

SECOND LANGUAGE CORE ASSESSMENT REPORT

OFFICE OF ASSESSMENT

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Introduction

The Core student learning objectives identify the educational priorities for all undergraduates in Santa Clara University's Core Curriculum. Assessment of student learning is ongoing in the Core—we seek to understand in what areas of the learning objectives students are challenged or excel, and how the Core can offer better support for faculty teaching in these areas.

This assessment report summarizes the process and findings from an assessment of the 1.1 and 1.2 learning objective for the Second Language Core requirement.

The approved Core document (2007) provides the rationale for this requirement. Communication in a second language is an essential skill in the globalizing world that students face. Opportunities for cross-cultural misinterpretation abound. Training in additional languages also provides students experience of the different perspectives that use of another language affords. Jesuit education has always promoted the study of second languages to facilitate intercultural understanding. From the perspective of Santa Clara University, with its privileged location in the heart of Silicon Valley, linguistic and cultural engagement with diverse populations is a natural educational goal. Therefore, students should achieve at least basic conversational proficiency in a second language and demonstrate understanding of some of the cultural differences exhibited by language.

Students at SCU can complete their second language requirement in Arabic, Chinese, Latin, Greek, French, German, Italian, Japanese, or Spanish.

Core Learning Goals Addressed in the Second Language requirement

- *Communication*: Interacting effectively with different audiences, especially through writing, speech, and a second language
- *Perspective*: Seeking out the experience of different cultures and people, striving to view the world through their eyes

The two learning objectives for the Second Language Core requirement include:

- 1.1 Demonstrate skill in the use of the modern or classical language for authentic communicative purposes, as appropriate to the language.
- 1.2 Demonstrate an understanding of and sensitivity to the cultural products, practices, and perspectives exhibited in the language studied.

The Assessment Process

The assessment for the second language learning objectives took place in two ways:

LO1.1 Demonstrate skill in the use of the modern or classical language for authentic communicative purposes, as appropriate to the language

After consultation with the chair and other members of the Modern Languages and Literatures (MLL) department, a recommendation was made to assess student performance for LO 1.1 (skill in the use of the modern classical language for authentic communicative purposes) through the Avant STAMP online test that assesses language ability in reading, writing, listening and speaking. This test allows educators to map ability to the standards set by the American Council of the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). The cost of the Avant STAMP test made it prohibitive to give to all students enrolled in level 3 courses, so faculty teaching those courses in the spring of 2018 invited students from their classes to take the test as an independent activity. Numerous lab times were offered for students to take the test under the supervision of a faculty member in the MLL department. Twenty-two students completed the assessment in six different languages. Scores for the four skill areas were sent from Avant to the department and forwarded to the Office of Assessment.

LO1.2 Demonstrate an understanding of and sensitivity to the cultural products, practices, and perspectives exhibited in the language studied.

In winter 2018, the Office of Assessment asked faculty teaching 2nd level Second Language courses to gather student work related to LO 1.2. Student work was collected from a random sample of students from the 21 courses taught by distinct faculty during winter quarter, 2018. Level 2 was chosen as the appropriate level for the assessment since only students completing the B.A. or B.S. in Social Sciences are required to complete the 3rd Second Language course; others need only complete the 2nd level. Work from 108 students from 17 courses could be used in the assessment representing 16 percent of the total number of students taking level 2 second language courses.

Faculty teaching the courses identified the assignments or exam questions providing the clearest evidence for student learning with respect to LO 1.2: Demonstrate an understanding of and sensitivity to the cultural products, practices, and perspectives exhibited in the language studied.

A rubric was used to score student work and student learning for each objective was scored on a four-point proficiency scale (see Appendix). Eleven faculty who teaching in the second language area participated in the scoring of the student work. After two norming sessions and clarifying modifications to the rubric, raters independently reviewed and rated all materials.

What We Learned

LO 1.1 Students will demonstrate skill in the use of the modern or classical language for authentic communicative purposes, as appropriate to the language.

Table 1 summarizes the test scores for French and Spanish, where, according to the department, the expectation is that students will achieve a score of 4 in the communication skills (intermediate low per the ACTFL benchmark) by the end of Level 3. As Table 1 shows, all students met or exceeded the standard except on listening, where some students scored as novice-high, not intermediate-low.

