

Institutional Effectiveness Report  
Academic Year 2014-15  
For Modern Languages Program

*Modern Languages Faculty*  
*Coordinators of IE for Modern Languages*

*Christopher Johnson*  
*Chair of Department*

### *Program Mission*

The Department of English, Modern Languages, and Philosophy offers a major, minor and collateral in Modern Languages with tracks in French, German, and Spanish. Our mission is to provide the resources for students to acquire advanced oral proficiency, writing proficiency, reading comprehension, and listening comprehension in French, German, and Spanish, while gaining knowledge of the history, art, values, and customs of the cultures where these languages are spoken. Career opportunities for foreign language majors include teaching, international business, translation, interpretation, government professions, the military, and health care. Modern Languages majors often seek graduate degrees in foreign languages.

### *Expected Student Learning Outcomes*

Upon completion of a major, students should demonstrate the following learning outcomes:

#### **Knowledge**

Students demonstrate advanced oral proficiency, writing proficiency, reading comprehension, and listening comprehension in the language of their specialization.

Students recognize the cultural context in which oral and written discourses are produced.

#### **Skills**

Students are able to engage in conversation and create within the target language when talking about familiar topics, producing complete sentences using a variety of linguistic structures to convey intended messages without misrepresentation or confusion.

Students can fulfill practical writing needs in the target language, such as producing simple messages, letters, requests for information, notes, and essays.

Students understand the main ideas and supporting details of a variety of texts and can deduce meaning of unknown vocabulary through context clues.

Students understand discourses on a variety of topics in the target language, from among a range of different dialects and in different registers such as formal, informal, literary, colloquial, conversational, etc.

#### **Attitude**

Students are aware of the ways in which language and culture intersect, as well as openness to the history, art, customs, values and daily life of the peoples living in the cultures where the target languages are spoken.

*Assessment Activities*

**Scoring of Student-Produced Work.** Materials listed below were collected from graduating seniors and used to evaluate success in achieving Student Learning Outcomes.

Learning Outcome	Related Courses	Assessment Procedures
<b>General Learning Outcomes for French Students</b>		
Students are able to engage in conversation and create within the target language when talking about familiar topics, producing complete sentences using a variety of linguistic structures to convey intended messages without misrepresentation or confusion.	FNCH302	Modern Languages faculty collectively evaluate recorded oral interviews from the French Conversation course.
Students can fulfill practical writing needs in the target language, such as producing simple messages, letters, requests for information, notes, and essays	FNCH301 FNCH401 FNCH402	Modern Languages faculty collectively evaluate essays and writing samples from French Grammar and Composition course and French Literature courses.
Students understand the main ideas and supporting details of a variety of texts and can deduce meaning of unknown vocabulary through context clues.	FNCH401 FNCH402	Modern Languages faculty collectively evaluate essays written in exams and written papers in the French Literature courses.
Students understand discourses on a variety of topics in the target language, from among a range of different dialects and in different registers such as formal, informal, literary, colloquial, conversational etc.	FNCH302	Modern Languages faculty collectively evaluate listening comprehension tests given in the French Conversation course.
Students are aware of the ways in which language and culture intersect, as well as openness to the history, art, customs, values and daily life of the peoples living in the cultures where the target languages are spoken.	FNCH305 Study Abroad	Modern Languages faculty collectively evaluate student-produced cultural presentations from various classes including French Civilization, as well as journals from students who have participated in Study Abroad programs in France.

