

## **World Languages, Literatures and Cultures (WLLC) – Core Course Assessments 2018**

The following material presents the results of our assessment of 2003 courses, required of us each year, as well as some 2013 courses since 2003 is not offered by such languages as Russian and Portuguese during the Spring semester. We assess the 2003 courses in selected languages this year. The report this year includes assessments for Latin, Greek, German, Portuguese, and Russian. (In Portuguese and Russian the 2013 courses were assessed because the 2003 courses were not offered in the spring semester.)

### **I. WLLC 2003 Assessments**

#### ***A. Classical Studies - Latin and Greek 2003: Fall Semester, 2017.***

Students in Greek and Latin 2003 were asked to complete an online pre-test during the 1st week of the semester and then a post test during the 15th week of the semester. The results are as follows:

##### ***Latin 2003***

Average overall test score improved from 59% to 89%. Average translation score improved from 58% to 92%. Average grammar score improved from 50% to 78%.

Intermediate Latin (LATN 2003-001) focuses on strengthening the Latin grammar skills (morphology and syntax) introduced in Elementary Latin, as well as honing translation skills through the careful reading of Latin texts. As secondary learning goals, the course aims to build critical thinking skills through the socio-historical analysis of a primary text and cross-cultural perspective learning. A diagnostic test assessing skills in translation, grammar, and syntax was administered at the beginning and end of the fall 2017 semester. For the 11 students who completed both tests, the average overall test score improved 30% (pre-test 59% to post-test 89%), the average overall translation score improved 34% (pre-test 58% to post-test 92%) and the average grammar/syntax score improved from a 28% (pre-test 50% to post-test 78%). While our students leave LATN 2003 as confident translators, some still have difficulty identifying the mechanics behind the language. To assess the secondary learning goals, students complete four assignments over the course of the semester, which encourage them to engage with the textual material in critical and creative ways, such as translating and analyzing the Latin funerary epitaph of a Roman freedman as a comparison to the character Trimalchio introduced in the text. The averages on these assignments ranged from an 86% to 90%, reflecting a strong creative and critical thinking skills.

##### ***Greek 2003***

Since there only 3 students enrolled in GREK 2003 in the fall 2017 semester, we did not administer pre- and post- tests. However, we note that at the beginning of the semester, none of the students had memorized any ancient Greek literature, but by the end of fall semester 2017, each had memorized the Lord's Prayer in Ancient Greek (Matthew 6:9- 13) and had some

facility in reading both New Testament texts and Plato's Apology of Socrates: their first reading of real ancient Greek texts. They showed this knowledge in their midterm and final examinations, which required them to translate from ancient Greek into English, and to answer grammar questions about the texts.

The CLST Program Chair reviewed the results of the LATN 2003 Assessment for fall semester, 2017, and concluded that students are meeting the accomplishing the goals/outcomes of Latin 2003, and that we do not need to make changes in curriculum or pedagogy.

### **B. German 2003 Assessment**

All students enrolled in sections of German 2003 (Intermediate German I) were asked to complete a pre- and post-assessment during the second and fifteenth weeks of the semester, respectively. Upon completion of the assessment, students were given a homework grade to incentivize participation.

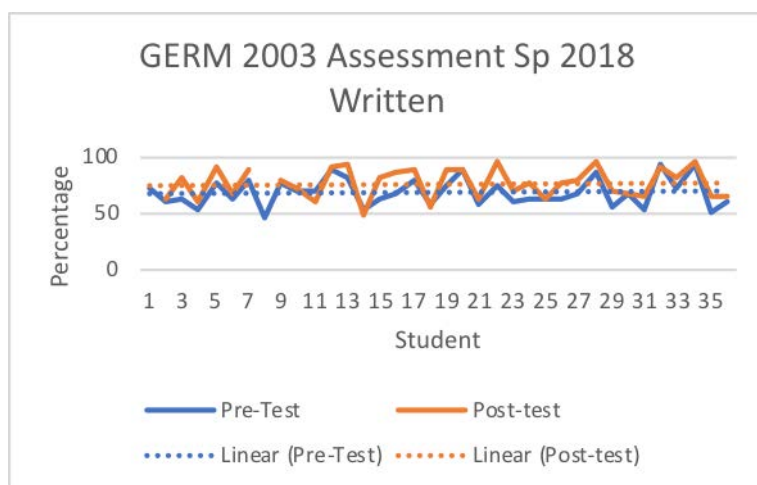
The pre- and post-assessment were identical, and comprised a written section covering grammar, vocabulary, and culture (40 multiple choice questions), and an oral section consisting of basic personal questions. The written assessment was constructed within Blackboard and graded automatically, while the oral assessment was graded by the course instructor, Caroline Beringer, from films that students had made of themselves answering the assessment questions.

