

Language Proficiency/Critical Thinking

Two different skills in *language proficiency* were tested during this six-year cycle. The first was the spoken language and the second the written language. We concentrated on these two skills because they often encompass the other two (listening with speaking, and reading with writing).

We incorporated one category for *Critical Thinking* in the writing rubric, but the design of the rubric did not allow us to disaggregate subtopics; therefore, with the information gathered it was unclear in which areas, if any, students needed more help. We have decided to assess critical thinking with a rubric that will specify problematic areas for our students and which we may address in our courses.

- I. **Oral Proficiency.** The Oral Proficiency Interview (from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) is a national test that indicates the level of oral competence. We used the rubric and standards described by ACTFL to evaluate our lower division classes. Only Spanish 1 and Spanish 3 courses were tested in the initial year (2009-10), and the data is provided below. We are very pleased that the modified OPI yielded excellent results (see Chart 1 below). The department's language classes are training students well for further study in the language or study abroad.

- II. **Writing Proficiency/Critical Thinking.** Another of our program assessments was written communication. The department collaborated on a rubric for assessing writing (see Chart 2 below). Secondly, faculty collected appropriate writing samples from their classes. After collecting samples from our upper division courses taught by individual faculty, we calibrated our grading and found that we were in agreement about the standards set by the rubric. As we shared the data from our classes, we found that (a) our students lacked research as well as (b) organizational skills in their essays. Furthermore, we concluded that (c) students should be encouraged to edit and revise their written work more closely. We included one question on critical thinking that did not yield any useful results, and we will be assessing this outcome in the next six-year cycle. We closed the loop by including more writing in Spanish 4 as well as giving better prompts for Sp100. Sp 4 and 100 also have instituted writing several drafts of papers, including peer editing as one of the steps.

Chart 1: Oral Proficiency Testing 2009-10 Data

Spanish 1

ACTFL Speaking Guidelines Levels	Spring 2009 (23 Students)	Fall 2009 (41 Students)	Spring 2010 (50 Students)	Totals (114 Students)	Total Percentages (99.97%)
Novice-Low	0	1	0	1	.87%
Novice-Mid	3	10	3	16	14.03%
Novice-High	2	15	7	24	21.05%
Intermediate-Low	4	9	16	29	25.43%
Intermediate-Mid	14	6	24	44	38.59 %

Spanish 3

ACTFL Speaking Guidelines Levels	Spring 2009 (21 Students)	Fall 2009 (24 Students)	Fall 2010 (17 Students)	Totals (62 Students)	Total Percentages (99.98%)
Novice	0	2	0	2	3.22%
Intermediate-Low	0	1	4	5	8.06%
Intermediate-Mid	3	3	6	12	19.35%
Intermediate-High	11	5	2	18	29.03%
Advanced	7	13	4	24	38.71%
Advanced-High	0	0	1	1	1.61%

Chart 2: MODERN LANGUAGES DEPARTMENT RUBRIC (2010-2011)

CRITERIA	Highly Competent <i>Meets all criteria fully and at a high level</i>	Competent <i>Meets all or most criteria; some may be less developed or uneven</i>	Emerging Comp. <i>Meets some criteria, but falls short on most of them</i>	Not Competent <i>Meets few or none of the criteria</i>
<p>Critical Thinking & Argumentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Thesis</u> is clear & insightful; relevant to assigned topic; carried through to a logical conclusion • <u>Argument</u> is identifiable, reasonable, & sound and proceeds logically, makes novel connections • <u>Analysis</u> is fresh & exciting, posing new ways to think of the material; based on a synthesis of sources (i.e. writer does more than just provide a summary of others' work & differentiates between his/her views and those of sources) 				
<p>Use of Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes <u>sufficient evidence</u>, details &/or description to support ideas/thesis • Attention given to <u>quality of evidence</u>: quotes/citations are chosen carefully & used to support points (rather than presented in large blocks unrelated to points &/or without context or analysis) • Attention given to <u>presentation of evidence</u>: writer understands when & how much to quote or paraphrase; excellent integration of quoted material into sentences 				
<p>Organization & Development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes <u>appropriate title & introductory paragraph</u> that reflects thesis • Each paragraph contains <u>topic sentences</u> with points supported by evidence and related to thesis; Clearly organized with <u>transitions</u> between paragraphs & ideas • <u>Conclusion</u> summarizes points and provides closure (does more than simply restate thesis); explains why it matters 				
<p>Fluency & Style:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Level of fluency</u> appropriate to level of course • <u>Register, style & vocabulary</u> appropriate to purpose, audience, genre, etc. • Sentence-level <u>stylistics</u> are appropriately sophisticated, i.e. clear transitions between sentences, variety of sentence structure & vocabulary, lack of unnecessary repetition 				
<p>Mechanics & Grammar:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of correct grammar, spelling, punctuation & sentence structure & syntax (e.g. no run-on sentences or fragments) • Shows evidence of careful proofreading & correction 				
<p>Documentation & Format:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate formatting of text (heading, margins, space) • Cites and documents sources correctly & consistently using MLA style (e.g. in-text citations & "Obras citadas" page) • <u>Research/evidence</u> applied appropriately; interprets textual & other evidence correctly; 				