<b>General Learning Outcomes for German Students</b>		
Students are able to engage in conversation and create within the target language when talking about familiar topics, producing complete sentences using a variety of linguistic structures to convey intended messages without misrepresentation or confusion.	GER302	Modern Languages faculty collectively evaluate recordings of final individual interviews ( <i>Klausuren</i> ) which serve as the final exam.
Students can fulfill practical writing needs in the target language, such as producing simple messages, letters, requests for information, notes, and essays.	GER401 GER402 GER304	Modern Languages faculty collectively evaluate research papers, tests, and short essays, from the Literature courses.
Students understand the main ideas and supporting details of a variety of texts and can deduce meaning of unknown vocabulary through context clues.	GER301 GER302 GER303 GER304 GER305 GER401 GER402	Modern Languages faculty collectively evaluate major tests and assignments from courses above the 300 level.
Students understand discourses on a variety of topics in the target language, from among a range of different dialects and in different registers such as formal, informal, literary, colloquial, conversational, etc.	GER302	Modern Languages faculty collectively evaluate listening comprehension tests given in the German Conversation course.
Students are aware of the ways in which language and culture intersect, as well as openness to the history, art, customs, values and daily life of the peoples living in the cultures where the target languages are spoken.	GER305 Study Abroad, GER301 GER302 GER303 GER304 GER401 GER402	Modern Languages faculty collectively evaluate major tests and coursework from classes above the 300 level and specifically from the Civilization and Culture course (305) or from surveys from Study Abroad experience.

<b>General Learning Outcomes for Spanish Students</b>		
Students are able to engage in conversation and create within the target language when talking about familiar topics, producing complete sentences using a variety of linguistic structures to convey intended messages without misrepresentation or confusion.	SPAN302	Modern Languages faculty collectively evaluate recorded conversations from the Conversation course.
Students can fulfill practical writing needs in the target language, such as producing simple messages, letters, requests for information, notes, and essays.	SPAN301	Modern Languages faculty collectively evaluate essays from the Spanish Grammar and Composition course.
Students understand the main ideas and supporting details of a variety of texts and can deduce meaning of unknown vocabulary through context clues.	SPAN306 SPAN307 SPAN401 SPAN402	Modern Languages faculty collectively evaluate reading response papers or other essays or final exams from the Spanish Literature courses.
Students will develop listening skills so that they demonstrate competency and understanding of discourses on a variety of topics in the target language, from among a range of different dialects and in different registers such as formal, informal, literary, colloquial, conversational, etc.	SPAN302	Modern Languages faculty collectively evaluate listening comprehension tests given in the Spanish Conversation course.
Students are aware of the ways in which language and culture intersect, as well as openness to the history, art, customs, values and daily life of the peoples living in the cultures where the target languages are spoken.	SPAN308 SPAN309 SPAN220 SPAN497 Study Abroad	Modern Languages faculty collectively evaluate student-produced cultural presentations from the Culture and Civilization classes (308, 309); field experience in service-learning courses (220, 497); or journals from study abroad experiences.

## *Benchmarks for Assessing Student Learning Outcomes*

Student work was evaluated in accordance with the following Assessment Scale: Four (4) through one (1), with four being the highest and one the lowest assessment level given. The Modern Languages faculty have established a benchmark of 2.5 as a desirable overall average for all learning outcomes. Exit Interviews were also collected from graduating French and Spanish majors. Where applicable, the results from these procedures have also been used to evaluate success in achieving program goals.

### **Conversational Proficiency / Conversational Skills**

Level Four: Speaks and comprehends in a variety of registers with sufficient skills to move the conversation forward. Has only a few moments of hesitation and demonstrates a proficient and varied vocabulary for effective communication. Grammar has only a few serious faults and pronunciation is comprehensible. Ability to contribute own ideas to conversation in addition to answering questions or responding to situations.

Level Three: Speaks and comprehends in various registers demonstrating the ability to grasp most of the topic with little or no repetition. Carries conversation with sufficient skills for communication. Grammar errors and mispronunciations do not impede intended statements or explanations. Answers questions with reasonable information.

Level Two: Speaks and comprehends with some hesitation. Communicates facts and ideas using basic vocabulary and structures. Errors occur frequently and in patterns but speech is generally comprehensible to those accustomed to conversing with non-natives.

Level One: Able only to utter polite phrases. Unable to comprehend or respond well even when questions or situations are repeated numerous times. Has very little concept of grammar nor possesses adequate vocabulary to converse on topics presented. Pronunciation hinders communication.

