

Assessment of General Education Foreign Languages Competency 2006

Department: Language and Literature

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Period Covered by Report: Fall 2006

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1. - Key Learning Outcomes: What should students be able to do AFTER completing this program? State learning outcomes simply and in measurable terms. Please limit the number of outcomes to five or fewer.

If your department reports on General Education competency areas (writing, foreign language, quantitative reasoning, scientific reasoning), please use this form to report on those areas in a separately generated document.

Foreign language faculty have identified a set of proficiencies they believe students should achieve in the target language by the end of the two-semester introductory sequence or the one-semester accelerated course in Spanish, French or German.

These proficiencies are the following:

- A rudimentary mastery of tenses
- Familiarity with pronouns and ability to use them correctly
- A core vocabulary that enables students to communicate on an elementary level both *in* comprehension and *in* response
- Near standard spelling
- Knowledge of present subjunctive (French and Spanish only; German introduces subjunctive in the third semester)
- Understanding of the four cases (German only)
- An introduction to another culture and an awakening understanding of the culture of the countries associated with the target language.

2. - Please link learning outcomes to the College's Desired Accomplishments/Goals.

Culture and language are inextricably related, and in the foreign language classroom, students not only learn about the target culture directly, they also learn about it through the manner in which the peoples in those cultures express themselves. They are introduced to Francophone culture, Germanic culture, or the various Hispanic cultures and are taught to appreciate those cultures. This appreciation results in a greater appreciation of diversity within their own country.

All the proficiencies link to Desired Accomplishments/Goals 1.3 and 1.6.

3. - Through what courses/assignments will you ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn this? List key courses, capstones, internships, experiences, etc.

- Spanish 101 and 102 *or* Spanish 103H (accelerated elementary course)
- French 101 and 102 *or* French 103H (accelerated elementary course)
- German 101 and 102

4. - Please list all tools used for assessing student achievement (CRTs, MFTs, capstones, exit interviews, external reviews, etc.). Choose a minimum of three tools.

1. Minimum Competency Test: This test consists of 20 questions from a test bank of 25. It tests students' knowledge of tenses, idiomatic expressions, use of pronouns, spelling, case (German), question and answer formation, and present subjunctive. Since it consists of questions which students must answer in complete sentences, it tests comprehension and ability to formulate grammatically correct replies to these questions, thus testing reading and writing. Cultural testing has been embedded in tests throughout the semester. However, it will be included in this test also to a small extent. The Minimum Competency Test is administered as a part of the final exam, but is not graded.
2. Oral Proficiency Test: This is administered between mid-semester and the end of the term to test oral production and comprehension. Students are given a topic which they must develop and present for 2-3 minutes. They must also answer questions chosen randomly from a bank they have been given previously. These questions cover topics students have studied throughout the semester—including cultural topics. The ACTFL Guidelines explaining competence students should achieve at the end of the 101-102 sequence will be used as a rubric to determine success on this testing.
3. Journal/Cultural Test of the Target Culture: This test consists of 20 questions from a test bank of 25. It tests students' knowledge about the people who speak the language they are learning and the culture. Questions will be answered in English. The Cultural Test will be administered at the beginning of the semester and as a part of the final exam in order to provide an analysis of value added.

Previous assessment planned for cultural knowledge was in the form of a cultural journal which was used during the fall and which will be discussed later in this report.

5. - How will you assess how well your students are learning? List standards/performance indicators, etc., taking care to provide quantifiable means (for example, all students should earn a minimum 50% on exit exam; 65 % should earn a minimum 70%; with a rubric, indicate the scale used, the levels of competence, what is identified as “competent,” and what constitutes competence for

each outcome measure, what percentage of students you would expect to see at each level, etc.). Be sure to spell out criteria.

