

**\*\*\*GRADUATE**

**Department of Modern Languages / Kansas State University  
Identifying and Assessing Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)**

**I. Introduction.** Student Learning Outcomes in programs of the Department of Modern Languages are listed in the six categories that are used university-wide in efforts to assess student output and program effectiveness. The categories are as follows: **Knowledge, Critical Thinking, Communication, Diversity, Ownership for Learning, and Personal and Professional Development**

Learning a foreign language implies the acquisition of *detailed knowledge* of the target culture as well as the comprehension of the language and its literature. Such knowledge encompasses purely technical knowledge of the target language as well as insights into modes of thinking other than those students already have. Studying a foreign language will stimulate the student's *critical thinking* about the linguistic structure of that language as well as its literature, all within a cultural context that implies a range of paradigms. Critical thinking goes beyond the mere technical understanding of a text and the ability to summarize it. It also implies the ability to interpret texts and the development of an understanding of the target culture. Therefore, it extends into many disciplines across the social sciences, the humanities, and cross-cultural studies. Students develop and improve *communication skills* not only in the target language, but through exposure to another linguistic system, and ultimately also in their mother tongue. Our classes stimulates students to develop the ability to relate to *diverse cultures* and thus reflect on their own. A foreign language, once started, often has the impact of turning students into *life-long learners*. In that sense it is like a savings account that keeps growing once the initial investment is made. The longer a student stays with the chosen language, especially after an extended sojourn in one of the countries in which it is spoken, the less the student may be inclined to give up on studying this language and its culture. Language learning engages in a multitude of exercises and experiences in which students learn to interact with their peers and learn how to *work as a team*, an ability that is highly sought by government and industry employers. Learning to do research cultivates individual responsibility and reinforces personal ethics. The knowledge of another culture through its language and texts enhances social responsibility as well as cosmopolitan and even global thinking. Consequently, the study of a foreign culture and its language has the potential to turn students into more *responsible citizens* of the world. Students with four years of language training and a year abroad clearly demonstrate this *development* from local thinkers into more cosmopolitan thinkers.

Note: References to "advanced" and "superior" skills in reading, speaking, and writing are to definitions and guidelines of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). References are made in this document to Attachment A (\*advanced) and Attachment B (\*\*superior).

**II. Student Learning Outcomes by Assessment Category**

**Master of Arts in Modern Languages**

**Master's Degrees Graduates in Modern Languages will have demonstrated:**

**Assessment Categories**

01. Superior ability to comprehend and interpret primary texts

knowledge, critical thinking, diversity

02. The ability to investigate, evaluate, and apply secondary sources of information in research and problem-solving activities	knowledge; critical thinking; ownership for learning; personal and professional development
03. Extensive knowledge of target culture and appreciation of and sensitivity to cultural differences	knowledge; critical thinking, diversity; personal and professional development
04. Superior** level skills in speaking according to recognized professional guidelines	communication; knowledge
05. Superior** level skills in reading according to recognized professional guidelines	communication; knowledge
06. Superior** level skills in writing according to recognized professional guidelines	communication; knowledge; critical thinking
07. The ability to work effectively in multi-cultural, multilingual environment	diversity; critical thinking; personal and professional development; ownership for learning
08. Awareness of professional standards and career possibilities for those with bilingual/multilingual skills	personal and professional development

### **III. Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Methods**

#### **Master of Arts Degree**

<b>Student Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>Assessment Mode:</b>
01. Superior ability to comprehend and interpret primary texts.	research papers, thesis/exam in the target language
02. The ability to investigate, evaluate, and apply secondary sources of information in research and problem-solving activities	thesis/comprehensive exam
03. Extensive knowledge of target culture and appreciation of and sensitivity to cultural differences	observation of classwork; exit interview
04. Superior** level skills in speaking according	to recognized professional guidelines

05. Superior\*\* level skills in reading according to recognized professional guidelines

thesis/comprehensive exam; OPI or SOPI (ACTFL guidelines)

06. Superior\*\* level skills in writing according to recognized professional guidelines

thesis/comprehensive exam; OPI or SOPI (ACTFL guidelines)

07. The ability to work effectively in multi-cultural, multilingual environment

observation of teaching; student evaluations

08. Awareness of professional standards and career possibilities for those with bilingual/multilingual skills

MLANG 710; exit interview

## **Attachment B: Master of Arts Degree**

### **ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines: Superior**

The following guidelines of the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages are used nationally to identify proficiency levels in foreign language skills.

#### **1. Speaking**

Able to speak the language with sufficient accuracy to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social, professional, and abstract topics. Can discuss special fields of competence and interest with ease. Can support opinions and hypothesize, but may not be able to tailor language to audience or discuss in depth highly abstract or unfamiliar topics. Usually the Superior level speaker is only partially familiar with regional or other dialectical variants. The Superior level speaker commands a wide variety of interactive strategies and shows good awareness of discourse strategies. The latter involves the ability to distinguish main ideas from supporting information through syntactic, lexical, and suprasegmental features (pitch, stress, intonation). Sporadic errors may occur, particularly in low-frequency structures and some complex high-frequency structures more common to formal writing, but no patterns of error are evident. Errors do not disturb the native speaker or interfere with communication.

#### **2. Reading**

Able to read with almost complete comprehension and at normal speed expository prose on unfamiliar subjects and a variety of literary texts. Reading ability is not dependent on subject matter knowledge, although the reader is not expected to comprehend thoroughly texts which are highly dependent on knowledge of the target culture. Reads easily for pleasure. Superior-level texts feature hypotheses, argumentation, and supported opinions, and include grammatical patterns and vocabulary ordinarily encountered in academic/professional reading.

At this level, due to the control of general vocabulary and structure, the reader is almost always able to match the meanings derived from extralinguistic knowledge with meanings derived from knowledge of the language, allowing for smooth and efficient reading of diverse texts. Occasional misunderstandings may still occur; for example, the reader may experience some difficulty with unusually complex structures and low-frequency idioms. At the Superior level the reader can match strategies, top-down or bottom-up, which are most appropriate to the text. (Top-down strategies rely on real-world knowledge and prediction based on genre and organizational scheme of the text. Bottom-up strategies rely on actual linguistic knowledge.) Material at this level will include a variety of literary texts, editorials, correspondence, general reports, and technical material in professional fields. Rereading is rarely necessary, and misreading is rare.

#### **3. Writing**

Able to express self effectively in most formal and informal writing on practical, social and professional topics. Can write most types of correspondence, such as memos as well as social and business letters, and short research papers and statements of position in areas of special interest or in special fields. Good control of a full range of structures, spelling or non-alphabetic symbol production, and a wide general vocabulary allow the writer to hypothesize and present arguments or points of view accurately and effectively. An underlying organization, such as chronological ordering, logical ordering, cause and effect, comparison, and thematic development is strongly evident, although not thoroughly executed and/or not totally reflecting target language patterns. Although sensitive to differences in formal and informal style, still may not tailor writing precisely to a variety of purposes and/or readers. Errors in writing rarely disturb natives or cause miscommunication.