

Degree: BA in Spanish, Plan 15, for Calendar Year: 2009

Date submitted to college committee: 2/26/2010 By: Andrew J. Deiser

(1) Student learning goal(s) addressed this year: The following four goals are addressed each year.

Goal 1) Speaking: Students will acquire Intermediate-High speaking proficiency according to Proficiency Guidelines<sup>1</sup> established by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL).

ACTFL is the only nationally recognized language organization dedicated to the improvement and expansion of the teaching and learning of all languages at all levels of instruction throughout the U.S. Graduating Spanish majors are required to take a Modified Oral Proficiency Interview (MOPI) to assess whether they have achieved the Intermediate-High level of oral proficiency. The MOPI is based on the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI), a nationally recognized and normed tool designed by ACTFL for measuring oral proficiency in a given language. The OPI is based on research conducted by the School of Language Studies of the Foreign Language Institute, as well as on other studies that have since been conducted to determine typical performance levels for majors. DISLS faculty who conduct the MOPIs have been trained either in ACTFL OPI workshops or through in-house training to ensure inter-rater reliability.

Goal 2) Listening: Students will acquire Intermediate-High listening proficiency according to the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines.

Goal 3) Reading: Students will acquire Intermediate-High reading proficiency according to the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines.

Goal 4) Writing: Students will acquire Intermediate-High writing proficiency according to the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines.

(2) Learning outcomes for the four goals addressed each year:

1.1 Students will acquire Intermediate-High speaking proficiency according to the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines. This will be evidenced by the following behaviors:

- Students will be able to engage in a variety of conversations in the target language.
- Students will also be able to begin to narrate in different time frames and describe a variety of things with paragraph-length connected discourse although they will

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A for a description of ACTFL's Proficiency Guidelines for speaking, listening, reading, and writing at the intermediate-high level.

not be able to sustain this type of discourse for extended periods of time.

- Students will be able to perform successfully a variety of communicative tasks in the target language related to their daily lives, such as buying groceries, renting an apartment, describing their family and their weekly routine at the university. In addition, students will be able to discuss and analyze a variety of aspects concerning the cultures that make up the Spanish-speaking world.

1.2 Students will acquire Intermediate-High listening proficiency according to the ACTFL proficiency guidelines. This will be evidenced by the following behaviors:

- Students will be able to understand main ideas and most details with respect to a variety of topics. Discourses may include interviews, short lectures on familiar topics, and news items and reports primarily dealing with factual information.

1.3 Students will acquire Intermediate-High reading proficiency according to the ACTFL proficiency guidelines. This will be evidenced by the following behaviors:

- Students will be able to read somewhat longer prose of several paragraphs in length, particularly if presented with a clear underlying structure. Students will understand the main ideas and facts but will miss some details. Texts at this level include descriptions and narrations, such as simple short stories, novellas, news items, bibliographical information, social notices, personal correspondence, routinized business letters, and simple technical material written for the general reader.

1.4 Students will acquire Intermediate-High writing proficiency according to the ACTFL proficiency guidelines. This will be evidenced by the following behaviors:

- Students will be able to write routine social correspondence and join sentences in simple discourse of at least several paragraphs in length on familiar topics. This includes the ability to write simple social correspondence, take notes, write cohesive summaries and resumes, as well as narratives, and descriptions of a factual nature.

(3) Courses & activities where outcomes are assessed:

- See the detailed assessment map in Appendix B.

(4) Methods used.

To date, assignments, quizzes, tests, MOPIs and the Spanish Exit Exams have been the principal methods by which DISLS measures students' progress toward increased proficiency in the areas of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. A departmental ad hoc committee met twice during the fall of 2009 to discuss using portfolio-based

assessment in conjunction with a capstone course for the Spanish B.A. After much deliberation, faculty decided not to implement this approach at this time. Those faculty members opposed underscored the difficulty of designing and embedding assessment activities that could be administered to students in the same way every semester, thus raising reliability issues. Faculty members also discussed the possibility of requiring all Spanish majors to take an official OPI and WPT (Writing Proficiency Test designed by ACTFL) as part of their Exit Exams. However, because of the large number of Spanish majors who graduate each year, the cost of the exams (\$200 total) would be prohibitive. DISLS will therefore continue to use its Exit Exams as its primary assessment tools; however, faculty noted the need to update and re-norm the Spanish Exit Exams currently being used for reading, writing, and listening.