Table 1. Communication skill scores for students taking French and Spanish (score (n))

Language	Reading score	Writing	Listening	Speaking
French (n=5)	5 (5)	4 (5)	3 (3), 4 (1)	4 (4), 5 (1)
Spanish (n=3)	4 (1) 7 (2)	4 (1), 5 (2)	3 (2), 4 (1)	4 (1), 5 (2)

Table 2 summarizes the test scores for German and Italian, where, according to the department, the expectation is that students will achieve a score of 3 in the communication skills (novice high) per the ACTFL benchmark) by the end of Level 3. As Table 2 shows, all students met or exceeded the standard in all communication skills.

Table 2. Communication skill scores for students taking German and Italian (score (n))

Language	Reading	Writing	Listening	Speaking
German (n=2)	6 (2)	4 (2)	5 (2)	4 (2)
Italian (n=5)	5 (3) 6 (2)	4 (3), 5 (2)	6 (2), 8 (3)	3 (1), 4 (2), 5 (2)

Table 3 summarizes the test scores for Chinese and Japanese, where, according to the department, the expectation is that students will achieve a score of 2 in the communication skills (novice mid) per the ACTFL benchmark) by the end of Level 3. As Table 3 shows, all students met or exceeded the standard in all communication skills.

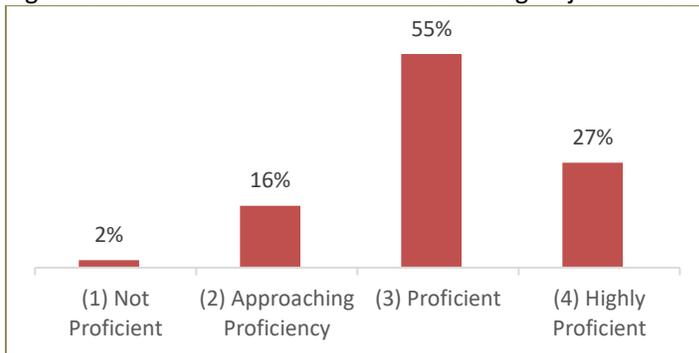
Table 3. Communication skill scores for students taking Chinese and Japanese (score (n))

Language	Reading	Writing	Listening	Speaking
Chinese (n=4)	2 (3), 3 (1)	4 (4)	3 (1), 4 (2), 8 (1)	4 (4), 5 (1)
Japanese (n=2)	4 (1) 5 (1)	4 (2)	2 (1), 3 (1)	3 (1), 5 (1)

LO 1.2 Students will demonstrate an understanding of and sensitivity to the cultural products, practices, and perspectives exhibited in the language studied.

Student work was generally judged as proficient or highly proficient for LO 1.2 (combined 82 percent, see Figure 1). An additional 16% of the student work was judged as approaching proficiency, 2% was rated as not proficient, and 1% was rated as not having evidence that the learning objective was addressed in the student work.

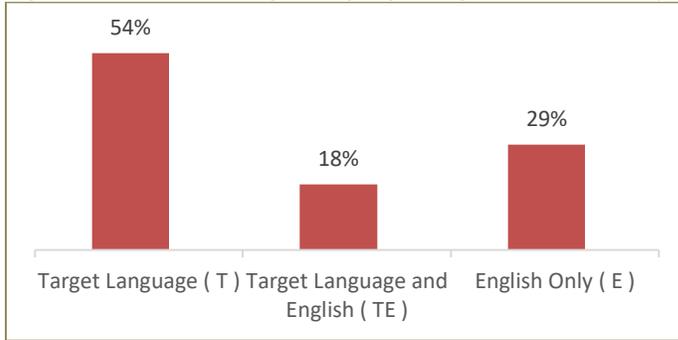
Figure 1. Percent of Rubric Scores for Learning Objective 1.2



Students wrote the cultural response(s) in target language (T), target language and English (TE), or English only (E). The scoring faculty thought it would be interesting to document the proportion of students in each of these groups and see if this was associated with a difference in rubric scores.

