Comprehensive Outcomes-Based Assessment:
A Guide for African Language Instructors

African Language Program
African Studies Center
Pardee School of Global Studies
Boston University

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First Edition

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Cover image:
Map of Africa with languages taught at Boston University’s African Studies Center
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INTRODUCTION

This guidebook provides outcomes-based assessment tools for African language instruction. It is divided into four major sections, one for each level: Beginning, Intermediate, Advanced, and Superior, corresponding to the first four years of language study. In these sections, we provide outcomes in terms of performance goals that you can use in assessing student achievement. It lays out concrete performance goals for each level across a range of parameters and provides suggestions in terms of methods and materials to assist you and your students in reaching these goals.

Our aim in preparing this guide is to create a degree of standardization across our African language courses, bringing them into alignment with those of the larger BU language teaching community and more broadly, with national standards. At the same time, we want to capture the particularities of African languages and cultures and, more importantly, of our students.

A majority of our students have highly practical reasons for learning. Many are graduate students who will go on to use their skills to become active members of communities where they will conduct research using the new language. They must be able to hit the ground running, as it were, as they navigate their new communities. Some will have special needs associated with their fields of study; we have developed specific courses for students working in medicine or public health, for example. We also have a significant number of heritage language learners among our students. These are students whose families are recent immigrants and who already have some proficiency in the language from using it or hearing it used among family and community. Heritage learners have a deep cultural and emotional connections to the language and may have varying but limited degrees of fluency. They often come with significant oral skills, but need to attain literacy and mastery of standard varieties for use in a range of social situations. Our challenge is to meet the needs of both of these groups in attaining proficiency.

The goal of the African Language Program at Boston University is to train students to be global citizens who are fluent in the language and culture of the speech community they are studying. We want them to know how, when and why to say what to whom. We want them to be able to use the new language to access information and knowledge otherwise unavailable to them, to deepen their understanding of their own language(s) and culture(s) as they explore the new one, and to be able to engage fully with members of the target language speech community using a range of mediums.

As all language instructors know, this is a highly complex undertaking with many moving parts. Students have to master new sounds and syntax, grapple with new ideas about the world and different ways of organizing social space, learn what is appropriate verbal and non-verbal behavior for themselves and others, learn to read and write—often using an entirely different writing system from the one they are familiar with, and reflect on their own language and culture as they become fluent actors in the new language. It is our
hope that this Guide will make this task less daunting and that the performance-based assessment outcomes provided for each level will be helpful to those building curricula that meet the BU Hub general education program course requirements in the areas of Diversity, Civic Engagement, Global Citizenship, and Intellectual Toolkits.

**Proficiency vs. Performance**

In addressing assessment, an important distinction to bear in mind is that between Proficiency and Performance. Proficiency is a person’s general fluency in a language, their ability to use language in unrehearsed, spontaneous real world settings; this is what, for example, the US Foreign Service Institute (FSI) exam assesses. FSI doesn’t care about how you got there; they just want to know where you are.

Performance, on the other hand, is tied to instruction and how well students can ‘perform’ specific tasks that they have been taught. While at the more advanced levels, this distinction between proficiency and performance blurs, we still need to be mindful of testing only what we teach. This Guidebook is concerned strictly with performance and focuses on assessing how well our students perform the language tasks that we have taught them.

**Performance-based Outcomes**

Having a common set of Performance goals ensures consistency across languages, with a grade of B+ at the end of first year Swahili and a B+ at the end of the first year of Amharic indicating an analogous level of performance—even though the languages themselves are very different.

Clearly agreed upon outcomes in terms of what we expect our students to be able to do and know at the end of each sequence of study, or Performance Goals, provide tools for assessing student progress. Can the student do X? And if so, how well? And it gets more complicated: how will you know whether the student can do X? What will constitute proof? Having these clear goals also allows us to communicate them to students from the outset so that they, too, know where they are headed.

Performance goals also act as guides in preparing our courses; only when we know our destination can we map out an effective path for reaching it. So for example, if one of our performance goals is to greet peers effectively in the morning and in the afternoon, our task is to design our instruction such that it will equip students to correctly perform the task. We need to think about a range of learning activities, estimate how long it will take for students to master the tasks, what kinds of feedback we can provide.
SECTION ONE

Background

Backward Design

Methods & Materials

Role and Importance of Feedback
BACKGROUND
This guide consists of sets of assessment standards for the Boston University African Language Program that take into consideration the specificities of the languages we teach AND that are closely aligned with accepted standards in the field of language assessment. Although our standards end up being somewhat more rigorous, they are informed by and in alignment with the work of ACTFL (American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages) colleagues on Integrated Performance Assessment (IPA) and their broader, more recent World Readiness Standards, as well as the STAMP 4S (Standards-based Measurement of Proficiency) and the benchmarks they have developed. We have also explored ways to integrate BU’s HUB program, taking advantage of the global nature of language study. Finally, we have taken into account the wide diversity of languages that we teach, evidenced in the range of sound systems, syntax, non-verbal communication, and writing systems, as well as the diverse cultures for which they serve as means of communication.

STAMP 4S, or Standards-Based Measure of Proficiency, is an online language assessment system developed by language faculty at the University of Oregon who later formed the AVANT group. Avant STAMP 4S is a system for assessing language proficiency in the four traditional skill areas—reading, writing, listening and speaking. STAMP includes benchmarks for various levels in each of the four skill areas. We have drawn on these benchmarks in developing this Assessment Guide.

It is the ACTFL World Readiness Standards that form the foundation for the materials presented in this Assessment Guide. The World Readiness Standards for Learning Languages are articulated in terms of the Five Cs of Learning Languages, five essential and interconnected goal areas of language education:

1. Communication
2. Cultures
3. Connections
4. Comparisons
5. Communities

Communication. Communication is our primary goal in learning another language; we want to be able to share information and ideas using the language—whether we are actively exchanging with others through the spoken or written word; reading, listening, viewing or otherwise interpreting ideas and information presented by someone else; or using our own speaking and writing skills to convey information.

Cultures. Learning another language also entails becoming fluent in the world view, or culture, of its speakers. Because each language is used by a group or groups of people who share a specific culture, a key part of learning another language is learning to become culturally competent—knowing how to behave appropriately in different contexts and demonstrating a knowledge of and an appreciation for the practices and products of the culture and how they reflect the values, tastes, beliefs, and aesthetics of the speech
community. There is much variation among the languages of Africa: One third of all known languages are spoken on the continent and those languages hail from three completely distinct language families. At the same time, there are commonalities shared by speech communities across the African continent, particularly in terms of cultural practices and the use of language. As African languages represent cultures with significant ‘distance’ from Western European languages and cultures, culture is an important part of the curriculum.

Connections. Familiarity with another language provides us with the tools for creating connections, opening doors to information and perspectives that can only be accessed by using the target language. Conducting research in the new language through web searches, viewing videos and listening to songs and podcasts are ways of connecting. Viewing or reading press coverage of major international events in the language being studied can provide a window into new perspectives.

Comparisons. As we explore a new language and culture, we discover similarities and differences, allowing us to draw comparisons between the target language and culture and our own, developing a better understanding of the nature of language and what it means to be human. The ability to discern these similarities and differences and their implications for intercultural relations is an important part of being a global citizen.

Communities. Finally, becoming fluent in another language and culture allows us to become participants in new communities in ways that we could otherwise never be. Part of language study involves actually participating in activities/interactions with members of the target language community. It also involves sharing new knowledge and perspectives with the learners’ own communities.

IPA Framework: Language Functions/Modes of Language Use
The IPA (Integrated Performance Assessment) framework—a product of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages—focuses on the first “C” of the World Readiness Standards, Communication, breaking this rubric down into three modes of language use:

- Interpersonal
- Interpretive
- Presentational

In the Interpersonal mode, the language learner is engaged with others in face-to-face conversation, debate, negotiation, exchange or other sort of interaction. In the interpersonal mode, depending on the medium, interlocutors can draw on the context, ask for clarification, make adjustments, and so on. Interpersonal use of language can also take place over a range of media including voice, email or texting, video chat, etc.
In the Interpretive mode, the language learner is receiving content through listening, reading, watching, or otherwise ‘absorbing’ material. Since the interpretive mode does not allow for clarification through questioning, our students must learn to take cues from context, pay attention to organization, and attend to non-verbal cues.

In the Presentational mode, the language learner is presenting content to an audience through speaking, writing, or various combinations of these in electronic modes of communication. Since there is no occasion for clarification in this mode, the presenter must be know as much as possible about the audience and work to be sure that the material is presented in a way that is clear to them.

In real life, these three functions are closely intertwined. This should be mirrored in the classroom. Students engage, for example, in reading a text (Interpretive mode), elaborate their understanding by discussing it with others (Interpersonal), and then share their revised information (Presentational).

BUILDING THE CURRICULUM: BACKWARD DESIGN
It bears repeating that when you know your destination, the task of mapping out the route will be easier. Performance-based outcomes provide language instructors with the ‘destinations’; it is then up to the instructor to draw up a road map for reaching them. This guide will introduce the use of backward design, that is, working backwards from each of the performance goals and laying out the steps for getting your students to a place where they have mastered the skills needed to reach the performance goals. In this sense, this guide is far more than a listing of performance goals; it is a guide for preparing syllabi for your courses that will ensure the success of your students.

Take the performance goal “Uses appropriate greetings in morning and evening”
• What will constitute a successful demonstration of this?
• How to get from ‘hasn’t a clue’ to a competent performance?
• What do the students need?
  o Models
  o Practice
  o Background information (social structure, lifestyle)

BUILDING YOUR TOOLBOX: METHODS & MATERIALS
We urge instructors to work on developing resources both in terms of methods and materials, being sure to incorporate authentic materials in a wide range of media. Instructors should avoid simplifying texts or preparing special texts for use in the classroom. Rather than edit the text to simplify it, edit the task to make it more appropriate for the level of your students. It is equally important that we provide students with real life opportunities to interact with native speakers of the target language through video chats, text, email, and voice—as well as in person.
Methods

Thematic Units. Block out your year in terms of thematic units. These can be focused around a function like greeting and leave taking, or could focus on cultural material such as an examination of childrearing practices. What are your interests? What are your students’ interests? What do they need to know about the speech community? Each unit will incorporate the different modes (interpersonal, interpretive, presentational) and will include cultural content as well as opportunities for interaction with members of the language community.

Methods specific to mode

• Interpersonal – Make use of games, role plays, debates, story-telling, discussions. Use video chats like Skype so that students can work with partners remotely or in person to plan, do, or create something or conduct a team research project. Can you create opportunities for your students to interact with native speakers on topics of interest?