In addition to reviewing the pros and cons of portfolio-based assessment during these meetings, DISLS faculty discussed the possibility of integrating a new assessment tool designed by ACTFL, the Integrated Performance Assessment (IPA), into all levels of instruction.<sup>2</sup> The IPA consists of three tasks within a single thematic context: an interpretive task (reading and listening), an interpersonal task (speaking and writing), and a presentational task (speaking and writing). The IPA assesses the level at which students comprehend and interpret authentic texts in the foreign language, interact with others in target language in oral and written form, and present oral and written messages to audiences of listeners and readers. The incorporation of the IPA at all levels of instruction would provide DISLS's faculty with an assessment tool that permits them to measure students' progress in all four goal areas and with respect to their progress in the three modes of communication defined by the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*.

The assessment coordinator for DISLS, Dr. Deiser, facilitated a three-hour workshop in which he introduced the concept of the IPA to faculty, and those faculty members most familiar with the IPA offered a detailed explanation of the assessment tool and provided hands-on activities that allowed faculty to design and rate IPAs appropriate to their level

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<sup>2</sup> The IPA was initially designed to meet the need for assessing K-12 students' progress toward achieving the goals and outcomes put forth by the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, a national initiative funded in 1993 by the U.S. Department of Education and the National Endowment for the Humanities, and subsequently published in 1996. The Standards are designed around the five C's, or goal areas, of language education and include progress indicators based on ACTFL's proficiency guidelines for each of the goal areas: Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities. In addition, the Standards define the overarching concept of foreign language communication in terms of three modes of communication: the Interpretive Mode, the Interpersonal Mode, and the Presentational Mode. Republished in 2006, the Standards now include progress indicators for post-secondary instruction at the college and university levels. Aware of these developments, DISLS faculty revamped its language skills courses (3000-level courses that extensively address reading and writing and listening and speaking) in 2006 to bring them in line with the National Standards.

of instruction. Dr. Deiser is piloting the IPA as an assessment tool in his upper-level seminar courses during the 2009-2010 academic year and will report his findings to faculty members at the beginning of the 2010 fall semester.

Objective 1.1 Students will acquire Intermediate-High speaking proficiency according to the ACTFL proficiency guidelines.

a. The principal method for measuring progress toward this objective is the MOPI. DISLS faculty who teach SPAN 2311 also conduct MOPIs with their students in order to develop a culture in which students are familiar with the expectations and demands of the MOPI, especially those students who go on to major in Spanish and take a MOPI as part of their Exit Exams and those who enter the Secondary Ed. program and are required to take an official OPI.

b. To reiterate, the MOPI is based on the OPI, a nationally recognized and normed tool for measuring oral proficiency in a given language. This interview is conducted by Dr. Deiser.

c. Students' progress toward this objective is currently being measured with the MOPI administered as part of the Exit Exam.

d. Professors guide students toward the achievement of this goal, and students are required to demonstrate sufficient progress toward the attainment of this goal. An assessment committee made up of three faculty members meets at least once each year to discuss assessment issues. It is during the yearly meeting that Faculty analyze the results of the tests and look into the possible need for any changes to the learning goals.

Objective 2.2: Students will acquire Intermediate-High listening proficiency according to the ACTFL proficiency guidelines.

a. The methods for measuring this objective include exams, quizzes, in-class activities computer-related activities, and the listening comprehension section of the departmental Exit Exams. At present, the listening comprehension portion of the departmental Exit Exams represents the principal data from which we determine whether students have reached this objective. Dr. Deiser, who is familiar with ACTFL's proficiency guidelines for listening, is responsible for administering the listening comprehension portion of the exit exam, and the primary person responsible for interpreting the results.

Objective 3.3: Students will acquire Intermediate-High reading proficiency according to the ACTFL proficiency guidelines. This will be evidenced by the following behaviors:

a. The methods for measuring this objective include exams, quizzes, in-class activities,

computer-related activities, and the reading comprehension portion of the departmental Spanish exit exams. At present, the reading comprehension portion of the departmental Exit Exams provides the principal data from which we determine whether students have reached this objective. Dr. Deiser is the primary person responsible for administering this portion of the exit exam and for interpreting the results.

Outcome 4.4: Students will acquire Intermediate-High writing proficiency according to the ACTFL proficiency guidelines. This will be evidenced by the following behaviors:

The methods for measuring this objective include exams, quizzes, in-class activities, computer-related activities, and the writing portion of the departmental exit exams. At present, the writing portion of the departmental exit exam provides the principal data from which we determine whether or not students have reached this objective. Dr. Deiser is the primary person responsible for administering the writing comprehension portion of the exit exam, and for interpreting the results.

(5) What are the assessment findings? How did you analyze them?

**Findings for spring and fall 2009 Exit exams:** Twelve Spanish majors took the listening, reading, writing, and speaking Exit Exams in 2009. The numbers in bold represent students who met or exceeded DISLS's minimum expectations for proficiency in the different skill areas.