1. Minimum Competency Test: Competence will be indicated by answering 12 out of 20 (60%) of the questions correctly. One hundred percent of students should achieve this score. We believe that 50% should score a 70% and 15% an 85%.
2. The Oral Proficiency Test: This test will be scored by use of the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Guidelines for speaking and listening which dictate the level which foreign language students should achieve by the end of the introductory sequence. The ACTFL rubric used is one for novices with low, mid, and high levels. Competence will be indicated by an average score of 2. One hundred percent of students should achieve this score. Foreign language faculty would expect about 30% to score a 2.5 and 5% to score a 3.
3. Journal/Cultural Test: Competence will be indicated by answering 12 out of 20 (60%) of the questions correctly. One hundred percent of students should achieve this score. We believe that 50% should score a 70% and 15% an 85%. (These standards apply to a new means of assessment for this component which is proposed to begin in the fall of 2007)

Foreign language faculty planned to use a rubric to evaluate the cultural journal mentioned above in 4.3, but never were able to develop or find one that would provide the information desired or that was acceptable to all faculty. This lack of usable evaluation in the area of culture led to the revised plan for assessing cultural knowledge described in the paragraph above and in 4.3. **The cultural journal was used in the fall of 2006, and there are, however, some results for that measure. (See 7.3)**

6. - How often, when, and under what circumstances will you gather the relevant data?

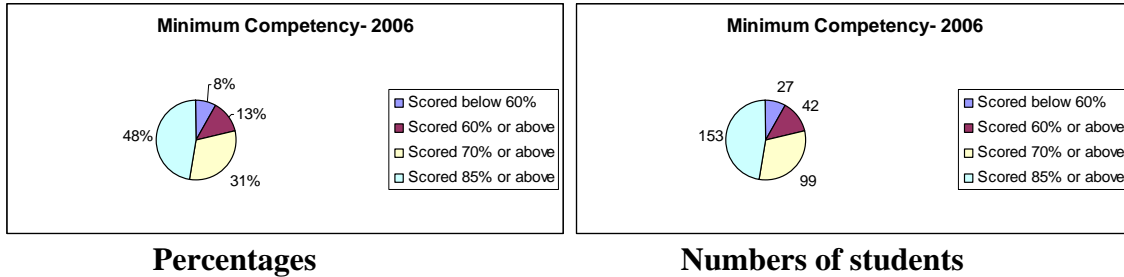
1. Minimum competency exams are given at the end of 101, 102, and 103H as a part of the final exams. They will be graded jointly for consistency, and instructors will analyze them to identify students' weaknesses.
2. Oral proficiency exams will be given between the middle of the semester and the end. Students will come to the instructor's office in pairs. The exam typically takes approximately 15 minutes per pair.
3. Cultural exams will be given at the beginning of the semester and at the end of 101, 102, and 103H as a part of the final exams. They will be graded jointly to analyze students' progress in gaining knowledge and understanding of the culture.

(new measure)

7. - Summarize what has been learned about how well students are achieving desired outcomes.

According to the data collected, we conclude the following:

1. Minimum Competency Test: This analysis is based on data from the fall of 2006.



At the end of the fall of 2006, there were 322 students in the introductory foreign language sequences who took the Minimum Competency Test.

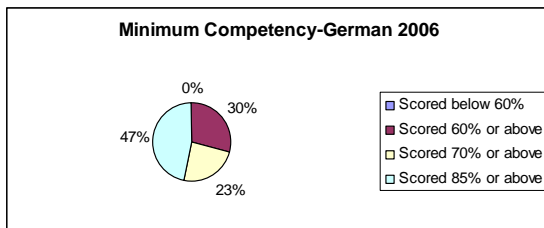
13% of the students scored between 60% and 70%.

31% of the students scored between 70% and 85%.

48% of the students scored 85% or above.

The Foreign Language section did not achieve the goal 100% of the students scoring 60% or above, but came very close with 92% of students in that range; however more than 50% scored a 70%, and the number scoring 85% was remarkable.

Reviewing the data by individual language provides the following information:



There were 17 students taking German by the end of the semester.

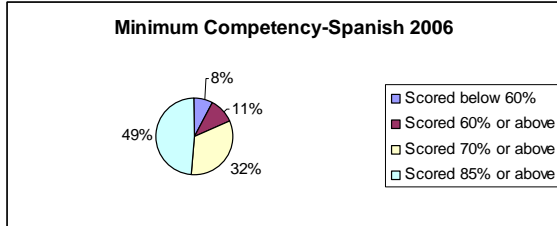
30% scored between 60% and 70%

23% of the students between 70% and 85%

47% of the students scored 85% or above

Totaling these percentages, it is clear that 100% of German students achieved the goal of 60% or better on the minimum competency, 70% scored 70% or above, and 47% scored 85% or above.

