

The College Board World Languages Framework

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Principal Writer – Gail Guntermann, Arizona State University

Content Editor – Greet Van Belle, Barnard College

The College Board World Languages Advisory Committee:

Carmen C. Tesser (Chair), University of Georgia

Dan Davidson, American Councils for International Education

Jane Harper, Tarrant County College

Pat Barr-Harrison, Prince George's County Public Schools

June K. Phillips, Weber State University

Martin Smith, Edison Township Public Schools

Helene Zimmer-Loew, American Association of Teachers of German

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THE COLLEGE BOARD AND WORLD LANGUAGES EDUCATION

Language and communication are at the heart of the human experience. The United States must educate students who are equipped linguistically and culturally to communicate successfully in a pluralistic American society and abroad.

Standards for World Language Learning in the 21st Century, 1999, (p. 7)

To study another language and culture gives one the powerful key to successful communication: knowing how, when, and why to say what to whom...Formerly, most teaching in World language classrooms concentrated on the how (grammar) to say what (vocabulary). While these components of language remain crucial, the current organizing principle for language study is communication...The approach to second language instruction found in today's schools is designed to facilitate genuine interaction with others, whether they are on another continent, across town, or within the neighborhood.

SFLL, (p. 11)

With the publication of the generic standards in 1996 and the language-specific standards in 1999 (referred to in this document as SFLL or simply as “the standards”), the National World Language Collaborative¹ embodied the profession’s vision for the new century. It set the course for applying current knowledge of language acquisition processes and best teaching practice to meet the new century’s needs. The College Board endorses the vision of education in world languages that is expressed in these standards.

In keeping with the College Board’s tradition of conceptualizing goals and best practices in American education, and of implementing them in its various programs—AP, CLEP, SAT—, this framework aims at providing some elemental standard-based principles that may guide the development of the College Board’s products and services. It reflects World Languages professionals’ consensus regarding curriculum development—*what* learners should know and be able to do—and assessment both in terms of performance—*how well* learners should know or be able to do, and in terms of evidence—how we should *measure* what learners know and are able to do. It also offers guiding principles regarding the goals and the role of world language education, the nature of language, language variants, the nature of culture, the students, instruction, teachers, the processes of language acquisition, and learning materials.

On all these points research is ongoing and continues to yield new facts and new insights. The list of national world languages resources and resource centers at the end of this framework invites its users to further explore some ideas discussed and to keep abreast of new developments.

¹The National Collaborative is comprised of the various professional language associations: The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), the Chinese Language Association of Secondary-Elementary Schools (CLASS), the Chinese Language Teachers Association (CLTA), the American Classical League (ACL), the American Association of Teachers of French (AATF), the American Association of Teachers of German (AATG), the Association of Teachers of Japanese (ATJ), the National Council of Japanese Language Teachers (NCJLT), the American Council of Teachers of Russian (ACTR), the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (AATSP), and the Association of Departments of Foreign Languages (ADFL), a division of the Modern Language Association (MLA). (AATA) American Association of Teachers of Arabic.

FRAMEWORK

1. *The Goals*

- ◆ The goals of world language programs are determined by the needs of the students to communicate for a variety of purposes and in many contexts; to understand the nature of language, communication, and culture; to apply effective language learning strategies; and to use the new language for much the same purposes that are served by the first language.
- ◆ Learning outcomes are stated in terms of student performances, processes, and strategies as well as knowledge of information.

2. *The Role of World Languages in General Education*

- ◆ World languages constitute an essential part of students' general education. In the course of language learning in today's standards-based curriculum, students gain an understanding of basic aspects of human existence: the nature of language itself as it is used for communication and the complex concept of culture. Students become aware of multiple perspectives and means of expression, which leads to an appreciation of difference.
- ◆ Language study also can and should reinforce and enrich the learning of content from other disciplines.

3. *The Nature of Language and Communication*

- ◆ Although accuracy in the use of individual elements of a language plays a more or less essential role in effective communication, language is more than a collection of grammatical forms and structures. It functions in communicative contexts to accomplish real-life purposes. Human communication is a complex, purposeful process of making and interpreting meaning in various contexts.
- ◆ Successful communication requires awareness of social, cultural, and linguistic conventions.