• Interpretive – Expand types of ‘texts’ beyond the written word, including such things as videos, songs, comics, brochures, schedules, directories, etc.

• Presentational – Guide students in preparing reports, brochures, posters, blog posts, PowerPoint, flyers, poems, children’s books, articles for publication in blogs or student papers. Encourage readings and performances.

Materials

Authentic Texts. Gather an inventory of authentic texts—texts that have been prepared BY and FOR members of the target language and culture group. Some types of texts will be more appropriate for beginners: schedules, brochures, graphic texts, children’s stories. Others will be more appropriate for advanced learners (novels, journal articles, and full-length films, for example). As you prepare activities around particular texts, think of adapting the activity to the level of your students. Take, for example, a full page text advertisement for a household product. If your students are beginners, you might ask them to pick out key words; if they are advanced, to discuss the cultural messages contained in the text. In any case, instead of simplifying texts for learners, you should focus on adjusting the activities/tasks to their level.

It is important to draw on a range of mediums in selecting authentic texts. In addition to written/printed materials, texts can include YouTube videos, songs, interviews, sermons, news reports, cartoons, brochures, newspapers, films, and more.

Finally, ‘texts’ should not necessarily be the center of attention, but should be resources for the tasks we are teaching. The focus should always be on the task. The question for any text is, “How can this text be useful in developing the skills I want my students to learn?”
FEEDBACK
Two types
• Assessing: What a student can do without assistance
• Assisting: What a student can do with assistance
Feedback should
• Be task-related
• Include hints/assistance/clues for improving performance
• Use technology (e.g., videotaping presentations for later review)

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Writing Systems
Does your language require learning another writing system? How will learning that system impact the rate at which your students can reach the goals set for the course? What are some specific activities you can use to teach the new writing system? The two Ajami workbooks (for Hausa and Wolof) published by Boston University provide a clear sequence of learning activities and goals for the first year that may have useful applications in teaching other writing systems.

Making it Relevant
Students will be more motivated if the content is of interest to them. Make a point of finding out the particular interests and talents of your students. Can some of these be incorporated into the classroom? What are your interests as an instructor? What is your field of study? These are all raw materials for developing instructional materials.

Variation in Student Background/Needs
Are some of your students heritage speakers (students whose parents speak the language and who have some experience speaking it in the home environment and for whom the language has a strong value)? How are their needs different than those of their classmates? How can their relationship to the language be made use of in class?
Novice: Level One  
Unit of mastery: Word, phrase and short sentence

At the end of the first year of language study, students in the BU African Language Program will be able, in each of the following Communication modes, to:

- **Interpersonal** - Express themselves in conversations on familiar topics using a variety of words, phrases, simple sentences, and questions that have been practiced and memorized;
- **Interpretive** - Understand words, phrases, and formulaic language that have been practiced and memorized to grasp the main ideas and derive meaning from simple, highly-predictable oral or written texts; and
- **Presentational** - Communicate information on familiar topics using a variety of words, phrases and sentences, and using a range of mediums, including oral or written presentation, audio or video.

The speech and writing of students completing the first year of study should be comprehensible, with some effort, to native speakers accustomed to interacting with people just learning their language.

If learning another writing system, students will be able, at the end of the first year, to recognize and write each of the letters/elements in the writing system. They will be able to decipher as well as write one- and two-syllable consonant-vowel sequences, as well as a few short words in the language.

In terms of the larger language context, our students will be able to identify where and by whom the language is spoken, approximate number of speakers, and a general history of those speakers’ communities and, if applicable, their presence in the diaspora.

In terms of cultural competency as reflected in both verbal and non-verbal behaviors, students completing the first year in the Boston University African Language Program will be able, among other things, to greet and take leave of people in ways appropriate to the time of day, use appropriate forms of address, engage in basic formulaic small talk, explain the basics of eating etiquette, name the terms for various family members, name and briefly explain major religions of the target language speakers, name major holidays or cultural observances and when they take place over the course of the year, identify and observe major cultural taboos (e.g., avoiding use of left hand for greeting or eating, avoidance behaviors).
Intermediate: Level Two
Unit of mastery: *Full sentence, strings of sentences, short paragraphs*

At the end of the second year of language study, students in the BU African Language Program will be able, in each of the following domains, to

- **Interpersonal** - At the end of the second year of study, students in Boston University’s African Language Program will be able to express themselves and participate in conversations on familiar topics using sentences and series of sentences, handle short social interactions in everyday situations by asking and answering a variety of questions, and communicate about themselves, others, and activities of everyday life.

- **Interpretive** - At the end of the second year of study, students in Boston University’s African Language Program will be able to identify main ideas and some supporting details in short, paragraph length texts—be they written, audio or video—on familiar topics.

- **Presentational** - At the end of the second year of study, students in Boston University’s African Language Program will be able to communicate information and express their own thoughts about familiar topics using full sentences, strings of sentences, and short paragraph length discourse.

Students completing a second year of language study can be readily understood by native speakers accustomed to interacting with non-native speakers.

In terms of the context, students will have developed detailed knowledge about some aspects of the history and contemporary life of the language community (or communities).

In terms of cultural competency as reflected in both verbal and non-verbal behaviors, our students will have a growing awareness of social distinctions and associated language registers, as well as distinctions between formal and informal registers. They will be able to describe/explain the boundaries between personal/family space and public space and associated communication styles. They will be able to describe childrearing practices and the socially proscribed life cycle and to contrast it with their own cultural practices/beliefs.
Advanced: Level Three
Unit of mastery: Paragraph

At the end of the third year of language study, students in the BU African Language Program will be able, in each of the following domains, to

- **Interpersonal** – Maintain conversations on a range of social, academic, and work-related topics, with a significant level of detail and organization, and sharing of points of view.
- **Interpretive** – Identify the theme, main ideas and supporting details in paragraph length texts of varying complexity. They will be able to identify how the piece—be it written, audio or video—is structured, and to discuss the theme and the issues it raises, as well as their own opinions.
- **Presentational** – Communicate information and express themselves in an organized and detailed manner on familiar and some new topics using full paragraphs or the equivalent thereof in oral presentations or other media.

The advanced learner can generally be understood—with some minimal effort—by native speakers, even those who are not accustomed to the speech/writing of non-native speakers.

In terms of context, students will have become well-versed on the language community or communities and familiar with their culture and history.

In terms of cultural competency as reflected in both verbal and non-verbal behaviors, our students will be aware of and (most of the time) able to act appropriately vis-à-vis a limited range of interlocutors (children, elders, and peers). Our students will be able to describe key cultural values and how those compare and contrast with the students’ own cultures.
Superior: Level Four
Unit of mastery: *Chapter length discourse* (series of related paragraphs that form a coherent whole).

At the end of the fourth year of language study, students in the BU African Language Program will be able, in each of the following domains, to

- **Interpersonal** – Engage in extended conversation on a range of concrete as well as abstract topics, employ a significant level of detail and organization, share and support points of view, and deal gracefully with unexpected developments.

- **Interpretive** – Identify main ideas, supporting details and organizational structure and the development of arguments in more complex texts dealing with abstract topics.

- **Presentational** – Communicate information and ideas, expressing themselves in an organized and detailed manner on both familiar and new topics, using series of paragraphs or the equivalent thereof in oral presentations or other media.

While unlikely to be mistaken for native speakers, students at the superior level can be readily understood by native speakers who are not accustomed to interacting with non-native speakers.

Courses in the fourth year tend to be content courses, that is, courses on a particular subject, taught in the target language. In terms of context, students will have become experts on the language community or communities, familiar with their history and conversant with current events of importance to them.

In terms of cultural competency as reflected in both verbal and non-verbal behaviors, students completing the fourth year of language study will have become quite familiar with the culture and will have had opportunities for extended interaction in the speech community. They will be aware of and able to act appropriately vis-à-vis a range of interlocutors occupying similar as well as distinct social locations. They will be able to discuss key cultural practices and products and how these contrast with those of their own culture and what this reveals about the similarities and differences in the values and beliefs of the two groups.
SECTION TWO

Performance-based Outcomes

Level I: Novice

Level II: Intermediate

Level III: Advanced

Level IV: Superior
Assessment Criteria for Level I: Beginner/Novice
Assessment Criteria for Level I:
Beginner/Novice

This guide presents assessment criteria in the form of performance goals for students completing the first year (L111 and L112) of language study in Boston University’s African Language Program. Knowing what your students should be able to do with the language at the end of the academic year provides you with the building blocks for developing your syllabi: Once you know what outcomes you are seeking in terms of performance goals, you can then determine what kinds of instructional experiences will best guide your students in reaching these goals and how best to measure their attainment of these goals.

Instructional/classroom experiences. What we are assessing is the learner’s ability to perform tasks explicitly taught in the classroom—tasks that at advanced level will demonstrate increasing degrees of creativity with language. If you want your students to be able to use context to guess at the meaning of words, or to write a poem using target language poetic forms, or to interview someone about their work, then opportunities for developing the needed skills must form part of the curriculum. This is what is meant by building a syllabus using backward design—starting with the destination and then designing a clear route for getting there.

Assessment tasks. In addition to providing opportunities to learn the performance-based outcomes, or skills, that will be tested, we must also determine what will serve as evidence that a learner has successfully mastered these skills. Assessment tasks should mirror those used over the course of the semester in learning particular skills.

The sections that follow present performance-based outcome measures, or assessment targets, for Novice learners. We use the Five Cs to organize them and provide tips on methods, materials & feedback. One of our objectives in using the Five C’s framework is to facilitate your accessing more information through ACTFL publications and other print and online sources.

Before going in to each of the Five Cs of the World Readiness Standards for Language Learning (Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities), a brief summary of the basic elements of the language that should be part of your program in the first year of instruction are outlined below. Remember: each of these represents an opportunity to exercise the fourth C: comparisons. Encourage students to notice how these features of the new language compare with their own language(s). This is a key skill in developing global citizens.
BASIC LANGUAGE ELEMENTS

Sound system – What sounds in the language will be ‘new’ to students? What kind of intonation system is at play? Does the language have grammatical tone? It is critical that these be mastered and become habit as early as possible. The best way is through ample practice.

Nominal system (coding objects/concepts/entities) – Students should know about the noun system – do nouns belong to genders or classes? If so, how many? What are the grammatical ramifications (agreement)? Students should have the ‘names’ for common objects in the classroom and in their immediate lives; animals; people (e.g., man, woman, child), and their roles (teacher, student; mother, sister, cousin, etc.). At the same time, students should be able to correctly use pronouns to refer to who or what is doing the action; who or what is being acted upon; possession, and other roles coded grammatically by the language.