	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking
Number of students who took test	12			
Minimum score expected by DISLS in each area	Intermediate-High	Intermediate-High	Intermediate-High	Intermediate-High
Below are ranges of possible scores				
Superior				<b>1</b>
Advanced-High				<b>2</b>
Advanced-Mid				<b>2</b>
Advanced-Low				
Intermediate-High	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>
Intermediate-Mid	3	2	5	5
Intermediate-Low				1
Novice-High				
Novice-Mid				
Novice-Low				
2009: Percentage of students meeting DISLS's goal for each language skill	75%	83%	58%	50%
2008: Percentage of students meeting DILS's goal for each language skill	57 %	64%	75 %	50 %
2007: Percentage of students meeting DILS's goal for each language skill	71 %	71%	57 %	57 %
3-yr. average	67%	72%	63%	52%

(6) What conclusions were drawn and what decisions were made as a result? How were stakeholder groups involved?

Since DISLS revamped its skills courses in 2006, and it was during that same year when departments redesigned their assessment plans and therefore did not report results, the writer of this report decided to look at the three-year averages from 2007 to 2009 for each goal area to draw conclusions. The averages show that over a three-year period more than half of Spanish majors met DISLS's outcomes in the areas of listening, reading, and writing. In the area of oral proficiency, the results remained constant at roughly 50%. The writer believes that if DISLS designed assessment tools that were embedded in courses as assignments for which students received a grade (i.e., portfolio-based assessment), assessment results might be more uniform, more faculty members would have a stake in assessment, and students would be more involved in the assessment process. In upcoming meetings the writer of this report will encourage faculty members to consider using the IPA as a portfolio-type assessment tool that can be embedded in courses and possibly replace the Exit Exams. For now, DISLS will continue to use the Exit Exams for assessment purposes.

DISLS would like to see the percentage of its majors consistently meeting its expectations for oral proficiency to increase to 75% within three years. To this end, DISLS will continue to conduct MOPIs in order to develop a culture in which students are familiar with the expectations and demands of the MOPI. DISLS will also encourage Spanish faculty to attend more conferences and workshops devoted to increasing students' oral proficiency in the classroom. In September of 2009, three Spanish faculty members attended a workshop at Harding University titled "Crossing Borders," which focused on strategies and classroom activities designed to move students from the intermediate to the advanced level of oral proficiency. Spanish faculty members have also begun to incorporate service learning projects and internships into upper-level courses. Our hope is that these projects and internships will offer students immersion experiences with native speakers, thus providing students with additional opportunities to improve in all four goal areas, especially in listening and speaking. Finally, DISLS is looking into the possibility of creating an exchange program in Spain. At present, DISLS has an exchange program with the University of Guadalajara, Mexico; however, an additional exchange program will help raise the number of Spanish majors who spend a year or semester abroad. Dr. Deiser will travel to Spain during spring break to participate in a program sponsored by the Spanish Ministry of Culture which allows U.S. professors to speak to representatives from universities across Spain about the possibility of creating an exchange program.

As part of a self-study that DISLS will complete by the end of 2010, faculty plan to create a survey soliciting feedback on its language programs from current students, alumni, and area employers. The results of these surveys will be incorporated into the 2010 assessment report.

## Appendix A

Below are the ACTFL proficiency levels for speaking, listening, reading, and writing, as defined by ACTFL.

**Speaking: Intermediate-High:** Intermediate-High speakers are able to converse with ease and confidence when dealing with most routine tasks and social situations of the Intermediate level. They are able to handle successfully many uncomplicated tasks and social situations requiring an exchange of basic information related to work, school, recreation, particular interests and areas of competence, though hesitation and errors may be evident.

**Listening: Intermediate-High:** Students will be able to sustain understanding over long stretches of connected discourse on a number of topics pertaining to different times and places. These topics frequently involve description and narration in different time frames.

**Writing: Intermediate-High:** Students will be able to meet all practical writing needs such as taking notes on familiar topics, writing uncomplicated letters, simple summaries, and compositions related to work, school experiences, and topics of current and general interest. Students will also connect sentences into paragraphs using a limited number of cohesive devices that tend to be repeated. They will write simple descriptions and narrations of paragraph length on everyday events and situations in different time frames, although with some inaccuracies and inconsistencies. Writing, though faulty, is generally comprehensible to natives used to the writing of non-natives.

**Reading: Intermediate-High:** Students will be able to read consistently with full understanding simple connected texts dealing with basic personal and social needs about which the reader has personal interest and/or knowledge. Students will be able to understand some main ideas and information from texts at the next higher level featuring description and narration. Structural complexity may interfere with comprehension; for example, basic grammatical relations may be misinterpreted and temporal references may rely primarily on lexical items. Students will have some difficulty with the cohesive factors in discourse, such as matching pronouns with referents.