4. *Language Variants*

- ◆ Languages vary internally reflecting different geographic regions, users' age, sex, and social standing. Where appropriate and/or for the purposes of College Board assessments, language learners may need to learn to comprehend and interpret the "standard" language or one of its major variants and develop awareness of the varied ways in which the speakers of a language may express particular meanings.
- ◆ However, we should not expect students to comprehend or produce language that is limited in usage to an isolated local area or group of people, especially at the early levels.

5. *The Nature of Culture*

- ◆ Cultural understanding is founded on knowledge of the relationships among cultural practices and products and the perspectives of the culture's people.
- ◆ Practices are the patterns of social interactions within a culture;
- ◆ products are both tangible (tools, books, music) and intangible (laws, conventions, institutions);
- ◆ and perspectives are the values, attitudes, and assumptions that underlie both practices and products but that are less readily evident to the observer.

6. *The Students*

- ◆ All students can and should learn at least one language other than English.
- ◆ However, the student population in world language classes is far from homogenous, and differences regarding language, cultural and learning background, as well as learning styles may affect curriculum design, instruction, materials and assessments.

6.1. Students can have different *home languages and cultures*:

Not all students may equally understand English and teachers, designers of curricula and materials may not assume that using English aids everyone equally to comprehend explanations and instructions.

Although speakers of any language can learn any other language, progress may greatly vary depending on the relative differences between various language systems. For example, a learner whose family speaks Romanian may learn many aspects of Spanish more easily than his or her English-speaking classmates, due to the similarities among Romance languages.

6.2. Students can be at different *levels of language learning*:

Students can have *started* language study at different points, from pre-school to adulthood, and individual schools and teachers may have offered widely varying programs and teaching approaches. High school students who began language study in elementary school immersion programs will have superior listening comprehension and more knowledge of content in the language than students from FLES classes and those who have had no language study before high school.

Heritage learners represent a special segment. They range from first-generation speakers who have transferred into a US school system, to members of the third or fourth generation who have an interest in their heritage language but speak it very little or not at all. Second-generation students are likely to exhibit high oral proficiency, but if they have not had the benefit of bilingual instruction, they read and write very little. In

general, heritage learners arrive with superior listening comprehension and demonstrate appropriate social use of the language.

As the standards are more fully addressed, as programs of instruction increase in length, and as more heritage learners seek to maintain and expand their knowledge of their ancestral languages and cultures, it is reasonable to predict that assessments such as the SAT and Advanced Placement tests will need to address the inclusion of more advanced learners who have had more previous experience than students from today's typical short programs of study. While students' varied abilities are not necessarily reflected in overall scores, they can be in a more detailed reporting of the results.

6.3. Students can greatly differ in their *learning styles and strategies*.

While one may be introspective and logically inclined, another can be more social, verbal, or musical. Some learn best from role-playing or physical activity, others through the use of pictures and mental images.

Research has demonstrated that students have different learning styles and that they learn best when that style matches the teacher's teaching style. However, language programs can meet the diverse learning preferences of students while also expanding their abilities to learn in new ways, if teachers and instructional materials provide varied exercises and activities. The task for teachers, creators of learning materials, and designers of assessments is to engage all learners by differentiating the tasks and providing support in varied forms for carrying them out; stressing learning processes as well as learners' products; and adjusting content to students' interests, preferably involving them in the planning process wherever possible. Technology can play an important role in meeting the needs and preferences of diverse learners. Web searches, e-mail, chat rooms, word processing programs, videos and DVDs, and combinations of electronic tools offer opportunities for addressing varied student interests and learning styles.

7. *Instruction*

- ◆ Instruction is student-centered and designed to achieve the curriculum goals with achievement measured according to assessment standards.
- ◆ Effective teachers place students at the center of education and limit their own role to arranging the best conditions for learning, to guiding and assessing students' performance, and to providing them with helpful feedback. The students themselves help to determine the content, activities, and assessments and carry out the tasks within thematic units, researching information for themselves as they need it.
- ◆ Teachers engage students, showing them by example and through meaningful activities the usefulness and excitement of language learning.
- ◆ They bring the culture into the classroom, so that students learn what the culture values and how it manifests those values.

- ◆ Teachers also make the connections with other subjects that the students are studying and arrange for connections with the community.
- ◆ In order for students to learn to communicate, teachers devote most class time to activities that involve students in interpersonal, interpretive and presentational modes of communication.