### **Writing Proficiency / Writing Skills**

Level Four: Able to produce formal and informal writing, including summaries, reports, and correspondence on a variety of topics. Conveys meaning and explains complex ideas in a clear, precise manner. Writes in paragraph form with a high degree of control of grammar and syntax. Very few or no errors occur and do not interfere with comprehension.

Level Three: Able to write factual descriptions and summaries and to narrate clearly in the past, present and future. Shows good control of frequently used structures and vocabulary and produces routine informal and some formal writing in paragraph form. Errors occur but writing can be generally understood by those not accustomed to writing by non-natives.

Level Two: Writes messages, letters, and notes on general topics related to practical needs. Communicates facts and ideas using basic vocabulary and structures. Texts are generally comprehensible to those accustomed to writing of non-natives despite more frequent errors.

Level One: Able to produce only lists and notes containing high-frequency vocabulary words and formulaic phrases. Relies heavily on practiced material and common elements

of daily life. Unable to sustain sentence-level writing all the time. Errors are frequent and gaps in comprehension are likely to occur.

### **Reading Proficiency / Reading Skills**

Level Four: Comprehends a wide variety of written texts from different genres including those with complex structures and cultural references. Able to follow extended discourse on unfamiliar topics and to make inferences based on what is read. Misunderstandings may occur when exposed to texts containing highly specialized vocabulary or relating to unusual or abstract situations.

Level Three: Understands the main ideas and some supporting details of narrative and descriptive texts related to general interest topics. Able to process information organized in a clear and predictable way and to compensate for limitations by using real-world knowledge or context cues. Comprehension may become problematic when dealing with abstract ideas or unfamiliar topics.

Level Two: Understands information in everyday texts that convey basic information and deal with common, personal, and social topics. Comprehension is most often accurate when texts include familiar vocabulary and basic grammatical structures. Comprehension is often uneven and misunderstandings may occur, especially with longer texts containing low-frequency vocabulary or unfamiliar structures.

Level One: Comprehends only a very limited amount of information in common, predictable texts that include key words and highly contextualized expressions. Relies heavily on his or her own background and extralinguistic cues to derive meaning. Misunderstandings may occur frequently.

### **Listening Proficiency / Listening Skills**

Level Four: Comprehends extended discourse in a variety of registers on a wide range of topics. Understands speech that may contain complex grammatical structures, uncommon vocabulary or culture-specific references. Able to make inferences based on what is said. Misunderstandings may occur when exposed to speech containing highly specialized vocabulary or relating to unusual or abstract situations.

Level Three: Able to grasp the main ideas and some supporting details of authentic discourse related to general interest topics. Able to distinguish basic time frames and to process information organized in a clear and predictable way. Comprehension may be limited to concrete, conventional discourse; comprehension may become problematic when dealing with abstract ideas or unfamiliar topics.

Level Two: Understands information related to common, everyday topics when conveyed in simple, sentence-length speech. Comprehension is most often accurate when exposed to speech containing high frequency vocabulary, basic grammatical structures, and familiar or predictable social contexts. Comprehension is often uneven and misunderstandings may occur.

Level One: Understands only key words and expressions that are highly contextualized and predictable. Relies heavily on extralinguistic cues to derive meaning and may require frequent repetition and rephrasing. Misunderstandings may occur frequently.

## **Attitudes Regarding the Intersection of Language and Culture**

Level Four: Demonstrates a deep and robust understanding of the relationship between the practices, products, and the perspectives of the culture studied. Able to discuss many culturally-relevant themes and topics, although misunderstandings may occur, especially when exposed to highly specialized cultural references.

Level Three: Demonstrates a moderate understanding of the relationship between the practices, products, and the perspectives of the culture studied. Able to discuss many culturally-relevant themes and topics, although cultural misunderstandings may occur occasionally.