Verb system (coding actions/states) – Students should learn the tools they need to talk about simple things happening now, in the past, or imagined or planned for the future. They should have the lexical tools to talk about a variety of activities and be able to use both affirmative and negative, as well as imperative and interrogative forms.

Modifiers & Positional elements (prepositions/postpositions) Describing objects/concepts/entities (noun modifiers) and actions (verb modifiers) – students should be able to describe objects by their qualities, e.g., big, small, beautiful, difficult, new; and to describe actions by their qualities, e.g., slowly, happily, carelessly. Students should be able to describe where an item is relative to themselves and to other item. How do these systems work? Students should know how modifiers act—where they are placed relative to the noun or verb, what if any agreement is required, etc., and how relative position is expressed.

Numbers & Time Counting and addition, subtraction, using numbers 1 – 1000; if another system is used, e.g., base 5 for money transactions in CFA zone. Students should be able to name the salient times of day and to tell time on a clock. They should know the days of the week and the months of the year.

Language Variation Students should learn the most obvious, survival-level variations and be able to use forms appropriate to the social setting and interlocutors.

Non-verbal communication. Focus on the most obvious/basic gestures, facial expressions, appropriate proximity and physical contact between interlocutors.

Writing system By the end of the year, students should be able to write and to identify each of the letters/characters of the script used to write the language. They should be able to read one or two syllable words, simple sentences or signs. Hausa and Wolof Ajami, students should complete the workbooks published by the Boston University African Studies Center.

Literary Styles Students should know a few of the most common proverbs, a folk tale or poem.

Specialized vocabulary At novice level, the focus should be on basic vocabulary.
The First ‘C’: COMMUNICATION

The principle goal of learning a language is Communication: being able to interact with native speakers, interpret texts of various sorts, and present ideas clearly through the spoken and written word. The speech and writing of students completing the first year of study should be comprehensible, with some effort, to native speakers accustomed to interacting with people just learning their language. Communication skills can be divided into three modes or functions:

Interpersonal
Interpretive
Presentational

On the following pages, you will find the summary ACTFL description of what novice learners should be able to do in each of the three modes, followed by detailed performance criteria, addressing the following five rubrics.

1. **Language Function**: What kinds of tasks can the learner comfortably engage in?
2. **Text Type**: What quantity and quality of discourse (word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, extended discourse, level of complexity) can the learner produce/understand?
3. **Strategies/Impact**: How engaging/engaged is the learner in the task at hand? What strategies does he/she bring to bear?
4. **Comprehensibility**: Who can understand the learner? (from a native speaker accustomed to interacting with those just learning the language to one only accustomed to other native speakers)
5. **Language Control**: How accurate is the learner’s speech/written production in terms of grammar, pronunciation, spelling, vocabulary?

These rubrics apply differentially in each of the three modes. In the Interpersonal and presentational modes, where we can ‘see’ the learner’s use of language, we assess all five rubrics. In the Interpretive mode, we focus on the first three.

Essential for each of these is the development of a robust vocabulary that will allow students to communicate with others and explore target language materials about topics of importance to them. Also, since there are numerous communication skills and background information one must learn to get up and running in a language, it is wise to organize early units of study around such things as greetings & presenting oneself, family structure, a ‘typical’ day in the life of one or more speakers of the new language, foods and mealtime etiquette, and ‘maps’ of social structure (so learners can figure out where they are located vis-à-vis other speakers and what the communication ramifications are). This, of course, is in addition to units on topics you deem of particular interest or importance to your students.
The Three Modes of Communication: Interpersonal, Interpretive, Presentational

**INTERPERSONAL:** At the end of the first year of study, students should be able to express themselves in conversations on familiar topics using a variety of words, phrases, simple sentences, and questions that have been practiced and memorized. Their speech and writing should be comprehensible to native speakers accustomed to interacting with people just learning the language.

In the interpersonal mode, habit is key. To engage in a lively interchange with others using the target language means having made basic structures of the language ‘automatic’. There is only one way to do this: PRACTICE. This includes engaging in actual, carefully choreographed conversations as well as lots of drills (repetition, substitution, changing person/tense/etc.). It also means doing a lot of listening and repeating to internalize the sound system. Again, the idea is to make the ‘tools of the trade’ absolutely automatic, as they are in one’s native language.

By the end of the first two semesters of study (111 & 112 level courses), the successful student, ready to move on to Intermediate level courses, will be able to

1. Language Function

*Greetings & Leave takings, Introductions*
- Greet peers in the form appropriate to the time of day/activity
- Greet those in other social locations using appropriate forms
- Use appropriate greetings for special occasions (birth, death, marriage, travel, etc.)
- Introduce self
- Introduce others
- Ask and answer simple questions about themselves and others (e.g., what is your name? where are you from? Where do you live? Are you Nigerian? Are you a student?)

*Getting and giving information*
- Identify and describe tangible objects and people by
  - Size, color, appeal (e.g., nice, ugly), and emotional/physical (e.g., happy, tired)
  - Location relative to self and other objects/people
  - Relationship to speaker/hearer (e.g., my aunt, their books, Ibrahim’s pen)
- Ask and respond to simple
  - Yes/No questions
  - Who, What, When, Where questions
  - Questions about third parties, e.g., what is his/her name? What does Bouba want? Where does Sharleen live? Where did they go?
Getting things done
- Give and follow simple instructions in the classroom setting (e.g., take this, sit down, pass me your pen, read this)
- Make polite requests and suggestions
- Make simple plans with others
- Seek assistance if you are sick, describe what is ailing you
- Make purchases at a shop or market
- Ask for and provide simple directions
- Exchange information using supporting ‘texts’ (images, charts, etc. – e.g., in this photo, my sister is on the left, my mother is in the center, and my brother is on the right; this chart shows the temperature in June and July)

Range of topics — What can you talk about in the new language?
- Carry on simple conversations concerning
  - Family/friends/community
  - School/focus of study
  - Typical Day/daily activities
  - Leisure Activities/hobbies
  - Foods
  - Specific topics or texts dealt with in class (a text in English on some aspect of the target culture/history/current events can be a subject of conversation in the new language)

2. Text Type
- Use in conversation/understand
  - memorized formulaic utterances (e.g., greeting formulas)
  - common phrases
  - simple sentences
  - strings of sentences
  - simple signage

3. Strategies/Impact
Conversational Skills & Strategies
Use various strategies to seek clarification of things they have not heard or understood, and to keep the conversation going. Specifically, they are able to appropriately and effectively use phrases in the target language analogous to those below.
- I didn’t hear you; could you repeat that?
- What did you say?
- What did she/he say?
- I’m sorry; I forgot.
- I don’t know.
- Ask him/her
- Really?
- Well, uh … (hedge for time)
4. Comprehensibility
The successful novice learner, at the end of year one of study, can generally be understood by native speakers of the target language who are accustomed to interacting with learners/non-native speakers. Clarifications and rephrasing may often be required.

He or she is able to engage in conversational exchange in each of the following mediums with classmates, instructors, and native speakers who are prepared to interact with learners:

- Face-to-face communication
- Telephone or other voice
- Email messages/text
- Video chats

5. Language Control
The successful student, at the end of year one of study, is able to:

- Create and understand simple, grammatically correct sentences referring to the present, past, and future.
- Freely access vocabulary related to topics covered in class.
- Demonstrate a burgeoning sense of what kinds of questions and comments are appropriate, and in particular, what is appropriate for them. Although they may frequently make errors, they are aware of the most obvious gestures or body language that are part of speaking the language, as well as those they should avoid.
**INTERPRETIVE:** At the end of the first year of study, students should be able, with strong visual support, to use words, phrases, formulaic language that have been practiced and memorized to grasp the main ideas and derive meaning from simple, highly-predictable oral or written texts.

In the interpretive mode, students are learning to make sense of texts in the target language, be they written, audio, or video. It is essential that these ‘texts’ be authentic, that is, prepared BY and FOR members of the target language and culture group. Instructors should avoid simplifying texts or preparing special texts for use in the classroom. Rather than edit the text, edit the task to make it more appropriate for novice level learners. For example, if you have a news broadcast or article on a musical event in the area, you might ask novice learners to pick out certain pieces of information, e.g., name the band/orchestra, when and where the event took place. For advanced learners, using the same text, you might also ask them to discuss the musical genre, drawing on their own knowledge and research skills in the language.

Our job is to help students master strategies for gleaning meaning from a text. These include ‘top-down’ strategies (using what they already know in terms of background knowledge of the topic, observing contextual clues, reading between the lines), and ‘bottom-up’ strategies that make use of a more granular examination of a text (word forms, word order, intonation, gesture).

Unlike the interpersonal and presentational modes, in the interpretive mode, the instructor cannot ‘view’ the learner’s work because this takes place internally, in the learner’s mind. But we can devise methods for inferring whether and to what extent the learner has grasped the text.

Because productive capacity lags behind interpretive capacity, learners can often understand much more in the target language than they can explain or express. Therefore, asking learners to use the new language to report back what they understand from a text in the new language does not always provide an accurate assessment. For this reason, especially at the novice level, questions about the text should be in English.

1. **Language Function**
   **Range of Topics** – In the interpretive mode, learners at all levels should be able to deal with a much broader range of content in the target language than they are able to in the interpersonal or presentational modes. That said, successful novice learners are minimally able to interpret texts on familiar topics such as those listed below, as well as special topics of interest dealt with in class.
   - Family/community
   - School/focus of study
   - Typical day/daily activities
   - Foods
   - Weather
   - Likes & dislikes
   - The body/health and wellness
   - Leisure activities/hobbies
2. **Text Type**  
Learners at all levels will be able to deal with much more complexity in grammatical form and vocabulary in the interpretive mode than they will be able to produce.  

At the end of the first year of study, students should be able to interpret short phrases (such as found in signage) and formulaic utterances, sentences, strings of sentences and short paragraphs.

3. **Strategies/Impact**  
Whether the text is written, audio, or video will be an important consideration in terms of the cues learners will have. Each offers particular advantages and disadvantages.