8. *Teachers*

- ◆ Teachers of world languages are proficient in the languages and cultures that they teach and in designing and implementing instruction according to the current paradigm of language instruction.

Teachers are clearly the most important influences on student learning in schools. It stands to reason that reforms in education depend upon the extent and quality of teacher development and that professional development efforts must prepare teachers to teach and assess according to the current paradigms in education. All of the standards for students and teachers are performance-based, specifying what teachers need to be willing and able to do with their knowledge. In addition to knowing the student content standards, teachers must be able to demonstrate the ability to implement them in classrooms, designing and executing standards-based curricula, units, and lesson plans.

In order to accomplish these ends through the use of the target language, teachers must first be proficient in the language and culture. Without advanced proficiency, they are unable to conduct standards-based classes, which require considerable content taught in the language and extensive non-planned conversation between teacher and students. Constant meaningful, contextualized linguistic and cultural input to learners is essential for their acquisition of the language, and when classes are taught largely in English, opportunities for receiving and processing input are lost. Furthermore, teachers need to be familiar with other subject matter in the language they teach and have the ability to teach this content in an interdisciplinary manner

9. *The Processes of Language Acquisition in the Classroom*

- ◆ Individuals best acquire language by using it to comprehend, interpret, and express meaning for particular purposes, rather than through the mastering of a set sequence of language elements that are presented, practiced, and tested.
- ◆ Mastery of any form or structure takes place gradually, with practice in comprehending, interpreting, and expressing meaning both in the classroom and beyond. Students can interpret the meanings carried by forms well in advance of their ability to produce them.
- ◆ Learning content is one effective use of language that leads to language acquisition.
- ◆ Like real-world communication, language acquisition requires a purpose for communicating and attention to situational contexts of communicative events.

10. *Learning Materials*

- ◆ In order to engage students and give them an accurate view of the language and its speakers, materials—textbooks, texts, activities and exercises—need to be authentic, varied, appropriate to the students’ learning level, and purposeful.
- 10.1.** Narrowly defined, *authentic* materials are those that are produced by and for native bearers of the language and culture, automatically integrating accurate linguistic and cultural input to students. Authentic materials, both written and oral, have many advantages: they exemplify natural language use for real-life communicative purposes, they bring the culture to the students directly, and they motivate and engage students much more than materials that are contrived for the purpose of teaching about language and culture. While authentic materials must be selected with learners’ abilities, age level, and interests in mind, they have been found to be—with appropriate instruction—more transparent and accessible to students than was previously thought.
- 10.2.** No single textbook, even when accompanied by ancillary materials, can meet the needs and interests and the varied talents and skills of a classroom full of students as they carry out tasks in thematic units. A *wide variety* of texts needs to be available, including literature, popular magazines, newspapers, radio broadcasts, movies, interview programs, weather reports, and many others. Even soap operas can demonstrate language use and non-verbal communication associated with particular social situations, and commercials can serve beginners with repetitive input and content for discussing linguistic and cultural similarities and differences. Often, a commercial or other short and familiar text can be used to introduce a topic in a simple, comprehensible fashion to help prepare students for a more complex text on the same or a closely related topic. Thus, one text builds on another and can serve as an advance organizer for another, more complex, text.
- 10.3.** In selecting **appropriate** materials for a particular group of students, teachers need to take into account their *students’ level*. For beginners and intermediate-level students, appropriate texts contain high-frequency or highly contextualized vocabulary and deal with topics with which the students are familiar. Discourse is connected, highly cohesive, and organized in a transparently logical manner. Texts may include description, narration, and explanation. They avoid most slang and other language that is limited to a particular locality, and they contain little figurative language that is not frequently encountered. At the same time, they are natural, not contrived for language learners; they contain embedded cultural information that can be analyzed by students; and they reflect a particular style, formal or informal, to demonstrate to students the social use of the language in a given setting or for a particular purpose. At higher levels, texts are longer and offer increasingly complex structures, more abstract ideas and topics, and less dependence on high-frequency vocabulary.
- 10.4.** Learning materials guide students through steps of developing *oral* and *written* proficiency for *a particular purpose and audience*.