Of the 43 students enrolled in GERM 2003 during the 2018 Spring semester, 36 students completed the written pre-test (34 completed the written post-test) and 30 students completed the oral pre-test (34 completed the oral post-test).

### Results

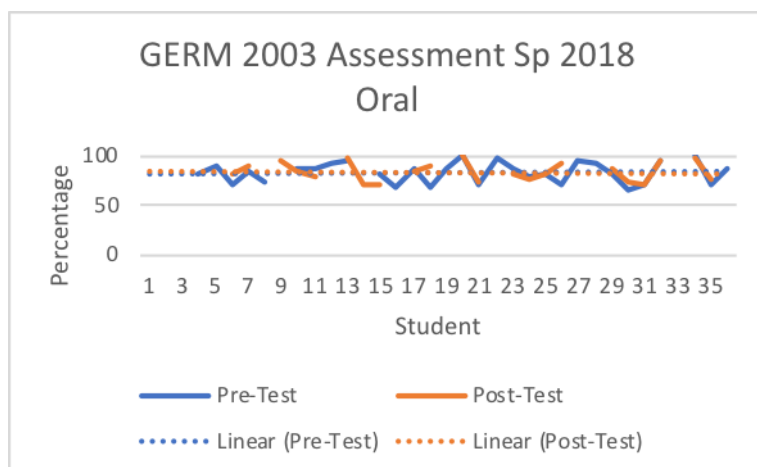
#### *Written Section*

- Pre-assessment
  - Avg. score: 68.26%
  - High score: 92.5%
  - Low score: 45%
- Post-assessment
  - Avg. score: 76.40%
  - High score: 95%
  - Low score: 47.5%



### Oral Section

- Pre-assessment
  - Avg. score: 83.37%
  - High score: 100%
  - Low score: 64%
- Post-assessment
  - Avg. score: 84.18%
  - High score: 100%
  - Low score: 72%



The change in performance from pre-assessment to post-assessment

shows measurable improvement in student scores, an increase of 8% for the written section and .8% for the oral section. Due possibly to difficulties with the software, there was noticeably less participation on the oral portion of the exam than on the written, and the number of those completing the oral portion decreased from the pre-test to the post-test, which may have skewed the results down.

The GERM 2003 assessment revealed problem areas for students at this level, including imperatives, genitive constructions, and verb conjugation with certain pronouns and possessive adjective constructions. These difficulties were anticipated by the faculty while creating the assessment module, but they were somewhat surprising in their frequency. As a result of this assessment data, we will be focusing additional time on these concepts in the 2003 classroom.

## II. 2013 Assessments

Some of our language programs do not teach 2003 during the Spring semester. Heeding the call to assess their students, they chose to assess their 2013 courses, the follow up course to 2003. These and other programs will assess their 2003 level students during the Fall 2013 semester.