- In written mode (including email and text messages, graphic materials such as posters, schedules, ads), learners can use morphological and syntactic cues to identify word meaning and function
- In audio mode (including radio broadcasts/podcasts, voice messages), learners can use auditory cues such as intonation, pauses, etc. to derive meaning
- In video mode (including YouTube, short films, ads), learners can use visual cues such as gestures and facial expression to derive meaning

**Interpretive Skills & Strategies**  
Given a short ‘text’ (to read, listen to, or view) on a topic with which the learner is familiar, the successful novice learner will be able, using a range of strategies, to

- Identify key words and phrases in the text that provide clues as to what the text is about, its purpose
- Detect the main idea of a short paragraph/audio piece/video
- Identify supporting details
- Outline organizational features of a ‘text’
- Make guesses at meaning, drawing on context
- Read between the lines, making inferences beyond what is literally in the text
- Describe the author’s perspective or purpose
- Describe cultural content and compare with analogous elements of the home culture
- Identify the genre (is this a fairy tale? an advertisement? A personal letter? A resume? How can you tell?) Identify/describe styles of presenting materials/information that differ from styles in English, e.g., some languages require formulaic introductions.
- Express one’s reaction to the text

The ten items above correspond to the ten sections of the **Interpretation Guide**, a template for which is reproduced at the end of this section. The **Interpretation Guide** can be used for all levels, from Novice to Superior. It makes it clear what to look for when dealing with a new text (be it written, audio or video). It can be developed for any text, leading learners through each of 10 interpretive strategies as they apply to the text in question. Through regular use of interpretation guides, students will 1) become aware that there are in fact specific strategies for successfully navigating texts in the target language (not to mention English!), and 2) have ample practice using each. Again, the **Interpretation Guide** is meant to be used as BOTH a teaching tool and a tool for assessing student progress in using the target language in the interpretive mode.
Below, you will find an **Interpretation Guide template**. This is drawn largely—with a few adjustments—from the Comprehension Guide developed in the IPA work of ACTFL (Adair-Hauck, Glisan and Troyan. 2013. *Implementing Integrated Performance Assessment*. ACTFL: Alexandria, VA 2013). Remember: Each of these ten strategies should be explicitly taught; only then will it be a fair method (“test only what you teach”) for assessing student achievement.

You will notice that the **Interpretation Guide** asks students to respond to the questions in English. This is to allow them to express their level of understanding, a level that may go beyond what they are capable of expressing in the target language at this stage of learning.

![INTERPRETATION GUIDE TEMPLATE](image)

**INTERPRETATION GUIDE TEMPLATE**

**Keyword Recognition**
Find in the article the word/phrase in the target language that best expresses the meaning of the following English words/phrases:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Target Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Xxx</td>
<td>xxx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xxx</td>
<td>xxx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>xxx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>xxx</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Detecting Main Idea**
Describe the main idea(s) of the article in English.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

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Supporting Details

**Note to Instructor:** In English, provide 5 correct details that support the main idea of the article and 3 distractors (items that may seem plausible, but are not correct)

Circle the letter of each of the details that is mentioned in the article, write the letter of the detail next to where it appears in the text and write the information from the article in the space provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>xxx</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>xxx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>xxx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>xxx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>xxx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>xxx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>xxx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>xxx</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Organizational Features

How is this article organized? Circle the ones that apply.

**Note to instructor:** provide 5 possibilities to choose from, with 3 being distractors (items that are irrelevant, e.g., by weight, spectographically. Some possible options include pros & cons, compare & contrast, chronological, step-by-step, how-to, cause & effect

- A Chronological
- B Cause and effect
- C Step-by-step, How-to
- D Pros & Cons
- E Compare & Contrast

Justification from the article  

Guessing Meaning from Context

Based on this article, what do you think the following words probably mean?

**Note to instructor:** Find three words or phrases in the article that students are unlikely to know, but should be able to understand from the context. Next to the word, copy the entire sentence in which it appears.

1. xxxxx 
2. xxxxx 
3. xxxxx 

Inferences

[“Read/listen/watch between the lines” to answer the following questions, using information from the text.]

**Note to Instructor:** For Novice level learners, provide a statement related to the topic of the text and ask them to indicate whether it is true or false and then to list evidence from the text that would help them to determine this, drawing on inferencing skills.

Statement:  

Drawing on information in the text, I believe that this statement is True or False (circle one)
Evidence from the text.
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

**Author’s Perspective.** Select the perspective or point of view you think the author adopts in this article and justify your answer with information from the text.
*Note to Instructor: Provide one correct answer and two distractors. Some possible options for describing points of view include moralizing, factual, questioning, defensive, zealous, critical, doubtful.*
A xxx
B xxx
C xxx
Justification from text ________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

**Comparing Cultural Perspectives.** Answer the following questions.
*Note to Instructor: Below are some possible types of questions, which for Novice level learners should be written in English. Questions with reference to specific cultural practices, products and perspectives in your questions.*
• What are the cultural similarities and differences between X and Y?
• How do the practices/products in the article reflect the target culture perspectives?
• What did you learn about the target culture from this article?
• How would this article have been different if it were written for a US audience?

**Identifying Genres.** What type of a text is this? Circle the one that best describes the text and explain your answer with reference to the text.
*Note to Instructor: Some possible genres include folktale, sermon, resume, personal letter, report, lecture, comic routine, instructional*
Xxxx
Xxxx
Xxxx
Justification _______________________________________________________

**Personal Reaction to the Text.** Using specific information from the text, describe your personal reaction to the article/broadcast/video. Be sure to provide reasons to support your reaction.
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
PRESENTATIONAL
At the end of the first year of study, the learner can communicate information on familiar topics using a variety of words, phrases and sentences, and using a range of mediums, including oral or written presentation, audio or video.

The presentational mode is marked by lack of interaction with one’s audience. This means that there are no opportunities for the back and forth that aids in clarifying meaning in the interpersonal mode; the presentation must stand on its own. For this reason, presentations are often prepared in advance with careful attention to making them as comprehensible and engaging as possible. At the same time, presentational mode also includes impromptu and minimally prepared presentations.

The question is: How well does the learner get their ideas across to an audience of native speakers? How engaging is he/she?

By the end of the first two semesters of study (111 & 112 level courses), the successful student, ready to move on to Intermediate level courses, will be able to

1. **Language Function**
   * **Types of Presentations.**
     - Comfortably use the target language to make simple presentations in a range of media, including
       - in-person oral presentations
       - video presentations
       - audio presentations
       - written presentations
     - (These can include such things as written/audio/video advertisements, brochures, posters, PowerPoint presentations.)
     - Combine known elements (words, phrases) to create new meaning.

   * **Range of Topics**
     - Make presentations on
       - Family/friends/community
       - School/focus of study
       - Typical Day/daily activities
       - Leisure activities/hobbies
       - Foods
       - Likes & Dislikes
       - Health/health-seeking
       - Weather
     - Specific topics addressed in class on aspects of the target culture/history/current events can provide material for presentations, as can special research on a specific topic, or group work preparing a presentation. Cultural comparisons are particularly good topics for novice learners.

2. **Text Type**
   - Use memorized phrases, simple sentences and some strings of sentences
     - In oral presentations, is able to appropriately use some of the more common gestures and body language in the target language
3. **Strategy/Impact**
   - Make a well-organized presentation, combining known elements to communicate original meaning
   - Make use of supporting materials such as visuals
   - Engage the audience

4. **Comprehensibility**
   Presentations by the successful novice learner, at the end of year one of study, can generally be understood, with some effort, by native speakers of the target language who are accustomed to the writing/speaking of learners/non-native speakers.

5. **Language Control**
   The successful novice learner, at the end of year one of study, is able to
   - Produce simple, grammatically correct sentences referring to the
     - present
     - past, and
     - future
   - Freely access simple vocabulary related to topics covered in class
   - Make presentations in a simple style but generally unable to adjust speech/writing to different audiences and situations.
     (Although they may make errors, they are able to use some of the most common facial expressions, gestures, and body language that are part of speaking the language, and to avoid those that are offensive or inappropriate.)
The Second ‘C’: CULTURES

We all know that you cannot interact effectively in another language unless you have some understanding of the cultural values, practices and products of its speakers. We want our students to become keen observers of how people in the target language community go about the business of living, what they value, their beliefs about what it is to be human and the social world around them, about why things are the way they are and how things ought to be—in other words, their world view. This also means learning to recognize them in one’s home culture.

While we can’t directly observe cultural perspectives and values, we can infer a lot from the practices (the way things are done) and products (things both tangible and intangible that are valued) of a culture.

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1 Often, a number of cultural communities share the same language—both Canadians and New Zealanders, for example, use English. Even within a single language community, there are subgroups, and many people belong to more than one linguistic/cultural group and thus are bi- or multi-cultural, having more than one ‘worldview’. Nor are any of these cultural worldviews static; culture is in constant motion, especially in the contemporary world where transportation and communications technology bring cultures into contact more and more.
Teaching cultural content entails teaching students to use the language in ways that are appropriate to their social location and to be aware of what is appropriate for others in various situations. This means mastering forms of address, gestures and other non-verbal forms of communication, and becoming knowledgeable about the cultural practices (e.g., rituals around birth, marriage, and death), holidays, gender and age specific behaviors, etiquette. And it means becoming knowledgeable about the things—be they tangible or intangible—that people in the target language culture value: laws and social conventions, the built environment (dwellings, community layouts, places of worship), art forms, design, sports, and so on.