10.4.1. As students develop *oral* proficiency in the language, they are placed in meaningful and purposeful situations in which they describe and narrate, first in sentence-length discourse and later in coherent paragraphs. They progress from briefly and simply expressing thoughts, feelings, needs, and likes and dislikes, to explaining and defending a point of view, and at the highest levels, to discussing hypothetical events and situations.

10.4.2. In *writing*, intercultural communications require attention to the communicative conventions of another culture in order to ensure accurate comprehension and interpretation of messages as they were intended; therefore, writing tasks either inform students of the purpose and situational context for writing, including a description of the audience, or ask students to determine their own purposes and audiences and create their messages accordingly. Students are led to write directly in the target language, rather than first composing in English and then translating. Writing skills are developed through what may be called personal writing and through tasks in the interpersonal and presentational communicative modes. *Personal* writing includes grocery lists, reminders of things to do, outlines, exercises for practice, personal diaries, and other messages that one writes to oneself. The purpose of *interpersonal* writing is to communicate with someone else in anticipation of a reaction or reply, and it includes letters, notes, instructions, e-mail messages, telephone messages for someone else, text messaging, and written chat room exchanges. *Presentational* writing refers to writing essays, skits, articles, stories, brochures, announcements, etc., to be read by others without the expectation of a response. The purpose of these written documents may be to inform, persuade, describe, or narrate.

11. *Curriculum Design and Development*

- ◆ Before specifying classroom activities, curriculum designers determine the desired goals and outcomes and the evidence that will demonstrate achievement. This process of “backwards design” (Wiggins & McTighe, 2004) produces curricula that are aligned with the vision of language acquisition embodied in the standards; it addresses the standards in an integrated fashion, and ensures that students as well as teachers are made aware of the purposes for learning and the ways in which it will be assessed.
- ◆ Students’ interests and preferences are taken into account throughout the curriculum-development process.

The eleven standards that define in broad terms the content of the curriculum are grouped under the five goal areas, the “five C’s” of: Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities.

- 11.1.** *Communication* encompasses three modes: interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational, as summarized by Kenyon, et al. (2000):

11.1.1. The *interpersonal* mode involves two-way, interactive communication, such as conversing face-to-face or exchanging e-mail messages. It is characterized by direct communication between individuals who are in personal contact, thus allowing the participants to clarify their meaning when misunderstandings occur. In this mode, participants in the interaction use both linguistic and non-linguistic feedback from others to ascertain the extent to which their message is being successfully communicated, and can make adjustments and clarifications accordingly. Necessary to achieving successful communication in this mode are the productive language abilities of speaking and writing as well as the receptive abilities of listening and reading, and the ability to use and interpret non-verbal behavior, including body language in face-to-face interactions.

11.1.2. The *interpretive* mode relates to the understanding of spoken or written language, such as listening to a broadcast or reading a magazine. It involves having a culturally appropriate understanding of the meaning of oral or written messages sent via print and visual images. In this mode, the original author is not present to clarify misunderstandings. Necessary to achieving successful communication in this mode are the receptive language abilities of listening and reading, and the ability to use visual images to assist in comprehension.

11.1.3. The *presentational* mode involves spoken or written communication, such as giving a speech or writing a story. It involves producing spoken or written messages for an audience with whom there is no immediate personal contact. Thus, there is no possibility to clarify intended meanings when misunderstandings occur. Such messages need to reflect awareness of cultural differences in order to be presented in a manner that will enable appropriate interpretation by persons from a cultural background where the World language is spoken. Necessary to achieving successful communication in this mode are the productive language abilities of speaking and writing and the ability to use visual images. (pp. 19, 20)

11.1.4. The following chart clarifies the roles that students learn to carry out in each of the three communicative modes and shows how the former “four skills” are contextualized:

| | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Interpersonal mode | Listener/Speaker Reader/Writer |
| Interpretive mode | Listener Reader |
| Presentational mode | Speaker Writer |

11.2. *Cultures.* Cultural perspectives underlie the ways in which people use languages for communication, and the patterns of behavior and products of a society; therefore, the Culture standards demonstrate the interaction of perspectives, practices, and products. A language curriculum oriented to the standards integrates these aspects of culture throughout, as they are pertinent to communicating effectively within the culture and

understanding cultural phenomena “from the inside.” From the first days of class, when students learn to greet each other and carry on short conversations, they need to consider the surrounding situation and know what to say when to whom in an appropriate manner. Technology offers opportunities to interact with native speakers in other countries and provides myriad culturally authentic resources for student research projects.

