

Modern Languages Student Learning Outcomes Assessment

Conducted as part of the 2019 Modern Languages Program review

Submitted by Mary Docter, Chair of Modern Languages Department

Modern Language GE SLOs assessment. In the Fall of 2018, Drs. Mary Collier and Leonor Elías assessed the writing competency of their FR 1 (1 section) and SP 1 (2 sections) classes respectively. They used a rubric (see Appendix) for the First Semester Language Assessment, based on national guidelines established by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). According to ACTFL, after one semester (45 contact hours), students should be at the novice-mid level. Modern Languages department set our benchmark higher, however: 75% of students will finish first semester language courses at the novice-high level.

In June 2019, Collier and Elías reported the results to the department and shared examples of student writing. FR 1 assessed 18 students. Of these students, **83%** (15 students) placed in the novice high category (4 were not as good, but still fulfilled the rubric's requirements); **17%** (3 students) placed in the novice-mid category. SP 1 assessed 27 students. Of these students, **81%** scored in the novice high category, and **19 %** placed in the novice-mid category.

The department concluded that in both Spanish and French, our students consistently met our benchmark and 100% performed at or above the national average. Putting national averages aside, however, and despite the fact that there were a handful of students that did commendable work and met or exceeded expectations, in general the majority of students performed at lower levels than in previous years. Data shows that our students today have greater difficulty learning a new language. This general trend, which all ML members have noted in all language-learning skills, has been a frequent topic of discussion in our department meetings. Drs. Cardoso, Docter and Elías have had to reduce material in their grammar courses that they were able to include successfully in the past. There remains little time left in class to include a satisfying amount and depth of cultural components. In addition, we note that in some sports, athletes have been missing an inordinate number of classes, which has affected learning.

As expressed in previous assessment reports, one semester of language instruction does not produce students who can go to a country and function as expected in the language. After one semester of language instruction, students can merely use the present tense and very basic vocabulary on six general topics, such as telling time, going shopping, and talking about the family and the weather. Even achieving novice high or intermediate low will not permit intercultural communication at a deeper level (see Appendix A). While other colleges require one or two-years of a foreign language (see Appendix B), our one-semester GE language requirement falls short: it does not provide enough instruction for students to engage in the target language in meaningful ways or to understand anything beyond very basic aspects of culture. This limitation has been further compounded by the difficulty our current students are having understanding very elemental grammar concepts.

We look forward to sharing these results with the Westmont faculty as part of a broader conversation about the foreign language GE requirements as they relate to the mission of Westmont College.

Finally, as stated in our past Six-Year Report, all department members would like to have training in the Oral Proficiency Inventory (ACTFL OPI) to further assess oral skills in language and major courses. Also note that the skills learned with this training also transfer over to understanding and evaluating other categories such as writing. Prior to Westmont, Dr. Cardoso had a week-long training with ACTFL OPI, which has served the department well and convinced us that we all need this training.

ACTFL Performance Descriptors for Language Learners | **Interpersonal**

Domains	Novice Range	Intermediate Range	Advanced Range
	<p>Expresses self in conversations on very familiar topics using a variety of words, phrases, simple sentences, and questions that have been highly practiced and memorized.</p>	<p>Expresses self and participates in conversations on familiar topics using sentences and series of sentences. Handles short social interactions in everyday situations by asking and answering a variety of questions. Can communicate about self, others, and everyday life.</p>	<p>Expresses self fully to maintain conversations on familiar topics and new concrete social, academic, and work-related topics. Can communicate in paragraph-length conversation about events with detail and organization. Confidently handles situations with an unexpected complication. Shares point of view in discussions.</p>
Functions	<p>Can ask highly predictable and formulaic questions and respond to such questions by listing, naming, and identifying.</p> <p>May show emerging evidence of the ability to engage in simple conversation.</p>	<p>Can communicate by understanding and creating personal meaning.</p> <p>Can understand, ask, and answer a variety of questions.</p> <p>Consistently able to initiate, maintain, and end a conversation to satisfy basic needs and/or to handle a simple transaction.</p> <p>May show emerging evidence of the ability to communicate about more than the “here and now.”</p>	<p>Can communicate with ease and confidence by understanding and producing narrations and descriptions in all major time frames and deal efficiently with a situation with an unexpected turn of events.</p> <p>May show emerging evidence of the ability to participate in discussions about issues beyond the concrete.</p>
Contexts/ Content	<p>Able to function in some personally relevant contexts on topics that relate to basic biographical information.</p> <p>May show emerging evidence of the ability to communicate in highly practiced contexts related to oneself and immediate environment.</p>	<p>Able to communicate in contexts relevant to oneself and others, and one’s immediate environment.</p> <p>May show emerging evidence of the ability to communicate in contexts of occasionally unfamiliar topics.</p>	<p>Functions fully and effectively in contexts both personal and general.</p> <p>Content areas include topics of personal and general interest (community, national, and international events) as well as work-related topics and areas of special competence.</p> <p>May show emerging evidence of the ability to communicate in more abstract content areas.</p>
Text Type	<p>Understands and produces highly practiced words and phrases and an occasional sentence. Able to ask formulaic or memorized questions.</p>	<p>Able to understand and produce discrete sentences, strings of sentences and some connected sentences. Able to ask questions to initiate and sustain conversations.</p>	<p>Able to understand and produce discourse in full oral paragraphs that are organized, cohesive, and detailed. Able to ask questions to probe beyond basic details.</p>