During the first year, the goal is to develop basic cultural survival skills: What students need to know and be able to do (and not do) to avoid offending people or being considered rude, boorish, or worse. Precisely what these skills and knowledge are will vary with the language community, but there are some commonalities among speech communities on the African continent that we highlight here: the importance of greetings and small talk; use of the right hand; pronounced social hierarchies informed by age, lineage, gender; the central role of religion; eating ‘around the bowl’; and the centrality of dance. Some things entail both practice and product, such as clothing—how we dress is a practice; the clothing itself is a product. Below are performance-based outcomes for students completing the first year of language study in the African Language Program at Boston University.
### Recognizing cultural practices and how they reflect the culture’s values and perspectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Practice</th>
<th>Cultural Values &amp; Perspectives</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greetings &amp; Leave takings</td>
<td>Social hierarchies, roles and responsibilities, notions of respect and seniority, value of cultivating human relationships</td>
<td>Greets peers and some others (e.g., teachers, elders) appropriately, uses greetings keyed to time of day/activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversational Etiquette</td>
<td>Notions of ‘personal space’, relations between the genders and different age groups, respect and cultivation of relationships</td>
<td>Maintains acceptable conversational distance, respects an introductory period of small talk and rules of physical contact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differential use of right and left hand</td>
<td>Ideas about cleanliness, associations with left and right.</td>
<td>Uses the right hand in greetings, taking and giving, eating, gesturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating together in family, friends</td>
<td>Attitudes towards food and those who grow and prepare it, social hierarchies within the family, restraint</td>
<td>Can explain in English basic table manners (use of hand/utensils; turn taking; mealtime conversation; accepting/refusing more).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious practices in daily life</td>
<td>Centrality (or not) of religion in peoples’ daily lives. Value placed on charity, reflection, humility, etc.</td>
<td>Can list the major religions of the language community and how each is observed in daily life (e.g., going to morning mass, praying five times a day, giving alms, chanting/singing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrating major holidays</td>
<td>What is the meaning of the holiday being observed? What is important about it?</td>
<td>Can name at least one major holiday and when and how it is observed by different people (e.g., children, women, men, elders).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dress codes</td>
<td>Respecting others by putting your best foot forward vs. being ‘natural’, and not trying to impress anyone. What is appropriate in different contexts (at home, in public, visiting). Keyed to gender and age, notions of respect and attitudes towards the body.</td>
<td>Is able to describe features of appropriate dress for self in formal and informal situations. Can describe general characteristics of dress for men, women, and children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dance (the practice of dancing to mark social occasions, for recreation, entertainment)</td>
<td>Expressing emotion through the body, community solidarity, beauty, attitudes towards the body.</td>
<td>Can name an occasion that is marked by dancing, and who dances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gift giving</td>
<td>Collective vs. individual orientation, weaving a fabric of mutual obligation/interdependence; notions of respect, ownership, sharing</td>
<td>Can point to two occasions when gift giving is appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stages of life</td>
<td>What it means to be human, how one becomes human, place of children, responsibilities of adults</td>
<td>Can describe one life transition and how it is marked (e.g., birth:naming ceremony; marriage:wedding)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinship</td>
<td>Who is family? What are the roles and responsibilities of different family members relative to each other? How does one become family?</td>
<td>Can recite the terminology for immediate family members and key others such as grandparents, mother’s and father’s siblings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Recognizing cultural products and how they reflect the culture’s values and perspectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Product</th>
<th>Cultural Values &amp; Perspectives</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘National’ Sport</td>
<td>Attitudes towards the body and strength, competition and collaboration</td>
<td>Can describe the ‘national’ sport, who plays it, the objective, and why people like it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing (as distinct from dress codes)</td>
<td>Attitudes towards the body, gender, climate, sexuality, color, ‘standing out’ or ‘fitting in’, materials and their provenance</td>
<td>Can describe basic pieces of clothing for men, women and children, color, cut, type of cloth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Games/Toys</td>
<td>What skills are valued? Is working together seen more in terms of cooperation or competition? How does learning take place?</td>
<td>Can describe one children’s game, the objective of the game, any objects needed to play, who plays it when</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwellings</td>
<td>What is the physical form? What parts are public? Private? What are the functions of different parts of the dwelling?</td>
<td>Can describe one kind of typical house and how it is laid out (shape, orientation).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Places of worship</td>
<td>What is the physical form? Where is it located relative to other structures? Natural features?</td>
<td>Can describe what is distinctive about the places of worship for one of the major religions (e.g., mosque, cathedral, church, temple)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Arts/Music/Dance/Theatre/Other art forms</td>
<td>Notions of beauty, social commentary, religious and spiritual values,</td>
<td>Can name and describe one of the principal art forms valued by the culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food preparation, eating</td>
<td>Attitudes towards food and those who grow and prepare it, social hierarchies within the family, restraint</td>
<td>Can name two typical dishes. Can identify some typical objects used in preparing food and in eating it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Songs</td>
<td>Value of singing/singing together; themes treated in songs;</td>
<td>Can recognize one song in the target language, who typically sings it (women, children, men) and when it is sung (part of a game, at weddings, sporting events, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valued animals</td>
<td>Qualities of the animal (strength, patience, loyalty). What the animal ‘gives’ to people (milk, meat, transportation, companionship).</td>
<td>Can name one animal that is highly salient in the culture and explain why.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyday household objects/tools</td>
<td>Reveals household tasks, organization of the household, functions (privacy, neatness, warmth), division of labor</td>
<td>Can name three household objects/tools and explain what they are used for.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceremonies</td>
<td>Reveal what is considered important and worthy of note.</td>
<td>Can briefly describe the ceremony associated with a major life transition (e.g., naming ceremony, wedding)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gift giving</td>
<td>Collective vs. individual orientation, weaving a fabric of mutual obligation/interdependence; notions of respect, noblesse oblige</td>
<td>Can provide examples of an appropriate gift to offer to a peer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stages of life</td>
<td>What it means to be human, how one becomes human, the place of children, responsibilities of adults.</td>
<td>Can name two objects associated with children and childhood and two associated with old age/elders</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Third C: CONNECTIONS

Connections refers to the connections one can make using the target language. This includes student research—exploring particular disciplines or topics through print or multi-media source in the target language. Connections also refers to accessing information and perspectives available only through the target language such as might be gleaned from news broadcasts about local and international events.

The Fourth C: COMPARISONS

The Fourth ‘C’ is about learners’ ability to compare and contrast the sounds, structures, semantic fields, and cultural practices and products of the new language with those of their home language(s). Instructors should encourage their students to draw these comparisons, making these differences explicit so that learners can consciously explore both their home culture/language and those of the target community. As learners realize that their home language represents just one among a myriad of systems, they are able to become more sensitive and better able to interact effectively in the global community.

This ‘C’ does not have its own assessment standards, but is incorporated into those of the Communication, Cultures, and Communities.

The Fifth C: COMMUNITIES

The Fifth ‘C’ is all about sharing what is being learned with one’s own communities and participating in authentic activities with the target community. Here are some activities/experiences that should be incorporated into the program during the first year of study. In this category, the point is participation. Students are not rated on the quality of their participation but rather on the fact of having participated. By the end of the first two semesters of study (111 & 112 level courses), the successful student, ready to move on to Intermediate level courses, will have

- Exchanged simple, brief communications with native speakers via email, text, and/or video chat.
- Met face-to-face with native speakers in the diaspora in ways organized/structured by instructor (e.g., class outing to attend attending a community/cultural event, engaging in organized exchanges about studies with target language speakers who are students at BU, or engaging in conversation with native speakers on topics of mutual interest—in-person or virtually).
- Shared language/culture skills with the BU and wider university communities through preparing and presenting a skit for African Language Theatre Night.

Set and met goals for using the language for enjoyment, enrichment and advancement. (This could be viewing films or listening to music, doing online research, reading or writing for pleasure in the new language.)
Assessment Criteria for Level 2:
Intermediate
Assessment Criteria for Level 2: Intermediate

Students who have successfully completed Novice/Beginner Level in the BU African Language Program will come to intermediate level language courses (L211 and L212) having attained certain skills that you can now build on as you prepare your syllabus for year II. Given this background and the performance goals established for year II, you can determine what kinds of instructional experiences will best guide your students in reaching these goals, and how best to measure their attainment of these goals.

Instructional/classroom experiences. What we are assessing is the learner’s ability to perform tasks explicitly taught in the classroom—tasks that at advanced level will demonstrate increasing degrees of creativity with language. If you want your students to be able to use context to guess at the meaning of words, or to write a poem using target language poetic forms, or to interview someone about their work, then opportunities for developing the needed skills must form part of the curriculum. This is what is meant by building a syllabus using backward design—starting with the destination and then designing a clear route for getting there.

Assessment tasks. In addition to providing opportunities to learn the performance-based outcomes, or skills, that will be tested, you must also determine what will serve as evidence that a learner has successfully mastered these skills. Assessment tasks should mirror those used in class in learning particular skills. This should not be interpreted as precluding the creative use of language, but rather should encourage the use of learning activities that call upon students to create with language, such as role plays, impromptu presentations or writing assignments and authentic conversations/exchanges with native speakers.

The sections that follow present performance-based outcome measures, or assessment targets, for Intermediate learners. These were developed with reference to the Five Cs (Communication, Cultures, Comparisons, Connections, Communities). More information and teaching resources can be accessed through ACTFL publications and other print and online sources.

A brief summary of the elements of the language that should be part of your program in the second year of instruction are outlined below. These are in addition to continued work and practice with grammatical material learned in first year. Encourage students to notice how these features of the target language compare with their own language(s). This is a key skill in developing global citizens.
LANGUAGE ELEMENTS

Sound system – Continue work on ‘differences’, be they particular sounds or tone

Nominal system (coding objects/concepts/entities) -- Continue to build vocabulary with focus on high frequency words

Verb system (coding actions/states) – Students should be well-versed in speaking about ongoing and habitual actions, things that happened in the past or imagined or planned for the future, to make polite requests and suggestions. They should learn to express conditionality (If I have time, I’d like to go; you should work on your spelling; and wishes, desires (I wish you’d eat your spinach; I hope she’ll be happy in her new job).

Modification positional elements continue to build vocabulary

Numbers & Time Division and multiplication, seasons, ‘times of life’

Language Variation Students should be able ability to use different registers as appropriate (e.g., formal, informal) and should be aware of the existence of regional/social varieties of the language.

Non-verbal communication Students should be familiar with and able to reproduce common gestures, facial expression. They should maintain proper distance from and forms of physical contact with interlocutors

Writing System Students should be able to read and write in the language’s writing system at the same level they can do so in the Latin script. That is, they should be able to read and write sentences, strings of sentences and short paragraphs.

Literary Styles Students should be able to effectively deploy most commonly used proverbs, should be able to recount a few of the most popular folk tales, and should be aware of other valued literary forms (e.g., poetry, song)

Specialized vocabulary Students should begin learning some of the basic vocabulary specific to their area of interest (e.g., agriculture, education, music)
The First ‘C’: COMMUNICATION

The principle goal of learning a language is Communication: being able to interact with native speakers, interpret texts of various sorts, and present ideas clearly through the spoken and written word. Below, these are divided into the three modes or functions; Interpersonal, Interpretive, and Presentational, and the summary ACTFL description of what learners at the intermediate level should be able to do in each. These brief summaries are organized according to the following five rubrics.

1. **Language Function**: What kinds of tasks can the learner comfortably engage in?
2. **Text Type**: What quantity and quality of discourse (word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, extended discourse, level of complexity) can the learner produce/understand?
3. **Strategies/Impact**: How engaging/engaged is the learner in the task at hand? What strategies does he/she bring to bear?
4. **Comprehensibility**: Who can understand the learner? (from a native speaker accustomed to interacting with those just learning the language to one only accustomed to other native speakers)
5. **Language Control**: How accurate is the learner’s speech/written production in terms of grammar, pronunciation, spelling, vocabulary?

These rubrics apply differentially in each of the three modes. In the Interpersonal and presentational modes, where we can ‘see’ the learner’s use of language, we assess on all five rubrics. In the Interpretive mode, we focus on the first three.