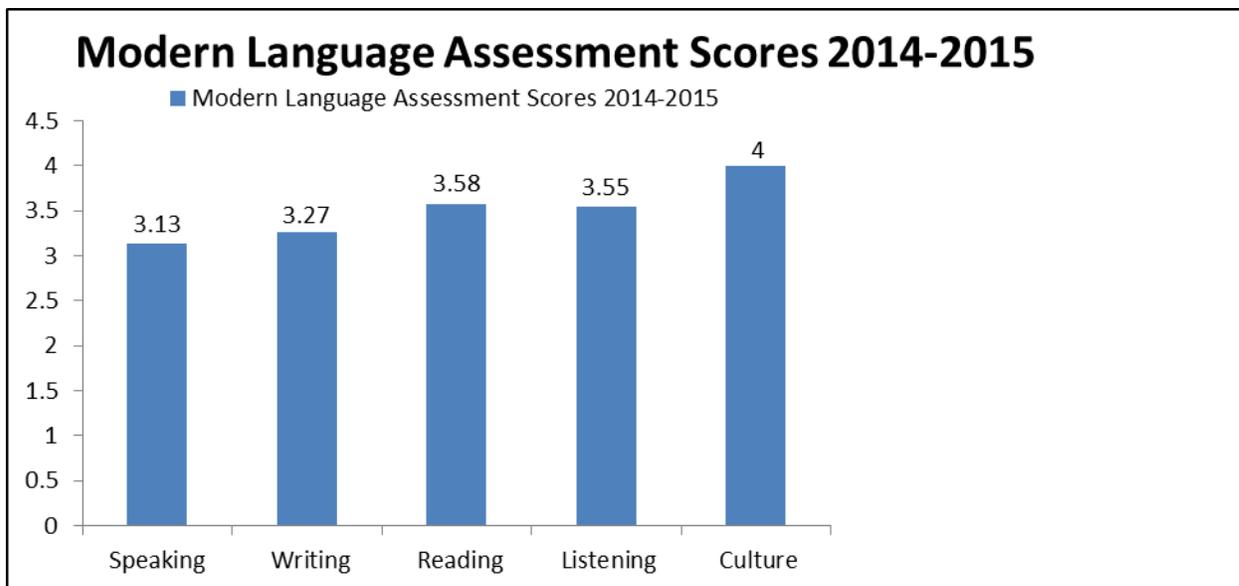
Level Two: Demonstrates a basic understanding of the relationship between the practices, products, and the perspectives of the culture studied. Able to discuss very common themes and topics that are culturally-relevant. Cultural misunderstandings may occur frequently.

Level One: Demonstrates only a minimal understanding of the relationship between the practices, products, and the perspectives of the culture studied. Cultural misunderstandings are likely to occur often.

## Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

### Scoring of Student-Produced Work

The results of the scoring of student-produced work show that the department's benchmarks have been met for each goal. The chart below reflects this year's composite student averages for the Modern Languages program.



As the assessment scores demonstrate, the areas in need of most improvement in student performance are speaking and writing. Compared to last year, the speaking average increased from 2.85 to 3.13, while the writing average saw the largest increase from 3.08 to 3.27. The strongest area is culture, with an increase from 3.26 in 2013-2014 to 4.0. The fact that all of the ML graduates this year took advantage of travel/study abroad opportunities during their course of study at FMU is a contributing factor in the strength of this area.

### Results of Exit Interviews

Graduating Modern Languages majors completed exit interviews. Each student responded to a questionnaire and/or scheduled a meeting with a Modern Languages faculty member to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the program. These comments were taken into consideration and analyzed to help determine program strengths and weaknesses. Not coincidentally, the student comments closely reflect the assessment scores. For example, with regard to speaking as an identified area for improvement, one student noted that the bimonthly *tertulia* provided a "good opportunity to practice Spanish in a normal conversation setting." Another student noted that the most enjoyable

courses were those in which “only speaking Spanish was enforced.” The same student stated that he/she would like to see more emphasis on speaking the target language in class. They all responded that they learned more in courses taught in the target language. These comments suggest that there are inconsistencies in the use of the target language among courses.