- 11.3. *Connections.*** In addition to aiding learners in the acquisition of the language, using the target language to learn subject matter from other disciplines helps students to see how all learning is interrelated; subjects do not exist in isolation in the real world. Furthermore, students will often learn information that is only available to them through the medium of the new language.
- 11.4. *Comparisons.*** Students compare their native and target languages and cultures, in order to acquire a deeper understanding of their own language and culture. They can gain insight into the nature of language itself and can develop an appreciation for cultural diversity. Students may need strong guidance to see similarities and to appreciate differences without making overgeneralizations.
- 11.5. *Communities.*** The standards-based curriculum takes the student to the community wherever and whenever possible, and brings the community to the school. Students participate in ethnic festivals and other activities off-campus, perform in the language for parents’ organizations, interview native speakers and others who have traveled or lived in countries where the language is spoken in order to gather information for their projects, and interact in the classroom with visitors who speak the language.

12. *Assessment*

- ◆ The effectiveness of human communication is best measured by observations of language users in realistic situations in which they apply strategies to communicate within the range of their expertise and interests, in all three modes of communication as stated in the standards: interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational.
- ◆ For individual examinees, the expected proficiency level depends upon the language itself, the time spent on learning, the nature of the learning context, and characteristics of the learner.
- ◆ The tasks engage students in communicating for realistic purposes, and their responses are rated in terms of effectiveness and appropriateness as well as fluency and accuracy in pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary for expressing particular meanings.

Assessments in standards-based language education are much like those applied in English language arts, in that they measure oral and written communicative processes and performance as well as knowledge. They are authentic in that they test students’ performance in real-world contexts. Knowledge and abilities should be tested the way they are taught; that is, teaching sets the conditions necessary for developing communicative skills, and assessments measure those skills under similar conditions. All too often, teaching and testing have not been aligned, or

teachers have abandoned some communicative goals and methodologies in order to prepare students for standardized tests of grammar, vocabulary, and cultural facts.

Assessments need to deal with language in coherent discourse beyond the level of the single word or sentence, because an understanding of form in terms of its functions requires contextualization; that is, in the world outside of the classroom, language skills do not exist devoid of context. Tests of grammar forms and vocabulary without meaningful contexts lack authenticity and therefore lack validity. Furthermore, communication is purposeful and students should be motivated by realistic purposes for their written and oral communications and for interpreting those of others. Compared to easily-scored discrete-point tests, assessments as described here provide more information that is more interpretable and thus more useful in providing feedback to both students and educators.

12.1. *The three modes of communication.* Since the communicative use of language is central for addressing the other four goal areas of the national standards: cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities, the Framework of Communicative Modes of the standards should serve as the framework for assessments: SFFL p. 37.

12.1.1. The *Interpersonal* mode is perhaps the most difficult of the three modes to assess, given the need for natural, authentic interaction between the examinee and a tester. Nevertheless, this is the domain of communication that is central to the majority of program goals, and it is usually interpersonal communication to which students refer when they say that they most want to learn to “speak the language.”

Interpersonal communication involves interacting with people who do not act like testers; that is, they interact according to particular real-life roles and, unlike testers, they do not always determine the topics and direct the turn-taking aspects of the conversation. Assessments in this mode need to engage students in playing roles with others, in order to test students’ listening comprehension skills as well as their speaking skills, and also their knowledge of how to say what to whom within which social circumstances. Ideally, the interlocutors should also react authentically to the examinees’ communicative attempts. In face-to-face communication, both “sides” call upon strategies of negotiation of meaning, such as asking for clarification and repetition, signaling understanding, restating in different words, and checking for comprehension.