While German achieved all goals indicated in section 5.1 of this assessment report, Spanish and French do not show similar results. However, their results are still quite good.



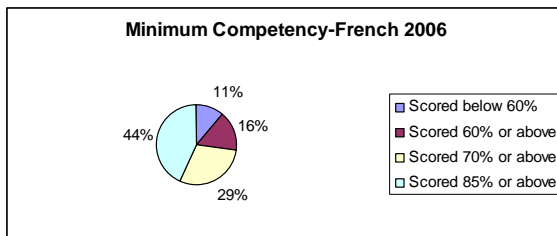
There were a total of 224 students taking Spanish by the end of the fall of 2006.

11% of the students scored between 60% and 70%.

32% of the students scored between 70% and 85%.

49% of the students scored 85% or above.

The total percentage of students achieving 60% or above is 92%. While Spanish did not achieve the goal of 100% of students scoring 60% or above, it surpassed its other goals with 81% of students scoring 70% or above, and 49% scoring 85% or above.



There were a total of 80 students taking French by the end of the fall of 2006

16% of the students scored between 60% and 70%.

29% of the students scored between 70% and 85%.

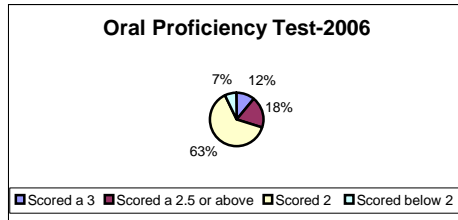
44% of the students scored 85% or above.

A total of 89% of students achieved a score of 60% or above. French did not achieve the goal of 100% of students scoring 60% or above but surpassed the other goals with 73% of students scoring 70% or above, and 44% scoring 85% or above.

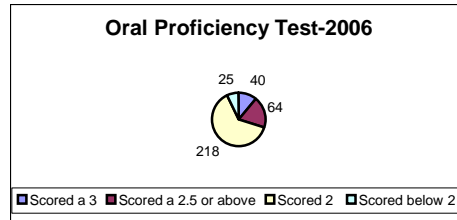
These results indicate that only German achieved the goals described in the 5.1 section of the report. Neither French nor Spanish students met the goal of 100% of students scoring 60% or above, but both achieved respectable percentages that did meet that goal. However all the foreign languages surpassed the goals for students scoring 70% or above and 85% or above with healthy margins.

We believe the number of students taking a foreign language to be a major factor determining success in the achievement of the goals. Fewer students allow instructors to spend more time with individual students and to be more flexible to students' needs, as in the case of German.

2. The Oral Proficiency Test: This assessment measure was put in place beginning with the fall of 2006, using the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Guidelines for speaking and listening. The ACTFL scoring rubric used was one intended for novices.



Percentages



Number of Students

There were a total of 347 students in the introductory foreign language sequences who took the Oral Proficiency Test. The results indicate that:

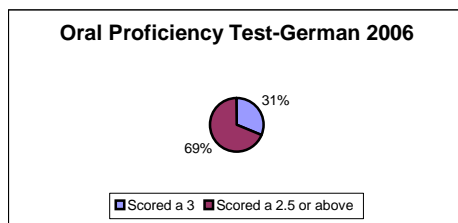
62% of students scored between 2 and 2.5.

18% of students scored between 2.5 or 3.0.

12% of the students scored a 3.

A total of 92% scored a 2 or above, 30% scored a 2.5 or above, and 12% scored a 3.

A review of the data from the individual languages provides the following information:



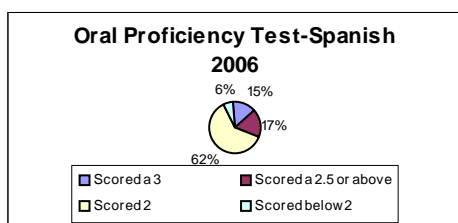
A total of 16 students took the oral exam in German.

31.25% of the students scored between a 2 and a 2.5.

37.5% of the students scored between a 2.0 and a 2.5.

