

1st Feedback Submitted to the Modern Languages PAC

**William Keeth, Associate Professor of Spanish, Mansfield University of Pennsylvania,
11/3/2011**

Foreign Language Articulation Agreement

I find the articulation agreement deficient in the following ways:

1. This articulation agreement does not require the PASSHE institutions to comply with any intra-system policy of articulation.
2. The articulation agreement mentions language proficiency as foundational component of GEN ED competencies, but makes no provisions for nor guarantees that the same GEN ED competencies are homogeneously present or consistent system wide.
3. This agreement mentions language assessment, but only in terms of a "may exist" condition. Given PDE and PASSHE support for the agreement and given PDE's responsibility for monitoring compliance, a coherent and shared set of assessment methods and mechanisms should be implemented system-wide and in a manner that avoids overlapping. Current overlapping between PDE and NCATE standards taxes professors with excessive assessment responsibilities and fails to isolate and measure the same assessment artifacts.
4. The articulation agreement seems to preclude written placement tests, yet at the same time fails to mention the method or mechanisms by which oral proficiency will be accredited within the PASSHE system.

**Jeffrey Ruth, Assoc. Prof. of Spanish, East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania,
11/4/2011**

For. Lang. Articulation

This agreement seems well constructed. With respect to foreign languages, it appears to place emphasis on the need for 2-year colleges to ensure that their programs are meeting the ACTFL Intermediate-Low level upon graduation. This is appropriate. However, if a 2-year college is not ensuring this quality, there may be no mechanism in place to know this. For example, a student who completes French 2 at a 2-year college with less-developed outcomes may be placed at French 2 upon arrival at a 4-year college. The student may protest under this agreement, but how will the dispute be resolved? How will we know if the 2-year colleges are fulfilling the required outcomes? Perhaps their accreditation process require evidence of this; I'm not sure. Likewise, it is incumbent upon 4-year college language programs to have accurate placement processes in place. Currently they vary from college to college. It might be fruitful to have a dialogue among heads of 2- and 4-year college language programs to exchange ideas and tools use for placement.

Eleanor ter Horst, Faculty, Clarion University of Pennsylvania, 11/8/2011

Competencies are Insufficient

I think it's fine to require Intermediate Low speaking proficiency. However, it's not enough. Students should also demonstrate some ability to read and write in the target language, as well as some knowledge of culture. Why not require Intermediate Low proficiency in reading and writing as well?

Also, the ACTFL Standards are cited in the appendix but not mentioned in the document. The agreement addresses only one of these standards, "Communication," but leaves out the other four: Cultures, Connections, Comparisons and Communities. We do address these standards in the last two years of the curriculum, but some attention to them should be required in the first two years.

Elisabeth Donato, Faculty, Clarion University of Pennsylvania, 11/8/2011

Articulation Document for Modern Languages

I will repeat here what my colleague, Eleanor ter Horst, just mentioned here a bit earlier:

It is absolutely fine to require Intermediate Low speaking proficiency from students who have completed two years of college-level foreign language study. However, it's not enough. Students should also demonstrate some ability to read and write in the target language, as well as some knowledge of culture. Why not require Intermediate Low proficiency in reading and writing as well?

Also, the ACTFL Standards are cited in the appendix but not mentioned in the document. The agreement addresses only one of these standards, "Communication," but leaves out the other four: Cultures, Connections, Comparisons and Communities. Some attention to them should be required in the first two years of college language studies.

Sean McDaniel, Professor and Chair, Dept. of Foreign Languages IUP, Indiana University of Pennsylvania-Main Campus, 11/15/2011

Foreign Languages

COMMENTS/QUESTIONS: DRAFT OF STATEWIDE MODERN LANGUAGES
ARTICULATION AGREEMENT
Department of Foreign Languages
Indiana University of Pennsylvania

It is commendable that the state of Pennsylvania is developing an articulation agreement for modern languages that is based on the currently used frameworks for both language proficiency as defined in the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines--Speaking

(1999) and the Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century (1996, 2006).

However, there are some inaccuracies in the proposal related to both proficiency and the standards, as explained below. Additional clarification is also necessary in areas described below. Finally there are several concerns that should be given serious consideration regarding the articulation agreement as presented below.

INACCURACIES: PAGE 3 OF DRAFT

1. The top of page 3, "Foreign Language Competencies and Foundations," identifies a list of learning outcomes that students must attain "at the Intermediate -Low level minimum." However, the following outcomes in the list do not have any relationship to Intermediate-Low proficiency:

- #5 pertains to the Cultures Goal Area of the Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century, NOT to language proficiency.
- #6 (interpretation of authentic materials) deals with the Interpretive Mode of the Communications Goal Area, NOT to language proficiency.

2. It appears that the proficiency level of "Intermediate Low" refers to SPEAKING, as indicated by Appendix B, which depicts the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines for Speaking (Intermediate Level). However, the list of "Foreign Language Competencies and Foundations" (page 3) includes writing (outcome #3). Does the reference to Intermediate Low refer to both speaking and writing?

3. Outcome #8 in the same list on page 3 addresses the use of "basic negotiation of meaning strategies during conversations." An intermediate-level speaker does NOT use negotiation of meaning strategies. Note that speakers at this level "are primarily reactive and struggle to answer direct questions or requests for information," as stated in the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines in Appendix B. Therefore, this outcome should be deleted.