12.1.1.1. In *oral* interpersonal communication, students participate in two-way conversations for a variety of purposes, such as establishing and maintaining relationships, exchanging information, and carrying out transactions. They express feelings and emotions and exchange ideas and opinions. In live, interactive conversations with others, speakers have the opportunity to use language and gestures to signal comprehension or lack of comprehension, and they can make adjustments as needed. In assessments of oral proficiency, students demonstrate the ability to initiate, maintain, and close conversations appropriately without resorting to English. Role-play may be used in order to expand the possibilities of situations and roles beyond the classroom setting. A conversation needs a believable context (e.g., conversing with a friend in a

coffee shop, requesting help from a teacher in a classroom, meeting a friend's Colombian grandparents at a party) and a clear purpose (e.g., getting to know someone, gathering information, buying and selling, getting and giving directions for finding one's way in a city, or sharing information on findings from a science project).

12.1.1.2. Testing *written* interpersonal communication also requires a realistic but imaginary context for an exchange of messages in order to give it a real-life purpose such as extending and accepting or rejecting an invitation, solving a problem, exchanging opinions on an issue related to current events, or sharing information among a group of students who have investigated the educational system of another country, prior to preparing a report. The examinee demonstrates his or her knowledge of the written language and the cultural conventions regarding the particular purpose and relationship to the interlocutor.

12.1.2. In the *Interpretive* mode, the examinee listens or reads in order to comprehend and interpret oral or written texts. Stimulus materials in tests intended to measure interpretive tasks of listening or reading should be drawn from authentic sources with the visual or graphic support that accompanied them in the original format. The materials should not be specialized in their subject matter (unless that is the purpose of the test) but of general interest to a range of students in a designated age group. *Written* authentic texts fit the theme of a particular unit and may range from train schedules to newspaper and magazine articles and literature. *Oral* authentic texts range from airport announcements to segments of academic lectures, recorded television programs, or film.

An alternative that should be available in computer-administered exams would be to allow students *some choice of topic*; this reflects the standards, in that students interpret to a higher degree material with which they are familiar or in which they are especially interested. As the interpretive mode is assessed, some portion of the test should measure how students draw cultural information or new content learning from documents in the target language. Interpretive tasks must also be sufficiently content rich for interpretation to occur and not mere comprehension of words and phrases. To this end, items must include short- and extended-answer formats and not just multiple-choice.

In assessments as well as in instruction, students listen to or read texts *for the purposes for which they were intended*. For example, students listen to recorded movie theater information in order to decide upon a movie and a time, they read history texts in order to understand the historical context of a particular country or region, or they watch a segment of a televised interview in order to ascertain the perspective of a government official in another country toward a current event or international issue of concern. Again, topics and texts are appropriate to the proficiency levels and interests of the students.

Because the use of effective strategies and processes is important in comprehension and interpretation, it is appropriate for measurement specialists to *incorporate process, i.e., comprehension strategies*, into test formats. What a student understands about a specific passage may reveal less about the student than how he interacts with texts to derive meaning. Strategies include seeking main ideas; paying attention to formal context, illustrations and headings; considering the source, purpose, and age of the text; drawing on their own background knowledge; and distinguishing between fact and opinion. Furthermore, students can be expected to vary greatly in the amount and type of background information that they bring to any given text. Therefore, interpretive stimuli should be preceded with (unscored perhaps) pre-reading/pre-listening tasks to get students oriented to the passage and content before they read or listen.

12.1.3. *Presentations* to an audience can be oral or written, but both have in common a need to use language that is especially clear, precise, and appropriate to the audience, because in neither case does the presenter benefit from an opportunity to interact with interlocutors to ask for help or check for comprehension. To be effective communicators, both oral presenters and writers depend on having clarity of purpose and an understanding of the audience, and in intercultural communication this includes an understanding of the cultural conventions and underlying assumptions shared by the audience.

12.1.3.1. *Oral* presentations may be social or academic in nature. When one travels or lives abroad, for example, situations arise in which it is necessary to present oneself to a group, who may be interested in knowing about the speaker's origins, family, interests, and reasons for the visit. In such a case, the audience will be moved by appropriate expressions of pleasure at local amenities and gratitude for hospitality extended. Oral presentations prepare students for future life and for professions, and in an academic situation they provide opportunities to use the language to organize and present knowledge and ideas on topics such as the geography, history, economics, politics, language characteristics, and customs of a country or region where the language is spoken. The effectiveness of an oral presentation depends upon connecting with the audience, which in turn rides on being organized and clear without reading from a script or appearing to have memorized one. The speaker can use visual aids such as PowerPoint slides both to guide his or her thoughts and language use and to aid the audience to comprehend the speaker's less than native speech. Oral presentation assessment tasks should offer examinees some time to brainstorm ideas, take notes, and revise. Instructions to the examinee may suggest topics to include or they may provide questions to answer in the talk. Alternatively, the speaker may begin by writing down answers to questions that he or she thinks the audience may have. Notes and drafts may be collected in order to assess the process as well as the presentation itself.