As seen in Figure 2, most of the student responses used the target language (54%). Additionally, 18% of responses used a combination of the target language and English, and 29% of students only used English.

Figure 2. Percent of target language usage for cultural responses



When student scores were examined across each group, no significant differences were found relating to whether students completed their work in English, the target language, or both.

Conclusions

The scores from the Second Language core assessment indicate that the student work shows considerable evidence of meeting LO 1.1. Across the six languages included, most students met or exceeded the recommended standard of the Modern Languages and Literatures department for reading, writing, listening and speaking. It should be noted that the sample was small and students volunteered for the assessment (no payment nor extra-credit was offered).

The assessment for LO 1.2 drew from a much larger sample of students randomly drawn from courses and using embedded course assignments. Overwhelmingly students were determined as meeting or exceeding the rubric standards set for the demonstration of understanding of and sensitivity to the cultural products, practices, and perspectives exhibited in the language studied.

The faculty members teaching in this area were enthusiastic participants in the scoring of the student work for LO 1.2 and the discussions around the goals of the learning objectives and approaches faculty take in their teaching to support students' their understanding of and sensitivity to culture were engaging and appeared to be very valuable to the participants. Within the scoring session, faculty exchanged ideas and suggestions, jumpstarting one of the outcomes typically seen after the assessment in complete. Further discussions with all faculty teaching in this area are encouraged, especially among faculty who have more recently joined SCU as instructors.

Acknowledgments: The Office of Assessment thanks the Second Languages FCC, the faculty teaching Core courses who participated in the assessment, the faculty members who offered to serve as scorers for the student work, and our student assistants who contribute ongoing support to the assessment process.

Second Language Rubric for LO 1.2 (Updated on 6-27-19)

Objective	Highly proficient- 4	Proficient-3	Approaching proficiency-2	Not proficient-1	Score
<p>1.2 Demonstrate an understanding of and sensitivity to the cultural products, practices, and perspectives exhibited in the language studied. <i>Note:</i> examples of cultural products include monuments, clothing, music; examples of practices include pastimes or family interactions; perspectives include ideologies or values related to national symbols, appropriate dress, religion.</p>	<p>Content reflects strong knowledge, understanding, and sensitivity related to cultural products, practices or perspectives. Shows a developed understanding of the meaning of products, practices and perspectives within the culture.</p> <p>Note: student responses that earn a “4” will be elaborated and show complexity in understanding of culture.</p>	<p>Content reflects some knowledge, understanding, and sensitivity related to cultural products, practices or perspectives. Shows a basic awareness of the meaning of products, practices and perspectives within the culture.</p> <p>Note: to earn a “3” students should respond to more than one cultural product, practice, or perspective.</p>	<p>Content identifies cultural products, practices or perspectives, but knowledge of them may be formulaic without reflecting a deeper cultural understanding. Shows a limited awareness of the meaning of products, practices and perspectives within the culture.</p> <p>Note: a “2” emphasizes that the student is providing more formulaic responses without explanation or elaboration. For example, “German houses tend to be smaller than American.” The student has not provided a reason for this that would reflect deeper understanding. This may be because of limited vocabulary. Nevertheless, we score it as a two.</p>	<p>Content reflects a very limited awareness of cultural products, practices or perspectives, and may be communicated predominantly from the point of view of one’s own culture. Shows very little or no awareness of the meaning of products, practices and perspectives within the culture.</p> <p>Note: A score of “1” may be used when there is only a single example of a cultural practice offered, in addition to offering only predominant reflections from the point of view of student’s own culture.</p>	

Notes:

1. Follow the rubric regardless of the language in which the student writes about culture.
2. If the student writes about culture in the target language, concentrate on the content not the fluency of language. In other words, try to understand the intended meaning, despite errors in word usage or grammar, and score according to the rubric above, rather than language accuracy.
3. Scorers will note on the scoring sheet whether the student responded to cultural prompts only in the target language, in target language & English, or only English.
4. Please use the comments section to make notes that will help us interpret the scores, raise issues for faculty to discuss later on, or any other observation.
5. Use only whole numbers (1-4)
6. Give a score based on the “best” work you see, i.e., the highest level of student learning