## Appendix B: Objectives Curriculum Assessment Map

		Goal 1: Oral Proficiency	Goal 2: Listening Proficiency	Goal 3: Reading Proficiency	Goal 4: Writing Proficiency
Course and activities	How outcomes are addressed and assessed	Outcome 1: Achieve Intermediate-High speaking proficiency	Outcome 2: Achieve Intermediate-High listening proficiency	Outcome 3: Achieve Intermediate-High reading proficiency	Outcome 4: Achieve Intermediate-High writing proficiency
Span 1311	Emphasis Assessed	Somewhat Routine activities, exams, quizzes, MOPI	Somewhat MOPI, activities, exams, quizzes	Somewhat Activities, exams, quizzes	Somewhat Activities, exams, writing assignments
Span 1312	Emphasis Assessed	Somewhat Routine activities, exams, quizzes, MOPI	Somewhat Exams	Somewhat Exams	Somewhat Exams
Span 2311	Emphasis Assessed	Somewhat Routine activities, exams, quizzes, MOPI	Somewhat Exams, quizzes, and listening activities	Somewhat Exams, quizzes, and reading activities	Somewhat Exams, quizzes, and writing activities
Span 3310	Emphasis Assessed	Extensive Oral exams, Oral presentations	None	Somewhat Exams, quizzes, assignments	Extensive Exams, quizzes, writing assignments
Span 3311	Emphasis Assessed	Extensive MOPI, exams, activities, project	Extensive Exams, quizzes, Listening Activities	None	Somewhat Exams, quizzes, writing activities and assignments
Span 3312	Emphasis Assessed	None	Extensive Exams, quizzes, activities	Extensive Exams, quizzes, activities	Extensive Exams, quizzes, writing activities and assignments
Span 4361/62	Emphasis Assessed	Somewhat Oral activities in class	Somewhat listening activities	Extensive Reading novels, short stories, poetry, etc.	
Spanish Exit exams	Emphasis Assessed	Extensive MOPI	Extensive Exam	Extensive Exam	Extensive Exam

## Spanish B.A. Secondary Education Program

See Spanish B.A. program for goals, outcomes, methods.

In addition to fulfilling the requirements for the Spanish B.A., those students seeking a teaching licensure in Spanish must complete eighteen hours in secondary education courses and successfully pass the state Praxis I, II, and III exams. These students must also take an official OPI and score at the Advanced-Low level, a requirement of NCATE.

There were six completers for the Secondary Education Program in 2009. All six passed Praxis I, II, and III. Four completers received acceptable ratings on the OPI, two at the Advanced-Low level, one at the Advanced-Mid level, and one at the Advanced-High level. Of the two completers who did not successfully complete the OPI, one received the rating of Intermediate-Mid, while the other received a rating of Intermediate-High.

Secondary Ed. Program Requirements	Number of completers who passed praxis exams
Praxis I	6
Praxis II	6
Praxis III	6

NCATE Requirement of OPI at Advanced-Low level	Ratings of 6 completers
Levels	
Superior	
Advanced-High	<b>1</b>
Advanced-Mid	<b>1</b>
Advanced-Low	<b>2</b>
Intermediate-High	1
Intermediate-Mid	1
Intermediate-Low	
Novice-High	
Novice-Mid	
Novice-Low	

What are the assessment findings? How did you analyze them?

DISLS will continue to conduct MOPIs in order to develop a culture in which students are familiar with the expectations and demands of the MOPI, especially those students who enter the Secondary Ed. program and are required to take an official OPI. Instituted three years ago, the MOPI did not significantly impact the six completers mentioned in this report. Of the six completers reported above, three had semester-long experiences abroad and all three received an acceptable rating on the OPI. If DISLS is able to establish an exchange program in Spain, study abroad experiences will offer more opportunities for teacher candidates to spend a semester or academic year abroad and will likely raise the number of candidates who receive an acceptable rating on the OPI. In addition, as mentioned previously, DISLS faculty are beginning to incorporate more service-learning projects and internships into their upper-level courses with the intent that these immersion experiences will permit more students to reach an advanced level of proficiency, especially in listening and speaking.

It is noteworthy that DISLS's Secondary Ed. undergraduate and graduate programs were the only programs in CAHSS and the State of Arkansas to be approved unconditionally by NCATE during the 2009 NCATE review.

Stakeholder involvement: DISLS will include alumni who are teaching in area schools as well as their employers in the surveys it plans to conduct for its self-study.