ACTFL Performance Descriptors for Language Learners | Interpersonal

Domains	Novice Range	Intermediate Range	Advanced Range
Language Control	<p>Can usually comprehend highly practiced and basic messages when supported by visual or contextual clues, redundancy or restatement, and when the message contains familiar structures.</p> <p>Can control memorized language sufficiently to be appropriate to the context and understood by those accustomed to dealing with language learners, however at times with difficulty.</p>	<p>Understands straightforward language that contains mostly familiar structures.</p> <p>Control of language is sufficient to be understood by those accustomed to dealing with language learners.</p>	<p>Language control is sufficient to interact efficiently and effectively with those unaccustomed to dealing with language learners.</p> <p>Consistent control of basic high-frequency structures facilitates comprehension and production.</p>
Vocabulary	<p>Able to understand and produce a number of high frequency words, highly practiced expressions, and formulaic questions.</p>	<p>Communicates using high frequency and personalized vocabulary within familiar themes or topics.</p>	<p>Comprehends and produces a broad range of vocabulary related to school, employment, topics of personal interest, and generic vocabulary related to current events and matters of public and community interest.</p>
Communication Strategies	<p>May use some or all of the following strategies to maintain communication, able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imitate modeled words • Use facial expressions and gestures • Repeat words • Resort to first language • Ask for repetition • Indicate lack of understanding 	<p>Uses some of the following strategies to maintain communication, but not all of the time and inconsistently, able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask questions • Ask for clarification • Self-correct or restate when not understood • Circumlocute 	<p>Uses a range of strategies to maintain communication, able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request clarification • Repeat • Restate • Rephrase • Circumlocute
Cultural Awareness	<p>May use culturally appropriate gestures and formulaic expressions in highly practiced applications. May show awareness of the most obvious cultural differences or prohibitions, but may often miss cues indicating miscommunication.</p>	<p>Recognizes and uses some culturally appropriate vocabulary, expressions, and gestures when participating in everyday interactions. Recognizes that differences exist in cultural behaviors and perspectives and can conform in familiar situations.</p>	<p>Understands and uses cultural knowledge to conform linguistically and behaviorally in many social and work-related interactions. Shows conscious awareness of significant cultural differences and attempts to adjust accordingly.</p>