QUESTIONS FOR CLARIFICATION REGARDING LANGUAGE STANDARDS

1. The only valid and reliable way to assess a student's oral proficiency using the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines is through the official double-rated Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) administered through Language Testing International (LTI). The current cost of an official telephonic OPI is \$134 plus \$10 for the OPI certificate. Will students completing the two-year program be required to take the official OPI to prove attainment of the minimum Intermediate-Low level of speaking? If so, will students incur the costs of the OPI?

2. Given the inaccuracies of the current draft as listed above, how will outcomes #3 (writing), #5 (culture), and #6 (interpretation of texts) be assessed and verified?

3. How will the outcomes listed under "Other Foundations" on page 3 be assessed and verified?

- What types of communication strategies (Outcome #3) are considered to be "effective"?
- What characterizes an "interest in lifelong learning," as listed in Outcome #5? Does this refer to learning of languages? Of cultures? Learning in general?

CONCERNS REGARDING LANGUAGE STANDARDS

1. The level of Intermediate Low speaking proficiency is typically that of the average student who graduates from high school having studied a foreign language for 3-4 years. Intermediate Low as a minimum for students completing a two-year program and "entering a parallel baccalaureate program with full junior standing" is lower than the level currently in place in many PASSHE schools, especially those that are accredited by NCATE. For example, IUP requires Spanish and French Education majors to demonstrate a minimum level of Intermediate-Mid speaking proficiency by the end of the sophomore year so that students have the necessary time to attain the exit level of Advanced Low prior to Student Teaching in the senior year.

Therefore, students who transfer to IUP with only Intermediate Low proficiency could not be granted full junior standing if they are education majors.

2. Since many of the major courses taken by students in the sophomore year in 4-year institutions include competencies and content in addition to language proficiency (e.g. Introduction to Literature; Teaching Methodology and Early Field Experiences for education majors), by what mechanism would students be required to complete this coursework if a course-by-course equivalency is not done and students transfer with full junior standing?

3. The logistics surrounding the implementation of an oral interview based placement system for all incoming students with experience in foreign language is likely not practical nor feasible for any institution, but in particular for one as large as IUP. For example, in the summer of 2011, over 1000 foreign language placements were conducted at IUP; oral interviews were used only for the "fine-tuning" of placements first made via open-ended question paper or online placement exams. It is not practical to expect that all placements can be done, at least initially, by oral interviews. See also Item #1 under "QUESTIONS FOR CLARIFICATION REGARDING LANGUAGE STANDARDS," noted above.

4. Will the next step of the articulation agreements be the establishment of course-by-course equivalencies among all participating universities? Who makes the decision about the transfer equivalencies? This should most definitely be a decision made by the faculty in the departments that own the curriculum.

5. Given the level of language ability noted in the original proposal, it would seem that this articulation agreement is only geared toward the lower levels of foreign language courses rather than the coursework required of foreign language majors and minors. Is this the case? It is our opinion that the only way to properly evaluate the successful completion of foreign language coursework would through a course-by-course transfer equivalency review process.

6. Is this just an agreement between community colleges and PASSHE schools? What schools are involved?

7. Is this just for students with AA degrees? If not, will grades below "C" transfer? At the moment, only grades of C or better transfer in unless a student is transferring in an entire AA degree (then, a D will be accepted).

8. The document says "Program Articulation." What is the "program" that is being discussed here? To our knowledge there are not AA degrees in Foreign Language. Is

this ANY AA degree? Is it just a BA degree, for example, or would it also pertain to Foreign Language Education (BS) degrees?

9. What happens when curricula change at a participating institution? What is the mechanism by which these changes are 1) communicated to all participating schools and 2) who adjusts the transfer equivalency system? How will any changes made at the state level be 1) vetted by participating institutions and 2) communicated to these institutions?

10. How would study abroad requirements be evaluated? (Participation in a study abroad is often required at the various institutions, but the length and type vary.)

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Sean McDaniel

Chair, Dept. of Foreign Languages

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Blandine Mitaut, Faculty, Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania, 11/16/2011

Modern Languages Draft Articulation Agreement

p. 2, §4 "in weaker curricular areas" : I am not sure I understand the use of "weaker" in this context. What does it refer to? the weakness of the courses offered for Associates degrees in languages? To language courses in general? In what way are the curricular areas weak?

p. 2: "This articulation agreement is also based on the following assumptions:
1. The foreign language curriculum at the Community Colleges and at the Four-Year Institutions in Pennsylvania is framed around the ACTFL National Standards and the Proficiency Guidelines." :Yes, this is an assumption. What happens when in actuality, the language programs are not all in compliance with ACTFL?

p. 2: "4. The minimum level of language proficiency of a Community College graduate (60 credits) with an Associate of Arts degree in French, German or Spanish is Intermediate-Low as described by the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines.": what is an Associates' degree equivalent to? A minor in French? Then yes. If it equates a BA, then no.

Also: What structure is in place to test the proficiency level of the student?

p. 12: #11: "Participating institutions will enact the Agreement in accordance to the timeline outlined by the TAOC, but no later than Fall 2013".: added "than" before "Fall 2013"