Essential for each of these is the continuing development of a robust vocabulary that will allow students to communicate with others and explore target language materials about topics of importance to them. At the intermediate level, students should be building vocabulary and working to solidify through practice the grammatical structures introduced in the first year. Intermediate level is also a time for students to learn commonly used idiomatic expressions, to be introduced to formal and informal registers, and to begin to learn the specialized vocabulary associated with their fields of study.

The Three Modes of Communication: Interpersonal, Interpretive, Presentational

**INTERPERSONAL**: At the end of the second year of language study, students in Boston University’s African Language Program will be able to express themselves and participate in conversations on familiar topics using sentences and series of sentences, handle short social interactions in everyday situations by asking and answering a variety of questions, and communicate about themselves, others, and activities of everyday life.
In the second year of study, the development of conversational skills requires a lot of practice and experience interacting with a range of interlocutors. This can be accomplished through the use of video and audio chats with native speakers or more advanced learners on other campuses and, if possible, face-to-face interactions with members of the language community living in your area. During the second year, students expand their conversational negotiation skills to include strategies for changing the topic, excusing themselves, and so on.

By the end of two years (four semesters) of study, the successful student will be able to

1. **Language Function**

   **Greetings/Leave takings, ‘small talk’**
   - Appropriately greet and take leave of people in casual and formal situations
   - Use specialized greetings of congratulation, condolence, encouragement
   - Introduce self and others using socially appropriate forms
   - Demonstrate, through use in conversation, an understanding of one or more appropriate topics for ‘small talk’

   **Getting and giving information**
   - Ask and answer questions about and describe events in past, present and future
   - Make use of a range of modifiers and expressions to identify and describe objects, events, and people, ideas and concepts
   - Ask and respond to WHY and HOW questions
   - Ask and respond to questions eliciting opinions on familiar topics

   **Getting things done**
   - Give and follow instructions for relatively simple tasks that go beyond the classroom
   - Make appointments
   - Make telephone calls and leave voice messages
   - Compose and respond to simple email and text messages
   - Plan future activities/events with others
   - Ask for and provide directions for getting from A to B

   **Range of topics—What can you talk about in the new language?**
   - Carry on basic conversations concerning
     - News
     - Travel
     - Work/occupations
     - Special interests/field of study
     - Holidays/celebrations
     - Self and family
     - Health
     - Weather
• Similarities and differences in cultural products and practices between home and target language communities (see table of products and practices)

2. Text Type Used with Ease
• Sentences and strings of sentences
• Short paragraphs of a few sentences, including short narratives/chronological reports
• Short folk tales/song lyrics

3. Strategies/Impact

*Conversational Skills & Strategies*
Is able to comfortably and confidently initiate a conversation on familiar topics, request and provide clarification, hedge for time, express agreement/disagreement, gracefully end a conversation.

4. Comprehensibility

Students completing a second year of language study can be readily understood by native speakers accustomed to interacting with non-native speakers.

They are able to effectively engage in basic conversational exchange with native speakers prepared to interact with learners in each of the following mediums

• Face-to-face communication
• Written communication
• Telephone or other voice
• Email messages/text
• Video chats

5. Language Control

The successful student, at the end of two years of study, is able to

• Demonstrate consistent control of verb systems in narrating in past, present and future
• Access and use vocabulary for familiar topics, including basic vocabulary related to their field of study/interest
• Use of tone/intonation sufficiently correct so as not to interfere with communication
• Speak/write with increasing fluidity
• Avoid most obvious faux pas in terms of culturally and situationally marked patterns of writing and speech (including the non-verbal)
**INTERPRETIVE**: At the end of the second year of study, students in Boston University’s African Language Program will be able to identify main ideas and some supporting details in short, paragraph length texts—be they written, audio or video—on familiar topics.

For the intermediate level, you can draw on a range of texts for instructional purposes. It is essential that these ‘texts’ be authentic, that is, prepared by BY and FOR members of the target language and culture group. These can include short folk tales, advertisements, instructional texts (how to), song lyrics, short videos and audio texts.

As with Novice level, instructors should avoid simplifying texts or preparing special texts for use in the classroom. Rather than edit the text to simplify it, edit the task to make it more appropriate for intermediate learners. You can take a complex text such as a video or audio clip, a news report or tale, and create level-appropriate tasks around the text, such as identifying main ideas, key words, etc. You can also sue very simple texts, such as signage, to engage students in discussion of cultural values.

The goal of instruction in Interpretive mode is to help students master strategies for gleaning meaning from a text. These include ‘top-down’ strategies (using what they already know in terms of background knowledge of the topic, observing contextual clues, reading between the lines), and ‘bottom-up’ strategies that make use of a more granular examination of a text (word forms, word order, intonation, gesture).

Unlike the interpersonal and presentational modes, in the interpretive, the instructor cannot ‘view’ the learner’s work because this takes place internally, in the learner’s mind. But we can devise methods for inferring whether and to what extent the learner has grasped the text.

Because interpretive capacity is generally more developed than productive capacity, learners can often understand much more in the target language than they can explain or express. Therefore, there should be opportunities for students to discuss target language texts in both the target language and in English. This is equally true for assessment: assessment of interpretive capabilities should not be entirely dependent on productive capabilities.

1. **Language Function**

   *Range of Topics* – In the interpretive mode, learners at all levels should be able to deal with a much broader range of content in the target language than they are able to in the interpersonal or presentational modes. At the intermediate level, learners should demonstrate an ability to interpret texts on an increasing range of topics beyond the classroom and immediate daily life, including
   - News/Current events
   - Work/field of study
   - Some cultural products & practices of target and home culture
2. Text Type
Intermediate learners should be fully comfortable and able to interpret strings of sentences and short- to medium-length paragraph texts. As is true at all levels, students will be able to deal with much more complexity in grammatical form and vocabulary than they will be able to produce.

3. Strategies/Impact
Whether the text is written, audio, or video will be an important consideration in terms of the cues learners will have. Each offers particular advantages and disadvantages.

- In written mode (including email and text messages, graphic materials such as posters, schedules, ads), learners can use morphological and syntactic cues to identify word meaning and function
- In audio mode (including radio broadcasts/podcasts, voice messages), learners can use auditory cues such as intonation, pauses, etc. to derive meaning
- In video mode (including YouTube, short films, ads), learners can use visual cues such as gestures and facial expression to derive meaning

Interpretive Skills & Strategies
Given a short paragraph length ‘text’ (to read, listen to, or view) on a topic with which the learner has some familiarity, the successful intermediate learner will be able, using a range of strategies, to

- Identify a majority of key words and phrases in the text that provide clues as to what the text is about, its purpose
- Detect the main idea or ideas
- Identify supporting details in the text and provide information from the text to explain some of them
- Describe organizational features of a ‘text’
- Make plausible guesses at meaning, drawing on context
- Read between the lines, making inferences beyond what is literally in the text
- Identify the author’s perspective or purpose
- Describe cultural content and compare with analogous elements of the home culture
- Identify the genre (is this a fairy tale? an advertisement? A personal letter? How can you tell?) Identify/describe styles of presenting materials/information that differ from styles in English, e.g., some languages require formulaic introductions.
- Express their reaction to the text

The ten items above correspond to the ten sections of the Interpretation Guide, a template for which is reproduced the end of this section. The Interpretation Guide makes it clear what to look for when dealing with a new text (be it written, audio or video). It can be used for any text, leading learners at any level through each of 10 interpretive strategies. Through regular use of interpretation guides, students will become more skillful at using a range of strategies for successfully navigating texts. Again, the Interpretation Guide is meant to be used as BOTH a teaching tool and a tool for assessing student progress in using the target language in the interpretive mode.
Below is an **Interpretation Guide template**. This is drawn largely—with a few adjustments—from the Comprehension Guide developed in the IPA work of ACTFL (Adair-Hauck, Glisan and Troyan. 2013. *Implementing Integrated Performance Assessment*. ACTFL: Alexandria, VA 2013). Remember: Each of these ten strategies should be explicitly taught; only then will it be a fair method for assessing student achievement: “test only what you teach”.

You will notice that the **Interpretation Guide** (the template for which is the same for all levels) asks students to respond to the questions in English. This is to allow them to express their level of understanding, a level that may go beyond what they are capable of expressing in the target language. At intermediate level, however; some questions can be posed in the target language.

---

**INTERPRETATION GUIDE TEMPLATE**

**Keyword Recognition**
Find in the article the word/phrase in the target language that best expresses the meaning of the following English words/phrases:

| XXX ______________________________ | XXX ______________________________ |
| __________________________________ |
| XXX ______________________________ | XXX ______________________________ |
| __________________________________ |

**Detecting Main Idea**

Describe the main idea(s) of the article in English.

__________________________________________________________

**Supporting Details**

*Note to Instructor:* In English, provide 5 correct details that support the main idea of the article and 3 distractors

Circle the letter of each of the details that is mentioned in the article, write the letter of the detail next to where it appears in the text and write the information from the article in the space provided.

| A XXX ______________________________ |
| B XXX ______________________________ |
| C XXX ______________________________ |
| D XXX ______________________________ |
| E XXX ______________________________ |
| F XXX ______________________________ |
| G XXX ______________________________ |
| H XXX ______________________________ |

**Organizational Features**

How is this article organized? Circle the ones that apply.

*Note to instructor:* provide 5 possibilities to choose from, with three being distractors. Some possible options include pros & cons, compare & contrast, chronological, step-by-step how-to, cause & effect

| A Chronological |
| B Cause and effect |
| C Step-cy-step, How-to |
| D Pros & Cons |
| E Compare & Contrast |

Justification from the article ____________________________

**Guessing Meaning from Context**

Based on this article, what do you think the following words probably mean?

*Note to instructor:* Find three words or phrases in the article that students are unlikely to know, but should be able to understand from the context. Next to the word, copy the entire sentence in which it appears.

1. xxxxxxxx __________________________________________
2. xxxxxxxx __________________________________________
3. xxxxxxxx __________________________________________
Inferences

["Read/listen/watch between the lines" to answer the following questions, using information from the text.]

Note to Instructor: For Novice level learners, provide a statement related to the topic of the text and ask them to indicate whether it is true or false and then to list evidence from the text that would help them to determine this, drawing on inferencing skills.

Statement: _________________________________________________________________

Drawing on information in the text, I believe that this statement is True or False (circle one)

Evidence from the text.
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

Author's Perspective. Select the perspective or point of view you think the author adopts in this article and justify your answer with information from the text.

Note to Instructor: Provide one correct answer and two distractors. Some possible options for describing points of view include moralizing, factual, questioning, defensive, zealous, critical, doubtful.

A xxx
B xxx
C xxx

Justification from text ________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Comparing Cultural Perspectives. Answer the following questions.