In addition, students expressed particular interest in cultural classes and a larger variety of course offerings. Students noted the heavy focus on literature in upper-division classes and less attention given to applied Spanish, linguistic and culture classes.

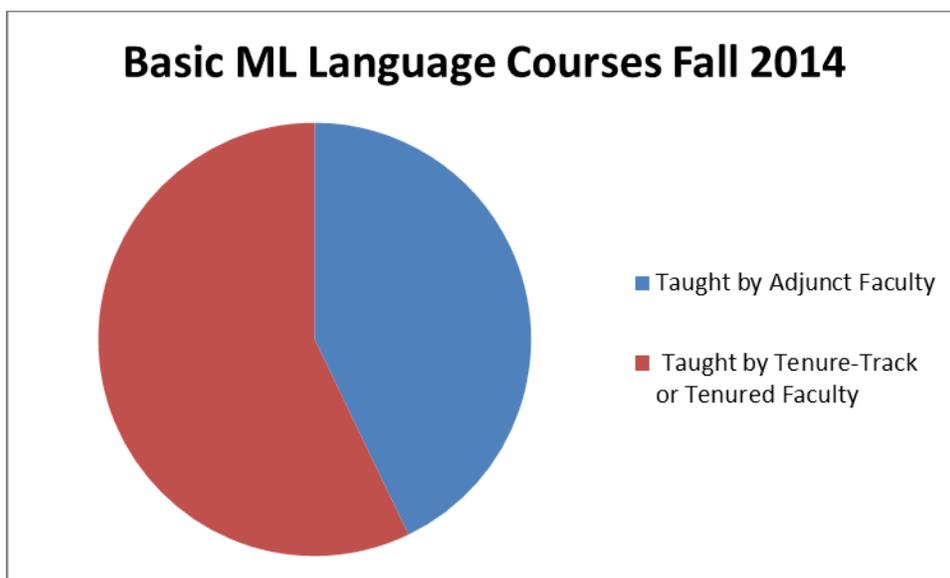
From the surveys, two areas that appear to be functioning optimally in the Modern Languages program are small class size and advising. Smaller classes equate to accessibility and building relationships with professors. All student surveys affirmed that small class size facilitates the student’s acquisition of the target language.

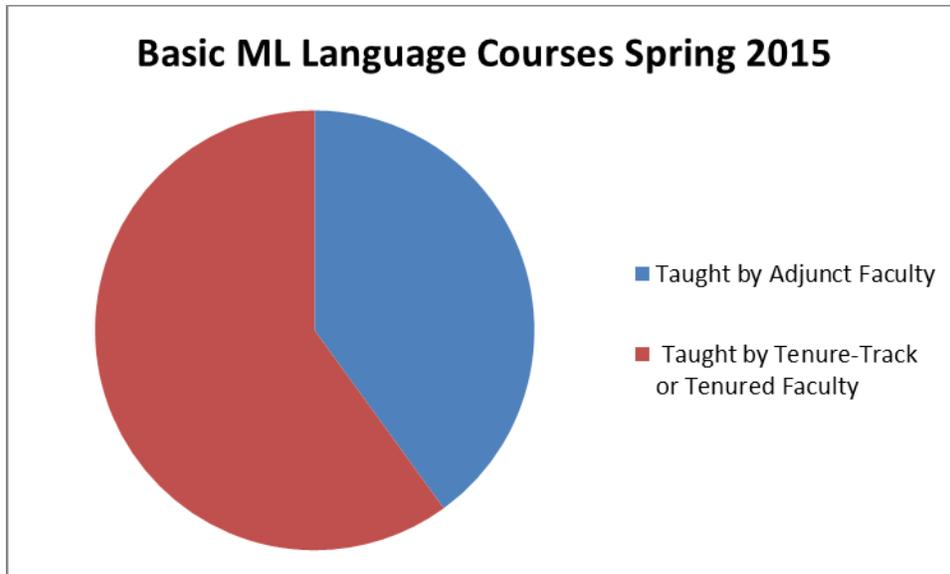
### **Closing the Loop**

Results of this year’s assessment suggest that the Modern Languages program is educating its majors well, with two areas for improvement:

