**Modern Languages & Cultures Initial Assessment Analysis, Interpretation, and Future Plan**

For our first round of assessment we collected data from all 301 courses for French, German, and Spanish. Later this semester, we will apply the same Assessment tool to a senior-seminar level class in each of the language sections for comparison. The scale below is based on the ACTFL Guidelines for language proficiency (Attached as separate document). The 301 course is in many ways a transition course from lower-division language (more structure-based) to upper division language (more content-based). This is the first upper-division course that our students take. In this course, though grammar is usually still present, there is a shift in this course toward content and theme-based course design. As the data indicates below most of our students at the 301 level are in the intermediate range, which is exactly what we would expect. Those students in 0+ range are the weaker students and are probably in need of remedial work (which could include study abroad) to have continued success in the major or minor. No differences can be detected across the various categories below. Students seem able to adequately negotiate the required expectations for FL proficiency. Those students who have scored 2+ are most likely to be heritage speakers, i.e. have been speaking the language at home prior to coming to Albion College. \*\*Japanese will be added once we are able to offer courses above the 301 level.

*MLAC Writing Proficiency Assessment Tool* ***DATA*** Fall 2009

Assessment Scale: Bitmap

0 -- 0 **}** Novice 3 - 3+

1 -- 1+ **}** Intermediate 4 - 4+ Superior

2 -- 2+ **}** Advanced 5

**1 Global Tasks / Functions**

**0 0+ 1 1+ 2 2+**

French 301 4 6 3

German 301 1 8 3 1

Spanish 301.1 4 6 2

Spanish 301.2 1 4 9

**2 Context**

**0 0+ 1 1+ 2 2+**

French 301 2 4 4 3

German 301 1 6 5 1

Spanish 301.1 4 6 2

Spanish 301.2 1 6 7

**3 Content**

**0 0+ 1 1+ 2 2+**

French 301 2 4 3 3 1

German 301 2 5 5 1

Spanish 301.1 5 3 3 1

Spanish 301.2 3 11

**4 Accuracy**

**0 0+ 1 1+ 2 2+**

French 301 4 2 2 4

German 301 2 4 6 1

Spanish 301.1 6 4

Spanish 301.2 2 7 4 1

**5 Text Type**

**0 0+ 1 1+ 2 2+**

French 301 6 6 1

German 301 1 7 4 1

Spanish 301.1 2 7 3

Spanish 301.2 5 4 5

**Assessment Scale**: Bitmap

0 -- 0+ **}** Novice 3 - 3+

1 -- 1+ **}** Intermediate 4 - 4+ Superior

2 -- 2+ **}** Advanced 5

**5 Text Type**

**0 0+ 1 1+ 2 2+ 3 3+ 4**

French

301 6 6 1

**French**

**320** 9

German

301 1 7 4 1

**German**

**307** 1 12 2

Spanish

301.1 2 7 3

Spanish

301.2 5 4 5

**Spanish**

**402** 2 2 7

**Analysis and Interpretation**

As hoped our comparative survey data shows that students across all 3 languages show significant improvement in their proficiency. The one surprising feature is that there seem to be discrepancies in proficiency levels when one compares advanced students in French with those students in Spanish or German. The data does not provide any reasons for this but I would suspect several possibilities: 1) inconsistency in interpretation. While we are professional language instructors we are not adequately trained in oral proficiency testing. This training program would require a significant time commitment and is expensive. The other option would be to require that all graduates take the oral proficiency exam which is administered by ADFL. The charge for this exam is also quite expensive. For each individual student it costs approximately $150. Presently those students in MLAC who seek teaching certificates are required to take this exam; 2) Heritage speakers in German or Spanish. Even though we do not track this I know that there are at least 2 heritage speakers in German and several in Spanish as well. Because they are semi-/near-native speakers, they would skew the data for those particular languages. 3) Some of the advanced classes have either more or fewer students who have already been on study abroad. If one of the above classes is either over- or under-represented in those students this would also have a significant impact on the survey results.

We are satisfied with the results of the data, which shows that our students are making substantial progress in their language proficiency while at Albion College.

**The way forward**

Because we feel that it is important to document our student’s progress in other areas, often less easily captured than proficiency in the language (however significant that part is) such as critical and creative thinking (in the target language), understanding cultural and societal norms in the geographical areas they have studied, especially in terms of how they compare to those they grew up with, this semester (spring 2010) we are going to have all our graduating seniors write a brief reflective essay (written in the target language) in which they describe the range of skills they think they have been able to develop or acquire in their capacity as Modern Language majors or minors at Albion College. We envision this essay being a forum in which students will be able to reflect upon where they are today in comparison to where they were four years ago, both in terms of proficiency as well as the areas described above. This will give us a clearer indication of how majoring or minoring in a Modern Language can radically change or reshape a student’s outlook on life.

Additionally, over the summer the Department of Modern Languages, in conjunction with the CIE, will begin to collect assessment data about where our students place on the various placement exams they must take at the beginning of their off-campus study. Most, if not all off-campus study programs in countries where English is not the native language, give placement tests to incoming students, in order to see what level of speaking, writing, listening and reading they have already attained in the target language, before they embark on their studies in the program. This data will indicate how our students have progressed since coming to Albion and enrolling in the language courses in our Department.

Since our department is several departments in one, each of the language sections will be asked to compare their data between the 301 results and the senior seminar results. Each section will be asked to identify any trends, discrepancies or qualitative differences in student progression from the intermediate level to the senior level first at the language section level. Those reports will be first given to the chair and then a departmental meeting will be called for discussion of the overall results. An important outcome for us is that each language is similar in terms of student success. Traditionally we have managed the individual language sections as a department and we will continue to do this.