Note to Instructor: Below are some possible types of questions, which for Novice level learners should be written in English. Questions with reference to specific cultural practices, products and perspectives in your questions.

• What are the cultural similarities and differences between X and Y?
• How do the practices/products in the article reflect the target culture perspectives?
• What did you learn about the target culture from this article?
• How would this article have been different if it were written for a US audience?

Identifying Genres. What type of a text is this? Circle the one that best describes the text and explain your answer with reference to the text.

Note to Instructor: Some possible genres include folktale, sermon, resume, personal letter, report, lecture, comic routine, instructional

Xxxx
Xxxx
Xxxx

Justification ________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Personal Reaction to the Text. Using specific information from the text, describe your personal reaction to the article/broadcast/video. Be sure to provide reasons to support your reaction.
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
PRESENTATIONAL – At the end of the second year of study, students in Boston University’s African Language Program will be able to communicate information and express their own thoughts about familiar topics using full sentences, strings of sentences, and short paragraph length discourse.

The presentational mode is marked by lack of interaction with one’s audience. This means that there are no opportunities for the back and forth that aids in clarifying meaning in the interpersonal mode; the presentation must stand on its own. Students at the intermediate level should have increasing opportunities to make impromptu or minimally prepared presentations. They should be able to identify and make use of the features of major genres of formal presentations. Students should demonstrate an ability to make an engaging presentation to members of the target language community.

The question is: How successful is the learner in getting their ideas across to an audience of native speakers? How engaging are they?

By the end of the second year of study, the successful student will be able to make coherent presentations on a range of topics. Although delivery may be somewhat halting and written language a bit awkward, this does not interfere significantly with comprehension. Students ready to move on to Advanced level courses will be able to perform the following.

1. **Language Function** – *The intermediate level learner will be able to comfortably use the target language to make brief presentations, both oral and written.*

**Type of Presentations**
- In-person oral presentations
- Written presentations
- Audio presentations
- Video presentations
  - These presentations can include a range of genres, including reports, opinion pieces, sermons, PowerPoint presentations, brochures, advertisements, speeches, news reports, essays, letters, news stories, among others.

**Range of Topics** (topics deemed pertinent and appropriate will vary with language/culture group).
- Make presentations on
  - News & current events
  - Comparing cultural practices and products of home and target language communities
  - Personal history & family
  - Travel
  - Work/occupations
  - Special interests/field of study
  - Holidays/celebrations
  - Health
  - Weather & climate
Specific topics addressed in class on aspects of the target culture/history/current events can provide material for presentations, as can special research on a specific topic, or group work preparing a presentation. Cultural comparisons are particularly fruitful topics.

2. **Text Type**
   - Use complete sentence and strings of sentences, short paragraphs
   - Incorporate some gestures, facial expressions, and body language into oral expression

3. **Strategy/Impact**
   - Make a clearly organized presentation that shows originality
   - Make use of supporting materials such as visuals
   - Engage the audience

4. **Comprehensibility**
   Presentations by the successful intermediate learner can be readily understood by native speakers accustomed to the speech/writing of non-native speakers. For those unaccustomed to interacting with learners/non-native speakers, comprehension may be uneven and require effort.

5. **Language Control**
   The successful intermediate learner, at the end of the second year of study, is able to
   - Produce utterances that are, for the most part, grammatically correct
   - Narrate events in
     - Present
     - Past
     - Future
     (May need assistance with aspect)
   - Access most vocabulary needed to discuss/present on the range of topics indicated above
   - Adjust language to some extent (for example, by incorporating formulaic introductions), depending on the type of presentation and audience, and, in oral presentations, incorporate the use of common facial expressions, gestures, and body language in a manner appropriate to the audience and situation.
The Second ‘C’: CULTURES

Students at the advanced level should have a solid understanding of the cultural perspectives/values, practices and products of the target language community and how they compare with those of their home culture(s).

As students in third year become more fluent in the language and culture of the target speech community, they will become familiar with a range of practices (the way things are done) and products (things both tangible and intangible that are valued) of the culture (see diagram below). These practices and products provide insight into the cultural perspectives and values of the group(s) whose language we are studying.

| Perspectives (Meanings, attitudes, values, ideas) |
| Practices (Patterns of social interaction)       |
| Products (Tools, foods, music/art, laws, games) |

Careful examination of Practices and Products of the culture can help students understand the underlying values and collective worldview of the target language community. What do people consider most worthy of effort? Enjoyable? Beautiful? Wise? Fair?

Teaching cultural content entails teaching students to use the language in ways that are appropriate to their social location and to be aware of what is appropriate for others in various situations. This means mastering forms of address, gestures and other non-verbal forms of communication, and becoming knowledgeable about the range of cultural practices (e.g., rituals around birth, marriage, and death), holidays, gender and age
specific behaviors, etiquette. And it means becoming knowledgeable about the things—be they tangible or intangible—that people in the target language culture value: laws and social conventions, the built environment (dwellings, community layouts, places of worship), art forms, design, sports, and so on.

**Recognizing cultural practices and how they reflect values and perspectives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Practice</th>
<th>Cultural Values &amp; Perspectives</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greetings &amp; Leave takings</td>
<td>Social hierarchies, roles and responsibilities, notions of respect and seniority, value of cultivating human relationships</td>
<td>Appropriately greets peers and others in a range of social positions, uses greetings keyed to time of day/activity, and those reserved for major life events (e.g., birth, death, marriage).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversational Etiquette</td>
<td>Notions of ‘personal space’, relations between the genders and different age groups, respect and cultivation of relationships</td>
<td>Maintains acceptable conversational distance, respects an introductory period of small talk and rules of physical contact, depending on the situation. Follows rules of turn-taking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Physical proximity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Physical contact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ‘Small talk’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differential use of right and left hand</td>
<td>Ideas about cleanliness, associations with left and right.</td>
<td>Uses the right hand in greetings, taking and giving, eating, gesturing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating together with family, friends</td>
<td>Attitudes towards food and those who grow and prepare it, social hierarchies within the family, restraint</td>
<td>Can explain in English basic table manners (use of hand/utensils, taking turns, accepting/refusing more), how to express gratitude to the host/cook, who may speak about what topics at meals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious practices in daily life</td>
<td>Centrality (or not) of religion in peoples’ daily lives. Value placed on charity, reflection, humility, etc.</td>
<td>Can list the major religions of the language community, what characterizes each (basic beliefs and values, and practice (e.g., going to mass, praying five times a day, giving alms, group chanting/singing, reciting scriptures)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrating major holidays</td>
<td>What is the meaning of the holiday being observed? What is important about it?</td>
<td>Can name and describe three major holidays and when and how each is observed by different people in the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dress codes</td>
<td>Respecting others by putting your best foot forward vs. being natural, casual, not trying to impress anyone. What is appropriate in different contexts (at home, going out, visiting, etc.) Keyed to social roles (gender and age), reflects attitudes towards the body.</td>
<td>Is able to describe some features of appropriate dress for self in formal and informal situations. Can describe characteristics of appropriate dress for men, women, and children, or other salient social categories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dance (the practice of dancing to mark social occasions, for recreation, entertainment)</td>
<td>Expressing emotion through the body, community solidarity, beauty, attitudes towards the body.</td>
<td>Can name occasions that call for dancing, what the dancing conveys, and who may dance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gift giving</td>
<td>Collective vs. individual orientation, weaving a fabric of mutual obligation/interdependence; notions of respect, ownership, sharing,</td>
<td>Can explain why and when people offer gifts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stages of life</td>
<td>What it means to be human, how one becomes human, the place of children, responsibilities of adults, responsibilities in the face of hardship</td>
<td>Can name the major life transitions, what characterizes each, and describe what marks the passing from childhood to adulthood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinship</td>
<td>Who is family? What are the roles and responsibilities of different family members relative to each other? How does one become family?</td>
<td>Can recite kinship terms for immediate and extended family (aunts, uncles, older and younger generations) and can explain their various roles and where these may differ from the learner’s community (e.g., role of mother’s brother in some communities)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recognizing cultural products and how they reflect values and perspectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Product</th>
<th>Cultural Values &amp; Perspectives</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘National’ Sport</td>
<td>Attitudes towards the body and strength, competition and collaboration</td>
<td>Can name two of the major sports, the objectives of each, and what is required to ‘play’ them (e.g., ball, field, stick, saddle)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing (as distinct from dress codes)</td>
<td>Attitudes towards the body, gender, climate, sexuality, color, ‘standing out’ or ‘fitting in’, materials and their provenance</td>
<td>Can describe pieces of clothing he/she might wear in different situations (school, wedding ceremony, meeting with elders, at home) in terms of cut, fabric, color, fit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Games/Toys</td>
<td>What skills are valued? Is working together seen more in terms of cooperation or competition? How does learning take place?</td>
<td>Can describe one children’s game, the objective of the game, any objects needed to play, who plays it when</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwellings</td>
<td>What is the physical form? What parts are public? Private? What are the functions of different parts of the dwelling?</td>
<td>Can describe one kind of typical house and how it is laid out (shape, orientation), its functions (e.g., where people sleep, eat, cook)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Places of worship</td>
<td>What is the physical form? Where is it located relative to other structures? Natural features?</td>
<td>Can describe what is distinctive about the places of worship for one of the major religions (e.g., mosque, cathedral, church, temple)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Arts/Music/Dance/Theatre/Other art forms</td>
<td>Notions of beauty, social commentary, religious and spiritual values,</td>
<td>Can name and describe one of the principal art forms valued by the culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food preparation, eating</td>
<td>Attitudes towards food and those who grow and prepare it, social hierarchies within the family, restraint</td>
<td>Can name two typical dishes. Can identify some typical objects used in preparing food and in eating it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Songs</td>
<td>Value of singing/singing together; themes treated in songs;</td>
<td>Is familiar with two songs in the target language and by whom and when they are sung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valued animals</td>
<td>Qualities of the animal (strength, patience, loyalty). What the animal ‘gives’ to people (milk, meat, transportation, companionship).</td>
<td>Can name one animal that is highly salient in the culture and explain why.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyday household objects/tools</td>
<td>Reveals household tasks, organization of the household, functions (privacy, neatness, warmth), division of labor</td>
<td>Can name three household objects/tools and explain what they are used for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceremonies</td>
<td>Reveal what is considered important and worthy of note.</td>
<td>Can name and describe the ceremony associated with a major life transition, the ceremonial objects used, as well as particular dances or music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gift giving</td>
<td>Collective vs. individual orientation, weaving a fabric of mutual obligation/interdependence; notions of respect, stewardship, sharing</td>
<td>Can describe an appropriate gifts to offer on the occasion of a marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stages of life</td>
<td>What it means to be human, how one becomes human, the place of children, responsibilities of adults.</td>
<td>Can name the outward signs of being an adult.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Third C: CONNECTIONS

Connections refers to the range of information and perspectives that fluency in the target language allows students to access that would otherwise be unavailable to them. Students at the intermediate level are able to be exploring resources in the target language. Students should be directed to a range of resources for topics addressed in class as well as those related to particular student’s interests. These can include in-person or virtual interactions with members of the target language community, online resources, radio and television broadcasts, and written materials.