In a testing situation, students must speak on a topic that is well known to them or be given the necessary information for the speech, perhaps by means of a short newspaper article or other authentic text. Because language use varies with the sociocultural context, the instructions should include a description of the situation, the audience, and the purpose of the speech (e.g., persuading, sharing experiences and knowledge, or giving advice).

12.1.3.2. In the case of *written* presentations, instructions should also inform students about the situation and purpose of the message, as well as the background of the audience or readers. Students may write letters for information from the office of tourism of a country; write invitations to a party, reception, or celebration of a cultural event; report on their findings from a research project; or compose letters to prospective host families in another country to introduce themselves. Extended written communications require planning and composing more than one draft as students clarify their thoughts, select appropriate words and phrases, and attend to how their work will “sound” to their readers. In revising, they pay attention to the register (the style and level of formality), the sophistication of their sentences, the accuracy of vocabulary, the amount of supporting detail, and the use of connecting words. The degree of sophistication naturally depends upon the students’ level of proficiency.

12.2. For individual examinees, *the expected proficiency level* depends upon the *language itself*, the time spent on learning, the nature of the learning context, and *characteristics of the learner*.

12.2.1. Even for summative testing against common criteria, the language and the time element need to be considered both in designing the tasks and rubrics and in assigning and reporting ratings. In the case of Asian language learners, for example, reading and writing skills can be expected to lag behind oral skills due to the differences between Asian and western writing systems.

Test scores across languages should reflect the same proficiency levels and be interpretable in the same way, it may be more meaningful to report subscores on the different communicative modes or subsections of a test along with composite scores.

12.2.2. In addition to differences among languages, students also vary in their *language backgrounds*. In particular, heritage learners, who may use languages other than English at home, will most likely score at the highest level on interpersonal communication in informal situations and much lower where formal or written language is involved, unless they have had formal schooling in the language in a program such as a dual immersion program, because although they may use the language exclusively at home with friends and family, they typically have had experience with formal language use only in English in school (Roca 2000, p. 99). In addition, they typically can comprehend much more than they can express, and

they may display more proficiency on some topics than on others because they normally use English for those topics. Because heritage speakers are fluent in regional dialects, they also display very different linguistic qualities from non-native learners and even from each other, especially if their school does not offer a program tailored to their need to expand their abilities in formal and written language. In this case, they may score more poorly than they deserve even on informal oral tasks, if the scoring system or the raters do not value their language variants. Heritage learners should not be unduly penalized for using a language variant that is comprehensible to speakers of other variants of the same language, yet feedback to them should indicate in some way that their speech is regional. In reality, “the ‘native/non-native’ distinction must be viewed as a continuum, not a dichotomy” (Teschner 2000, p. 103). It may be helpful to include “native-speaker identifier” items designed to place these students on the continuum, especially in Spanish, a language with increasing numbers of heritage speakers in the United States.

- 12.3.** For all writing, effectiveness can be **rated** in terms of comprehensibility, the power and clarity of the ideas expressed, planning and organization, the effective use of words, accuracy of forms and structures, spelling and pronunciation, and sociocultural appropriateness. Steps in the writing process may include brainstorming and note-taking, outlining, composing, and revising. Instructions might specify which draft is to be assessed, since the entire process of revising and polishing may not actually be finished within the time limits of an examination. The examiners may want to specify whether or not dictionaries may be used, or to what extent they may be used, since writing for realistic purposes may require some dictionary use, and it is appropriate to assess students’ ability to use a dictionary accurately and efficiently. Scoring may address the steps in the process as well as the final draft.