Domains	Novice Range	Intermediate Range	Advanced Range
	<p>Understands words, phrases, and formulaic language that have been practiced and memorized to get meaning of the main idea from simple, highly-predictable oral or written texts, with strong visual support.</p>	<p>Understands main ideas and some supporting details on familiar topics from a variety of texts.</p>	<p>Understands main ideas and supporting details on familiar and some new, concrete topics from a variety of more complex texts that have a clear, organized structure.</p>
Functions	<p>Comprehends meaning through recognition of key words and formulaic phrases that are highly contextualized.</p> <p>May show emerging evidence of the ability to make inferences based on background and prior knowledge.</p>	<p>Comprehends main ideas and identifies some supporting details.</p> <p>May show emerging evidence of the ability to make inferences by identifying key details from the text.</p>	<p>Comprehends the main idea and supporting details of narrative, descriptive, and straightforward persuasive texts.</p> <p>Makes inferences and derives meaning from context and linguistic features.</p>
Contexts/Content	<p>Comprehends texts with highly predictable, familiar contexts (those related to personal background, prior knowledge, or experiences).</p>	<p>Comprehends information related to basic personal and social needs and relevant to one's immediate environment such as self and everyday life, school, community, and particular interests.</p>	<p>Comprehends texts pertaining to real-world topics of general interest relevant to personal, social, work-related, community, national, and international contexts.</p>
Text Type	<p>Derives meaning when authentic texts (listening, reading, or viewing) are supported by visuals or when the topic is very familiar.</p> <p>Comprehends texts ranging in length from lists, to phrases, to simple sentences, often with graphically organized information.</p>	<p>Comprehends simple stories, routine correspondence, short descriptive texts or other selections within familiar contexts.</p> <p>Generally comprehends connected sentences and much paragraph-like discourse.</p> <p>Comprehends information-rich texts with highly predictable order.</p>	<p>Comprehends paragraph discourse such as that found in stories, straightforward literary works, personal and work-related correspondence, written reports or instructions, oral presentations (news), anecdotes, descriptive texts, and other texts dealing with topics of a concrete nature.</p>

ACTFL Performance Descriptors for Language Learners | Interpretive

Domains	Novice Range	Intermediate Range	Advanced Range
Language Control	<p>Primarily relies on vocabulary to derive meaning from texts.</p> <p>May derive meaning by recognizing structural patterns that have been used in familiar and some new contexts.</p>	<p>Sufficient control of language (vocabulary, structures, conventions of spoken and written language, etc.) to understand fully and with ease short, non-complex texts on familiar topics; limited control of language to understand some more complex texts.</p> <p>May derive meaning by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparing target language structures with those of the native language • Recognizing parallels in structure between new and familiar language 	<p>Sufficient control of language (vocabulary, structures, conventions of spoken and written language, etc.) to understand fully and with ease more complex and descriptive texts with connected language and cohesive devices.</p> <p>Derives meaning by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding sequencing, time frames, and chronology • Classifying words or concepts according to word order or grammatical use
Vocabulary	<p>Comprehends some, but not all of the time, highly predictable vocabulary, a limited number of words related to familiar topics, and formulaic expressions.</p>	<p>Comprehends high frequency vocabulary related to everyday topics and high frequency idiomatic expressions.</p>	<p>Comprehends generic and some specific vocabulary and structures, specialized and precise vocabulary on topics related to one's experience, and an expanding number of idiomatic expressions.</p>
Communication Strategies	<p>May use some or all of the following strategies to comprehend texts, able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skim and scan • Rely on visual support and background knowledge • Predict meaning based on context, prior knowledge, and/or experience <p>For alphabetic languages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rely on recognition of cognates • May recognize word family roots, prefixes and suffixes 	<p>May use some or all of the following strategies to comprehend texts, able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skim and scan • Use visual support and background knowledge • Predict meaning based on context, prior knowledge, and/or experience • Use context clues • Recognize word family roots, prefixes and suffixes <p>For non-alphabetic languages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize radicals 	<p>Comprehends fully the intent of the message adapting strategies for one's own purposes; uses some or all of the following strategies, able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skim and scan • Use visual support and background knowledge • Predict meaning based on context, prior knowledge, and/or experience • Use context clues • Use linguistic knowledge • Identify the organizing principle of the text • Create inferences • Differentiate main ideas from supporting details in order to verify
Cultural Awareness	<p>Uses own culture to derive meaning from texts that are heard, read, or viewed.</p>	<p>Generally relies heavily on knowledge of own culture with increasing knowledge of the target culture(s) to interpret texts that are heard, read, or viewed.</p>	<p>Uses knowledge of cultural differences between own culture and target culture(s) as well as increasing knowledge of the target culture(s) to interpret texts that are heard, read, or viewed.</p>