### *A. Portuguese 2013 Assessment*

2103 Portuguese for Spanish Speakers II is the second part a two-semester course in Portuguese especially designed for both native speakers of Spanish and learners of Spanish who have completed at least intermediate level (SPAN 1013) in this language. The assessment discussed throughout this document consists of the analysis of the results of two in-class examinations given to the students in the fourth week of class (February 7, 2018) and during finals week (May 09, 2018). There were six students enrolled in Portuguese for Spanish Speakers II (PSS2) in spring 2018, but only five participated in the assessment because one of them was auditing the class and was not required to take exams. There are a few things to keep in mind about this particular class. First of all, it does not fit into the regular three-semester sequence (1003, 1013, 2003) that is the norm for the regular Portuguese classes or other language programs. As such, this class emphasizes production skills (speaking and writing) as it is assumed that students will have some familiarity with grammar and some training in listening and reading in Portuguese because of their previous knowledge of Spanish. Even though an intermediate level of Spanish is

required from those who want to take this class, this requirement was waived for one student (S2) so that the class could meet the minimum number required for it to be offered. This particular student had travelled to Brazil a few months prior to enrolling in the PSS1 in the fall and had developed a relatively good speaking ability while there. In other two cases (S1 and S3), the requirement of having taken PSS1 before PPS2 was also waived for the reason just explained. As a result, this class had students with very different profiles in terms of Portuguese learning experience and speaking proficiency.

The assessment itself focused on students' acquisition of five specific grammar structures: 1) Direct and indirect object pronouns; 2) Present tense of irregular verbs; 3) Preterit of regular and irregular verbs; 4) Imperfect – indicative mood, and; 5) Present subjunctive. There were 49 items on the test, with 49 points possible on the assessment. Students were given a score of 0 (incorrect answer), 0.5 (correct answer with a minor error) or 1 (correct answer).

## **Results**

### *Direct and Indirect Object Pronouns*

There were 8 items featuring direct and indirect object pronouns in the assessment. Students were asked to re-write 8 sentences replacing the direct or indirect objects that were underlined in each of them. For this section of the assessment, the class average was 7.2 in the pretest and 5.6 in the posttest, which correspond to a 28% decline from the first to the second period.

### *Present Tense of Irregular Verbs*

There were 6 items (worth six points) in the section about irregular verbs in the present tense. This was a multiple-choice activity. The class average for this section was 5.2 in the pretest and 5.8 in the posttest, showing a 10% increase in performance from the first exam to the second.

### *Preterit of Regular and Irregular Verbs*

For this part of the assessment, students had to demonstrate knowledge of preterit of regular and irregular verbs by doing a fill-in-blank type of activity using 15 conjugated verb forms contextualized in a text. This activity was worth 15 points. The class average was 11 points in the pretest and 12, in the posttest.

### *Imperfect Tense, Indicative Mood*

The imperfect tense was measured in the assessment in an activity where students were asked to complete 10 sentences using conjugated forms of verbs whose base forms were given in parentheses. The total number of points for this activity was 10. The class average for this section was 7.7 in the pretest and 6.4 in the posttest.

### *Present Subjunctive*

The final grammar structure measured in the assessment was the present subjunctive. Students were asked to conjugate 10 verbs in this tense in order to complete 10 sentences. Base forms of verbs were given in parentheses). This activity was worth 10 points. The class average for this activity was 6.1 in the pretest and 8.2 in the posttest, showing a 34% increase from the first to the second test.

### **Final Considerations**

The goal of the present assessment was to analyze students' performance in the use of five grammatical structures covered throughout the semester, namely direct and indirect object pronouns, present tense of irregular verbs, preterit of regular and irregular verbs, imperfect – indicative mood, and present subjunctive. Five of the six students enrolled in PORT 2103 Portuguese for Spanish Speakers II in spring 2018 took part in the assessment.

The class averages show that students' performances from the pretest to the posttest increased in present tense of irregular verbs (5.2 to 5.8), preterit of regular and irregular verbs (11 to 12), and present subjunctive (6.1 to 8.2) but decreased in the use of direct and indirect object pronouns (7.2 to 5.6) and imperfect – indicative mood (7.7 to 6.4). The fact that all of these grammatical structures but the present subjunctive were studied in the unit that preceded the pretest (first exam) should be taken into consideration.

In addition, when analyzed individually, students show a very different pattern in terms of their progress acquiring the referred grammatical structures. Taking student 2 (S2) as an example, even though this particular student did well in the first semester of this class (fall 2018), where less complex structures were reviewed, the lack of experience with Spanish made it very difficult for them to understand and use the more complex structures studied in the second semester. As a result, this particular student struggled the entire semester, showing minimum progress not only in the assessment, but also in the course itself.