For rating students’ performance in the three communicative modes, the *ACTFL K-12 Performance Guidelines* (1998) provide detailed criteria for three levels of proficiency—Novice, Intermediate, and Pre-Advanced. Aligned with the original ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines and additionally based on the student content standards, they describe what language users can do, and how well they can do it, at each of the three levels, within each of the three communicative modes. The criteria used in assigning a rating to examinees are:

- *Comprehensibility*: How well do they make themselves understood? (in assessments of Interpersonal or Presentational communication)
- *Comprehension*: How well do they understand? (in assessments of Interpersonal interaction or of their ability to interpret oral or written texts)
- *Language Control*: How accurate is their language? (in all three modes, both when interpreting language and producing it)
This category includes control of grammatical structures, syntactical sophistication, pronunciation accuracy in oral assessments, and spelling and punctuation in writing assessments.

- *Vocabulary Use*: How extensive and applicable is their vocabulary? (in all three modes)
- *Communication Strategies*: How do they maintain communication? (in all three modes)
Examples are asking for clarification, checking comprehension, paraphrasing, circumlocuting, looking or listening for key ideas, inferring meaning, using notes and visuals appropriately in oral presentations, and using a dictionary effectively.
- *Cultural Awareness*: How is their cultural understanding reflected in their communication? (in assessments in all three modes)

The three proficiency levels of the Performance Guidelines represent wide ranges of proficiency. For purposes of a particular assessment, however, they can serve as a basis for creating the criteria for assigning ratings. While languages vary in the characteristics of their grammars, sound systems, word and sentence formations, and writing systems, the proficiency levels describe performance consistently across languages. Variations are found in the specifications for assigning ratings.

13. Professional Development

- ◆ Professional development engages experienced teachers in sustained, collegial programs in which they acquire new information and skills for implementing the standards and assessing the effectiveness of their teaching, reflect on their work, and share information with each other.

To be maximally effective, teacher development needs to reach beyond occasional workshops and conferences at which teachers are recipients of information. It must provide sustained, collegial engagement that requires teachers to develop curricula, units, and lesson plans for use in their classes. Teachers should also develop systems for assessing their work and for conducting action research and sharing their successful materials and procedures. For all of this to happen, teachers require time, resources, and appropriate models.

In addition to proficiency in the language and culture, entry-level teachers need to learn basic information on learner development and diversity, second language acquisition processes, classroom and time management, technology in language instruction, lesson planning, and assessment. Teacher education programs encourage students to reflect on their teaching experiences and preparation and to begin a professional development plan. They also lead future teachers in seeking relationships with the community for practice within a “real” cultural context, and they prepare teachers to be able to help their own future students to make similar connections.

Professional development for experienced teachers builds on all that they have accomplished during their years teaching as well as during their undergraduate preparation. Teachers who have taught for several years or whose original teacher education was not current may not be familiar with the new standards or our ever-expanding knowledge about intercultural communication and language acquisition. They need to learn to use a wider range of teaching strategies than they typically develop on their own.

It is also accomplished teachers who take leadership roles in creating new curricula, mentoring new teachers, and creating and selecting teaching materials. They need expertise in curriculum and program planning, and in the supervision of new teachers and student teachers. They should participate actively in professional organizations and conferences.

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Resource Centers

Brigham Young University
National Middle East Language Resource Center
<http://nmelrc.byu.edu/>

University of Chicago
South Asia Language Resource Center
<http://salrc.uchicago.edu/>

Duke University and UNC-Chapel Hill
Slavic and East European Language Resource Center
<http://seelrc.org>

Georgetown University, CAL, George Washington University
National Capital Language Resource Center (NCLRC)
<http://www.nclrc.org/>

University of Hawaii
National World Language Resource Center
<http://www.nflrc.hawaii.edu/>

Indiana University
Center for Languages of the Central Asian Region
<http://www.indiana.edu/~celcar/>

Iowa State University
National K-12 World Language Resource Center (NFLRC)
<http://www.educ.iastate.edu/nflrc/homepage.htm>

Michigan State University
Center for Language Education and Research (CLEAR)
<http://nflrc.msu.edu>

University of Minnesota
Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA)
<http://www.carla.umn.edu/>

Ohio State University
National East Asian Languages Resource Center
<http://nealrc.osu.edu/firstpage.htm>

University of Oregon
The Center for Applied Second Language Studies
<http://casls.uoregon.edu/home.php>

The Pennsylvania State University
Center for Advanced Language Proficiency Education and Research (CALPER)
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San Diego State University
Language Acquisition Resource Center (LARC)
<http://larcnet.sdsu.edu/>

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