summary tables)**

### **6. Resources**

- **Upcoming publications**
  - ADFL Bulletin (Summer, 2007), LTR (Jan, 2008)
- **Upcoming capacity development opportunities:**
  - Summer institute (may 28<sup>th</sup> – June 6<sup>th</sup>), Hawaii-Pacific Evaluation Association (Sept, 2007), American Evaluation Association (Nov, 7-10)
- **Foreign Language Program Evaluation Project:** <http://www.nflrc.hawaii.edu/evaluation>
- **Western Michigan Evaluation Center:**
  - Checklist for evaluators, <http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/checklists/index.html>
- **The International Development Research Centre:**
  - Guideline for identifying intended users of an evaluation, <http://www.idrc.ca/uploads/user-S/115645001817Guideline.pdf>
  - Guideline for identifying intended use(s) of an evaluation, <http://www.idrc.ca/uploads/user-S/115644998416Guideline.pdf>
  - Evaluation principles, [http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-58368-201-1-DO\\_TOPIC.html](http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-58368-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html)
- **The Online Evaluation Resource Library**
  - Professional development modules on key topics on evaluation, <http://oerl.sri.com/module/modules.html>
- **American Evaluation Association:** <http://www.eval.org>
  - Program Evaluation Standard, <http://www.eval.org/EvaluationDocuments/progeval.html>

	<b>A summary of the Evaluation of a Web-based Hybrid Beginning Conversational Mandarin Class</b>
Context	The first and second year conversational Mandarin classes at UHM have been taught online with once-a-week 50-minute face-to-face meeting since Fall 2005.
Purpose	To make improvement for the course
Intended users	The course instructor and teaching assistant if any
Intended uses	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To identify the components of the course that are unsatisfying to students;</li> <li>2. To identify emerging students' needs;</li> <li>3. To improve instructional practice in a way that may help motivating students and meet their needs.</li> </ol>
Evaluation questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How satisfied are students with each element of the course?</li> <li>2. What are class-related and individual-related motional factors in this course?</li> <li>3. What are emerging students' needs?</li> </ol>
Methods	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teachers' observation</li> <li>2. Face-to-face interview with three out of six students in Fall 2005 semester</li> <li>3. Open-ended end-of-semester evaluation in Fall 2005 semester</li> <li>4. Both open and close-ended evaluation survey at the end of the Spring 2006 semester</li> <li>5. In depth task-based needs analysis in Fall 2006 and Spring 2007 semester</li> </ol>
<b>STAGE 1</b> Key evaluation findings from Fall 2005	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students are unanimously happy with the instructor and flexibility of the online course and thought the course were adaptive to individual needs.</li> <li>2. Ten areas of common students' concerns were identified: such as needing more face-to-face conversational practice, more paragraph writing, providing students' common mistakes, etc</li> </ol>
Actual Uses in Spring 2006	<p><b>Actions taken to address students concerns:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Added one-time 15-minute private conversation session</li> <li>2. Added 5-minute opening chat during each tutoring session</li> <li>3. Added online paragraph writing assignments</li> <li>4. Created online summary of mistakes towards end of term w/ references</li> <li>5. Scanned and uploaded answer key for the listening workbook</li> <li>6. Checked students structure exercise online</li> <li>7. Made observations and created individual profiles</li> </ol>
<b>STAGE 2</b> Key evaluation findings from Spring 2006	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Most of the actions were well received but not all are practical.</li> <li>2. Students feel more satisfied than in the last semester or in previous Mandarin class.</li> <li>3. More needs analysis need to be conducted to address the emerging concerns for the evaluation: (1) What topics or tasks that learners need to learn most; (2) How to make connection between phrasal learning to real language use; (3) How to address learners' individual language learning emphasis—accuracy, fluency, complexity, cultural awareness</li> </ol>
Actual Uses in Fall 2006 and Spring 2007	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Three practices were continued: providing answer key, summarizing students' common mistakes, checking students' structure exercise online.</li> <li>2. The paragraph writing practice was given more scaffolding: phrases-sentences-paragraphs.</li> <li>3. Included students' advice in the orientation letters to the new students in Fall 2006.</li> <li>4. Task-based needs analysis was carried out to investigate the most needed task types for our learners, who all plan to go to China in the future and desire to communicate with native speakers of Chinese (ongoing)</li> </ol>

	<b>Summary of an evaluation of new-teacher induction program in the ELI</b>
Context	UH Manoa English Language Institute, where there is a constant need to provide new-teacher induction program to newly-hired GAs every semester.
Purpose	Developing and improving the new-teacher induction program; Generating knowledge about the new-teacher induction program
Intended users	ELI administrators (Director; Assistant Director; Curriculum Coordinator)
Intended uses	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Specifying what the new-teacher development practices are trying to accomplish;</li> <li>2. Finding out how well the current new-teacher development practices are able to meet new teachers' needs and administrators' expectations;</li> <li>3. Identifying specific areas for improvement and suggesting ways for improvement;</li> <li>4. Forming a basis for implementing necessary changes for the improvement of new-teacher development practices.</li> </ol>
Evaluation questions	<p>How well are the pre-semester induction practices helping new teachers to get ready for the teaching tasks in the ELI?</p> <p>What are the intended outcomes of the pre-semester induction practices for new teachers in the ELI?</p>
Methods	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Interview with the ELI administrators</li> <li>2. Interview with new ELI teachers of Spring 2006 semester</li> <li>3. Focus group with experienced ELI teachers in Spring 2006 semester</li> <li>4. Questionnaire for incoming ELI new teachers of Fall 2006 semester</li> </ol>
Key evaluation findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The intended outcomes of the program articulated by the administrators and the desired outcomes of the program perceived by the experienced teachers</li> <li>• The most helpful pre-semester induction practices perceived by teachers and their availability and accessibility in the program</li> <li>• Specific recommendations for the program from new and experienced teachers</li> </ul>
Actual Uses	<p><b>In Fall 2006</b>, the ELI administrators made a detailed action plan to use the evaluation findings, and implemented a number of program changes based on the findings. Some of them included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class observation was made a required pre-semester induction practice;</li> <li>• Hiring decision was made earlier to allow new GAs time for observing classes and interacting with administrators and current teachers;</li> <li>• Meeting with curriculum lead teacher was ascertained to be a required pre-semester induction practice;</li> <li>• The opportunity of volunteering in the ELI was announced to DSLS graduate students;</li> <li>• Prioritized sections on the Teachers' Manual were highlighted for new GAs to read through;</li> <li>• Efforts were made to re-arrange the materials and to fill out the gaps in the Online Resource Room to make it more useful and user-friendly to future teachers;</li> </ul> <p><b>In Spring 2007</b>, checklists for the pre-semester induction program are being drafted by Weiwei Yang, to be used by the ELI administrators, lead teachers, and new teachers. Changes implemented in Fall 2006 are being continued.</p> <p><b>In upcoming semesters</b>, improved program practices will be maintained with the help of the checklists for the program.</p>

## 7. References

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- Patton, M. Q. (1997). *Utilization focused evaluation: The new century text*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Weiss, C. H. (1998). *Evaluation: methods for studying programs and policies*. 2nd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.