Domains	Novice Range	Intermediate Range	Advanced Range
	<p>Communicates information on very familiar topics using a variety of words, phrases, and sentences that have been practiced and memorized.</p>	<p>Communicates information and expresses own thoughts about familiar topics using sentences and series of sentences.</p>	<p>Communicates information and expresses self with detail and organization on familiar and some new concrete topics using paragraphs.</p>
<p>Functions</p>	<p>Presents simple, basic information on very familiar topics by producing words, list, notes, and formulaic language using highly practiced language.</p> <p>May show emerging evidence of the ability to express own thoughts and preferences.</p>	<p>Expresses own thoughts and presents information and personal preferences on familiar topics by creating with language primarily in present time.</p> <p>May show emerging evidence of the ability to tell or retell a story and provide additional description.</p>	<p>Produces narrations and descriptions in all major time frames on familiar and some unfamiliar topics.</p> <p>May show emerging evidence of the ability to provide a well-supported argument, including detailed evidence in support of a point of view.</p>
<p>Contexts/ Content</p>	<p>Creates messages in some personally relevant contexts on topics that relate to basic biographical information.</p> <p>May show emerging evidence of the ability to create messages in highly practiced contexts related to oneself and immediate environment.</p>	<p>Creates messages in contexts relevant to oneself and others, and one’s immediate environment.</p> <p>May show emerging evidence of the ability to create messages on general interest and work-related topics.</p>	<p>Creates messages fully and effectively in contexts both personal and general.</p> <p>Content areas include topics of personal and general interest (community, national, and international events) as well as work-related topics and areas of special competence.</p> <p>May show emerging evidence of the ability to create messages in more abstract content areas.</p>
<p>Text Type</p>	<p>Produces words and phrases and highly practiced sentences or formulaic questions.</p>	<p>Produces sentences, series of sentences, and some connected sentences.</p>	<p>Produces full paragraphs that are organized and detailed.</p>

ACTFL Performance Descriptors for Language Learners | **Presentational**

	Novice Range	Intermediate Range	Advanced Range
Language Control	<p>Produces memorized language that is appropriate to the context; limited language control may require a sympathetic audience to be understood.</p> <p>With practice, polish, or editing, may show emerging evidence of Intermediate-level language control.</p>	<p>Control of language is sufficient to be understood by audiences accustomed to language produced by language learners.</p> <p>With practice, polish, or editing, may show emerging evidence of Advanced-level language control.</p>	<p>Control of high-frequency structures is sufficient to be understood by audiences not accustomed to language of language learners.</p> <p>With practice, polish, or editing, shows evidence of Advanced-level control of grammar and syntax.</p>
Vocabulary	<p>Produces a number of high frequency words and formulaic expressions; able to use a limited variety of vocabulary on familiar topics.</p>	<p>Produces vocabulary on variety of everyday topics, topics of personal interest, and topics that have been studied.</p>	<p>Produces a broad range of vocabulary related to topics of personal, public, and community interest, and some specific vocabulary related to areas of study or expertise.</p>
Communication Strategies	<p>May use some or all of the following strategies to communicate, able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rely on a practiced format • Use facial expressions and gestures • Repeat words • Resort to first language • Use graphic organizers to present information • Rely on multiple drafts and practice sessions with feedback • Support presentational speaking with visuals and notes • Support presentational writing with visuals or prompts 	<p>May use some or all of the following strategies to communicate and maintain audience interest, able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show an increasing awareness of errors and able to self-correct or edit • Use phrases, imagery, or content • Simplify • Use known language to compensate for missing vocabulary • Use graphic organizer • Use reference resources as appropriate 	<p>May use some or all of the following strategies to communicate and maintain audience interest, able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate conscious efforts at self-editing and correction • Elaborate and clarify • Provide examples, synonyms, or antonyms • Use cohesion, chronology and details to explain or narrate fully • Circumlocute
Cultural Awareness	<p>May use some memorized culturally appropriate gestures, formulaic expressions, and basic writing conventions.</p>	<p>Uses some culturally appropriate vocabulary, expressions, and gestures. Reflects some knowledge of cultural differences related to written and spoken communication.</p>	<p>Uses cultural knowledge appropriate to the presentational context and increasingly reflective of authentic cultural practices and perspectives.</p>



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Appendix B. Benchmark Schools: ML Requirements, Languages and FTE

College/University	FL Requirement	Undergrad pop	Languages*	FTE**
Willamette University	4 semesters	1950	6/3	15
Pomona College	3 semesters	1650	6	24
Occidental College	2 semesters	2000	7/2	16
Calvin College	4 semesters	3600	7/2	16
Wheaton College	3 semesters	2400	4/3	12
Pepperdine University	3 semesters	3600	5/2	13
Westmont College	1 semester	1300	3/2	4

*Number of modern languages taught /number of classical languages (e.g. Greek, Hebrew, and Latin)

**Not counting professors of classical languages (Greek, Hebrew, and Latin) or part-time/adjunct professors