- 1) As the ML Assessment Score results indicate (see table), speaking continues to be the area in most need of improvement and appears to be related, in part, to the particular instructor’s approach. Writing is the second weakest area, although it is encouraging that this area has seen the largest growth of the five benchmark areas over the last year.

The incongruencies in language instruction can be traced to the ratio of contingent faculty vs. permanent faculty.





As the above charts pinpoint, the fall and spring semesters saw 60% and 57%, respectively, of the Modern Language General Education courses (101-202) taught by adjunct faculty. Relying on contingent faculty to teach over half of the General Education course offerings each semester is not a viable way to sustain and continue building a quality program. With minimal expectations of them, adjunct faculty are contracted only to teach classes and hold office hours, and they are not required to undergo annual teaching evaluations to measure their effectiveness in the classroom. The end result is a fractured program. In the future, the Spanish faculty will continue to work in conjunction with the chair to ensure that all adjunct instructors are adhering to the program's standards so that students have the opportunity to acquire similar sets of tools to produce the target language at the appropriate levels. To alleviate the program's dependence on adjunct instructors, the Spanish faculty continues to advocate for an additional tenure-track line in Spanish to bring balance of permanent and contingent faculty in compliance with the AAUP guidelines.

- 2) The small number of course offerings was also seen as a program deficiency. The lack of course variety is due in part to the lack of ML faculty to enable expansion of the scope of course offerings. One means of ensuring that the ML course schedule offers a variety of course options each semester is to make a conscious effort to create a schedule that offers as much variety as possible within the confines of the current limited number of faculty.

### **Actions Already Taken for Program Improvement:**

The greatest improvement in recent years has been the placement of students in foreign institutions through our international exchange programs. Currently our French majors have been strong here, visiting the University of Caen in northern France on a regular basis for over a decade. Students in German have benefitted from the summer program in German Language and Culture hosted by our exchange partner, the University of Applied Sciences in Schmalkalden, Germany. This program has been in existence since 2004

where the FMU Professor of German has been a guest lecturer since that time. Recently, FMU has begun a partnership program with the University of Koblenz-Landau, located in the state of Rheinland-Pfalz, South Carolina's sister state in the Federal Republic of Germany. Spanish students also had the opportunity to study in Cuernavaca, Mexico, until recent years when that program was suspended due to political tensions there. Dr. García Otero identified several prospective universities in Spain that would be suitable for establishing an exchange agreement with FMU, and in March 2015, a FMU delegation, including four honors students, was sent to Spain to meet with two prospective exchange partners in Oviedo and Santiago de Compostela. As Modern Languages continues to expand travel abroad opportunities, student performance in all skill areas, particularly in speaking, should continue to improve.

Within the Spanish discipline, students now have the opportunity to participate in service-learning projects, which greatly enhance their cultural awareness of the Hispanic population in their own community. Spanish for Health Care now exists for nursing and other students interested in health care. Foreign Language Teaching Methods is also offered to assist our students who are interested in the teaching profession (Spanish 497, Special Topics).

The Modern Languages program has also made a great effort at recruitment and retention of quality majors. In Fall, 2014, a "Muffins with Modern Languages" open-house event offered prospective ML students information about our Modern Language Majors, Minors, Collaterals, and Study Abroad Programs. The Spanish program also took over 90 students to view the Francisco de Goya "Los Caprichos" exhibit in Lake City, South Carolina. A Spanish 101 online course will be offered for the first time in the summer 2015 session with the hope of attracting a new student audience.