31.25% of the students scored a 3

The students taking the German oral exam met all goals indicated in section 5.2 of this report. However, one student who did not pass the course did not take the exam.



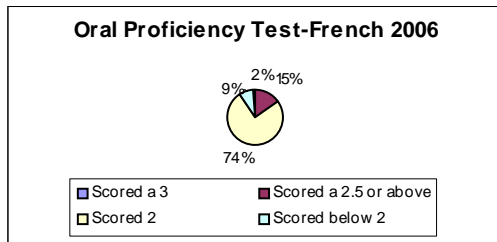
There were a total of 218 students who took the test in Spanish.

62% of the students scored between a 2 and a 2.5.

17% of the students scored between a 2.5 and a 3.0.

15% of the students scored a 3.

The total of students scoring a 2 or above is 94%. While Spanish did not achieve the goal of 100% scoring a 2 or above, it surpassed the goals of 30% scoring a 2.5 or above and 5% scoring a 3 with 32% scoring 2.5 or above and 15% scoring 3.



There were a total of 112 students who took the test in French.

74% of the students scored between a 2 and a 2.5.

15% of the students scored between a 2.5 and a 3.

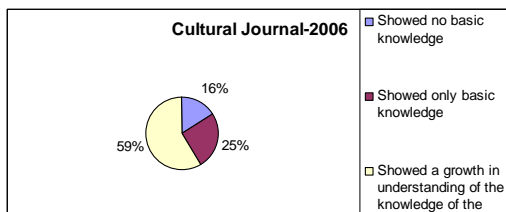
2% of the students scored a 3.

The total of students scoring a 2 or above is 91%; those scoring 2.5 or above is 17% and only 2% of students scored a 3. French did not, therefore, achieve any of the goals described in section 5.2 of this report.

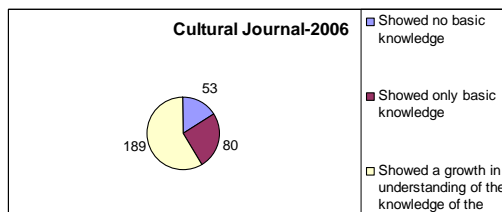
These results indicate that only German achieved the goals described in the 5.2 section of the report. French and Spanish students did not meet the goal of scoring 2, although Spanish did meet its other goals. In addition to that, the percentage of students of French who scored a 3 was less than 2.5.

We believe there is a strong relation between lower numbers and better results as in German. The smaller class allows students more opportunities to speak, and the instructor more time to spend with individual students.

3. Cultural Journal: This assessment measure was put in place beginning with the fall of 2006.



Percentages



Numbers of Students

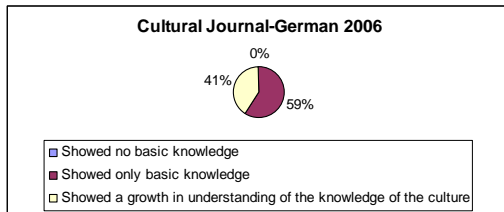
At the end of the fall of 2006, there were 322 students in the 101-102 sequence who turned in cultural journals. According to these data we can conclude:

25% of the students showed only basic knowledge.

59% of the students showed a growth in knowledge and understanding of the culture.

16% of the students did not show basic knowledge.

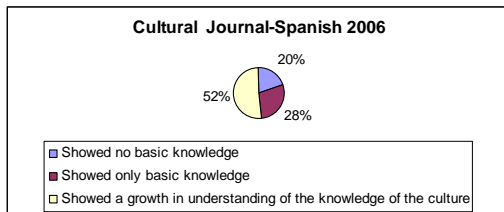
A review of the data from the individual languages provides the following information:



There were a total of 17 students who turned in journals in German in the fall of 2006.

59% of students showed only basic knowledge.

41% of students showed a growth in knowledge and understanding of the culture.

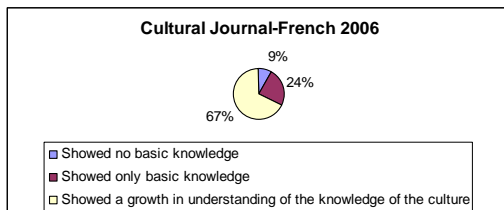


There were 224 students who took Spanish in the fall of 2006.