Analyzing the results of this assessment, there are a few changes that will be made in order to improve students' performance in the next time this class is offered. First of all, it is necessary to use a more holistic analysis of the student's previous knowledge of Portuguese in order for them to have the intermediate Spanish requirement waived. So far, I have admitted students who did not meet this criterion based on their performance on an interview, which would provide some information of their speaking ability. However, it is necessary to include an examination of their other skills (writing, listening, and reading) in order to have a more reliable picture of what they can do and cannot do in the Portuguese language.

Another element that needs to be improved is the assessment itself. The next time it is done it is important to incorporate an examination of the other language skills as focusing on only one provides a very limited view of the students' performance. In addition, it is important to follow the main principles of the pretest-posttest design, especially the one that states that the first test should be given before formal instruction takes place.

## ***B. Russian 2013 Assessment Spring 2018***

Fourth semester Russian 2013 is the last in the series of basic language courses. By the end of RUSS 2013, students are familiar with most basic structures of the Russian language and will have developed basic cultural knowledge about the Russian-speaking world. As vocabulary and grammar sophistication grow, students become increasingly proficient at expressing their thoughts, feelings, and opinions on a variety of subjects related to everyday life and abstract topics. The main objective for this course is to introduce students to topics beyond their everyday activities, enabling them to talk about abstract topics by exploring short literary texts, poems, songs, and short newspaper articles that serve as a gateway to exploration of more complex topics beyond their own lives. To this aim, each lesson centers on linguistic, communicative and cultural goals.

The goal of RUSS 2013 is to move students from the Novice High to the Intermediate Low/Intermediate Mid-Levels on the ACTFL chart.

Learning outcomes for the Russian class:

1. Carry on a conversation about themselves, university life, families, friends, hobbies, sports, movies, books, free-time and their future plans
2. Converse on the phone by making an appointment with a friend or leaving a message
3. Talk about famous Russian cultural figures
4. Give directions about how to reach a place by using verbs of motion with prefixes
5. Make a suggestion to go somewhere or do something using imperative commands
6. Understanding a short advertisement text about renting an apartment
7. Understanding short audio text about everyday life
8. Compose an informal letter about themselves to a potential host family in Russia
9. Express their opinion about current cultural events such as movies, music, or literary genres
10. Make comparisons

Assessment of 2013

Six students of RUSS 2013 participated in pre- and post-assessment.

The online exam consisted of questions focused on grammar, culture, and writing. Reading and listening comprehension skills were not tested because of time constraints.

The test showed growth in writing, cultural competence, and in the complex use of grammar for five students out of six. Students also showed growth in how much time they spent on the assessment, since the post-assessment was done faster than pre-assessment. In the pre-assessment, the average score was 29 out of 44 points and the average time was 44 minutes. In the post-assessment, the average score was 36.67 out of 44 points and the average time was 27 minutes. The average score improved by 7.67 points and the average time by seventeen minutes.

Plans for Improving the Assessment Test.

I plan to modify the test by including a reading section and an oral part where students will have to describe a picture or what they do in their free time and record themselves. The cultural part will change each year since every semester has a different cultural focus.

Because of the time constraints for the pre and post assessment test, I plan to make the test no longer than one hour and make it the first homework assignment, so that completion and feedback will be prompt.

### Curriculum Adjustments

Since the test comes during the first week after the winter break, it is important to have a review session during the first two classes so that students recognize the material that had already been covered in the fall semester in order for them to better benefit from the pre-assessment test. The pre-assessment test anticipates the new material, so students will hopefully acquire passing familiarity with this material before they are introduced to it. This will better prepare them for handling the unfamiliar structures of a real-life exchange and allow them to develop different approaches to deal with unfamiliar vocabulary and grammatical structures.

Writing: In order to improve performance in typing the answers in Cyrillic, a problem on the assessment, I plan to reinforce electronic communication with the students throughout the semester in Russian. Students will have to compose emails entirely in Russian.