52% of students showed only basic knowledge.

28% of students showed a growth in knowledge and understanding of the culture.

20% of students did not show basic knowledge.



There were 80 students who turned in the cultural journal the fall of 2006.

23.75% of students showed only basic knowledge.

67.5% of students showed a growth in knowledge and understanding of the culture.

9% of the students did not show basic knowledge.

German clearly shows better results than French and Spanish. As it was the case with the minimum competency and oral proficiency tests, the number of students and results seem to be interconnected.

This new assessment component had to be redesigned. There was some lack of consistency in the way it was applied and a lack of consensus on evaluation procedures, as well as a lack of performance standards because faculty were uncertain what to expect from students in this area. Due to the multiple procedures used by the instructors, the uneven results, and the lack of an acceptable means of assessment, foreign language faculty will begin using a different method to assess cultural knowledge and understanding in the fall of 2007. However, as a result of this attempt, some knowledge about what our students are learning has been gained, and that is reflected above. The redesign of the process is described above in section 4.3 and performance standards have been set. (See section 5.3.)

6. - How often, when, and under what circumstances will you gather the relevant data?

1. Minimum competency exams are given at the end of 101, 102, and 103H as a part of the final exams. They will be graded jointly for consistency, and instructors will analyze them to identify students' weaknesses.
2. Oral proficiency exams will be given between the middle of the semester and the end. Students will come to the instructor's office in pairs. The exam typically takes approximately 15 minutes per pair.
3. Cultural tests will be given at the beginning and end of each semester in 101, 102, and 103H. They will be graded jointly to analyze students' progress in knowledge and understanding of the culture. The pre- and post-tests will provide value added.

7. - Action Plan: What plans have you for the future based on the data gathered that will aim to improve student learning/achievement? Should students perform at less than the standard expected, what steps will the department take to improve their learning/performance? What steps does the department anticipate to improve the program otherwise?

1. **Minimum Competency** - At the end of each semester, minimum competency tests will be assessed jointly by foreign language instructors. Instructors will do an item analysis of the individual questions to determine students' weaknesses. After consultation with the Academic Dean, they will use that analysis to make determinations about areas which they need to reinforce in the content of the introductory classes. The results of those changes will be reported in the annual assessment report.

These results indicate that all the foreign language at the 101-102 sequence (especially Spanish and French) need to raise the percentage students scoring 60% or above.

On analyzing the results for weakness, faculty did not find surprises. Students have difficulties with verbal conjugation, understanding of the cases (German only), use of the pronouns such as reflexives, conjugations of verb tenses, and use of the different tenses such as present subjunctive (French and Spanish).

Some of the problem rests with the textbook. The textbook used in German puts too many confusing grammatical issues in the two chapters on the accusative case, particularly in the second one. The instructor will continue using this textbook because of its superior communicative exercises. However, she will reorganize the manner in which accusative is presented and provide more exercises in this area to help students reinforce their understanding of this difficulty.

In other languages, instructors will assign additional material and exercises dealing with the difficult items. The new textbook adopted by the Spanish section for Spanish 101 and 102 is expected to assist in the process.

2. Oral Production - We need to consider the fact that this is the first time we have done oral exams. It was difficult to know what to expect in terms of percentage but we feel we have done reasonably well, even though we did not reach the goal of 100% of students scoring a 2. We will do an item analysis of categories included in the rubric by ACTFF to find the weaknesses and we will reinforce these areas and use more small group work, as it is possible.

Instructors will use and assign additional material to enhance students' oral production. A major role will be played by more use of the audio material that accompanies the textbooks, such as audio CDs and/or videos, that will reinforce students' ability to communicate and understand native speakers and to produce in the target language.

The language lab has ten computers, which have been outfitted with microphones. Improvement in oral production may include new software for the laboratory.

3. Cultural knowledge and understanding - Beginning with the fall of 2007, instructors will follow a clear and consistent procedure. This will consist of a set of 25 questions chosen from a bank of material that students are expected to learn and understand. The questions, which will include factual material from the target culture, as well as questions that will elicit information about students' understanding of the culture, will be given to students at the beginning of the semester and at the end in order to determine value added. (See attached sample.)