The Fourth C: COMPARISONS

The Fourth ‘C’ is about learners’ ability to compare and contrast the sounds, structures, semantic fields, and cultural practices and products of the target language with those of their home language(s). Students at the intermediate level will be developing new understandings of their own culture(s) as they learn more about the target language and culture. This knowledge breeds the humility required to interact effectively in the global community. This ‘C’ does not have its own assessment standards, but is incorporated into those of the Communication, Cultures, and Communities.

The Fifth C: COMMUNITIES

The Fifth ‘C’ concerns sharing what is being learned with one’s own communities and participating in authentic activities of the target community. The key is participation. Students are not rated on the quality of their participation but on the fact of having participated. By the end of the second year of study, the successful student, will have

- Experience exchanging communications with native speakers via email, text, and/or video chat.
- Met face-to-face with native speakers in the diaspora (by attending community/cultural events suggested by instructor, exchanging with target language speakers who are students at BU or other local colleges, or engaging in conversation with native speakers on topics of mutual interest—in-person or virtually).
- Shared language/culture skills with the BU and wider university communities through preparing and presenting a skit for African Language Theatre Night.
- Set and met goals for using the language for enjoyment, enrichment and advancement. (This could be viewing videos or listening to music, doing online research, connecting with peers in the country/countries where the language is spoken, reading or writing for pleasure in the new language.)
Assessment Criteria for Level 3:
Advanced
Assessment Criteria for Level 3: Advanced

Students who have successfully completed Intermediate Level in Boston University’s African Language Program will come to advanced level language courses having attained certain skills that you can now build on as you prepare your syllabus for year III. Given this background and the performance goals established for year III, you can determine what kinds of instructional experiences will best guide your students in reaching these goals, and how best to measure their attainment of these goals.

**Instructional/classroom experiences.** What we are assessing is the learner’s ability to perform tasks explicitly taught in the classroom—tasks that at advanced level will demonstrate increasing degrees of creativity with language. If you want your students to be able to use context to guess at the meaning of words, or to write a poem using target language poetic forms, or to interview someone about their work, then opportunities for developing the needed skills must form part of the curriculum. This is what is meant by building a syllabus using backward design—starting with the destination and then designing a clear route for getting there.

**Assessment tasks.** In addition to providing opportunities to learn the performance-based outcomes, or skills, that will be tested, we must also determine what will serve as evidence that a learner has successfully mastered these skills. Assessment tasks should mirror those used in class in learning particular skills.

The sections that follow present performance-based outcome measures, or assessment targets, for Advanced learners. These were developed with reference to the Five Cs (Communication, Cultures, Comparisons, Connections, Communities). More information and teaching resources can be accessed through ACTFL publications and other print and online sources.

A brief summary of the elements of the language that should be part of your program in the third year of instruction are outlined below. These are in addition to continued work and practice with grammatical material learned in first and second years. Encourage students to notice how these features of the target language compare with their own language(s). This is a key skill in developing global citizens.
LANGUAGE ELEMENTS

Sound system – Students should be proficient at pronouncing those sounds that are difficult for non-native speakers, should be able to accurately produce grammatical tone and have a budding sense of ‘tone of voice’

Nominal system (coding objects/concepts/entities) – Continue to build vocabulary with focus on generative principles

Verb system (coding actions/states) – Students should be well-versed in speaking about ongoing and habitual actions, things happening in the past or imagined or planned for the future, conditionals, hypotheticals, wishes, contrafactuals (imagining a different past, as in “if she had only completed her thesis on time, ....”), having mastered the tense/aspect system of the language.

Modification/positional elements continue to build vocabulary, circumlocution

Numbers & Time Notions of time and timeliness, values associated with numbers.

Language Variation Students should be aware of different registers, and of regional and social dialects and styles of argumentation

Non-verbal communication Increase repertoire of gestures and facial expressions; more consistently maintain proper distance from and physical contact with interlocutors; understand the meaning of and be able to appropriately use and interpret silence.

Writing system For those languages that use a writing system other than the Latin script, students should be able to read and write in the other writing system at the same level they can do so in the Latin script. That is, they should be able to read and write paragraph length texts. Students should be aware of different styles of writing.

Literary Styles Students should be able to effectively deploy a number of proverbs, should be able to recount a range of folk tales, and other valued language forms

Specialized vocabulary (for student’s area of study, for topics discussed in class) Each student should have a working knowledge of vocabulary related to their field of study.
The First ‘C’: COMMUNICATION

The principle goal of learning a language is Communication: being able to interact with native speakers, interpret texts of various sorts, and present ideas clearly through the spoken and written word. Below, these are divided into the three modes or functions; *Interpersonal*, *Interpretive*, and *Presentational*, and the summary ACTFL description of what learners at the advanced level should be able to do in each. These brief summaries are organized according to the following five rubrics.

1. **Language Function**: What kinds of tasks can the learner comfortably engage in?
2. **Text Type**: What quantity and quality of discourse (word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, extended discourse, level of complexity) can the learner produce/understand?
3. **Strategies/Impact**: How engaging/engaged is the learner in the task at hand? What strategies does he/she bring to bear?
4. **Comprehensibility**: Who can understand the learner? (from a native speaker accustomed to interacting with those just learning the language to one only accustomed to other native speakers)
5. **Language Control**: How accurate is the learner’s speech/written production in terms of grammar, pronunciation, spelling, vocabulary?

These rubrics apply differentially in each of the three modes. In the Interpersonal and presentational modes, where we can ‘see’ the learner’s use of language, we assess on all five rubrics. In the Interpretive mode, we focus on the first three.

Essential for each of these is the continuing development of a robust vocabulary that will allow students to communicate with others and explore target language materials about topics of importance to them. At the advanced level, students should be encouraged to learn the specialized vocabulary associated with their fields of study. Also in the area of vocabulary development, students should continue gaining familiarity with a range of idiomatic expressions used in writing and in speaking.

The Three Modes of Communication: Interpersonal, Interpretive, Presentational

**INTERPERSONAL**: At the end of the third year of language study, students in Boston University’s African Language Program will be able to maintain conversations on a range of social, academic, and work-related topics, with a significant level of detail and organization, and sharing of points of view.

By the third year of study, conversational skills should be fairly strong, with habits having been developed through practice, and in particular, practice with a wide range of interlocutors. During the third year, the focus should be on the finer points of negotiating
conversations, presentation of opinion and the structure of arguments, and understanding some of the major regional and social accents and registers.

By the end of three years (six semesters) of study, the successful student will be able to

1. **Language Function**
   *Use formulaic utterances and engage in ‘social small talk’*
   - Appropriately greet and take leave of people in a range of social locations relative to self
   - Gracefully extricate oneself from a social situation/conversation
   - Use appropriate formalized expressions to convey congratulations, best wishes, condolences, gratitude, disagreement
   - Introduce self and others using socially appropriate forms
   - Engage in appropriate ‘small talk’

**Getting and giving information**
- Narrate and describe in all major time frames
- Confidently make use of a wide range of modifiers, expression, and circumlocutions to clearly identify and describe objects, events, and people, ideas and concepts
- Ask and respond to complex questions involving all major time frames, hypotheticals, facts, and opinion
- Demonstrate understanding of what kinds of questions are inappropriate in what circumstances

**Getting things done**
- Give and follow relatively complex instructions (e.g., how-to prepare a dish, how to raise livestock, how to make a video)
- Make detailed plans with others
- Ask for and provide detailed directions

**Range of topics—What can you talk about in the new language?**
- Carry on extended conversations in a range of social situations concerning
  - Current events/News
  - Contemporary Issues (economy, politics, science)
  - Work/occupations/professions
  - Special interests/field of study
  - Cultural products and practices of interest and their differences and similarities to one’s home culture (see table of products and practices)
  - Self and family
  - Cultural products in the visual and performing arts, music, film, literature
2. Text Type Used with Ease
   • Paragraphs of varying degrees of length and complexity
   • Descriptions
   • Narratives/chronological reports
   • Hypotheticals
   • Arguments

3. Strategies/Impact
   *Conversational Skills & Strategies*
   Uses a range of linguistically correct and culturally appropriate strategies to initiate a conversation, join in an ongoing conversation, seek clarification, to change the subject or redirect the conversation, clarify one’s position or express disagreement, postpone or end the conversation. Can with confidence use circumlocution, paraphrasing, and illustration.

4. Comprehensibility
   The advanced learner can generally be understood—with some minimal effort—by native speakers, even those who are not accustomed to the speech/writing of non-native speakers.

   He or she is able to effectively engage in extended conversational exchange with native speakers in each of the following mediums
   • Face-to-face communication
   • Written communication
   • Telephone or other voice
   • Email messages/text
   • Video chats

5. Language Control
   The successful student, at the end of three years of study, is able, in conversation, to
   • Demonstrate good control of aspect and/or tense systems in narrating in past, present and future
   • Access and use precise vocabulary, including some specialized vocabulary in their own field
   • Use correct intonation patterns
   • Speak/write with ease and fluency, using transition words/phrases and a range of idiomatic expressions,
   • Demonstrate a growing understanding of culturally and situationally appropriate patterns of writing and speech (including the non-verbal)—both for self and others.
INTERPRETIVE: At the end of the third year of study, students in Boston University’s African Language Program will be able to identify the theme, main ideas and supporting details in paragraph length texts of varying complexity. They will be able to identify how the piece—be it written, audio or video—is structured, and to discuss the theme and the issues it raises, as well as their own opinions.

At the advanced level there is generally a wide range of texts available that can be used for instructional purposes. It is essential that these ‘texts’ be authentic, that is, prepared by BY and FOR members of the target language and culture group.

Instructors should avoid simplifying texts or preparing special texts for use in the classroom. Rather than edit the text to simplify it, edit the task to make it more appropriate for advanced learners. You can take a very simple text, for example, and create a complex task. A basic primary school reader could be the subject of discourse analysis and discerning cultural and other messages being conveyed. You could also take a very complex film or audio clip and create fairly simple tasks that exercise students’ interpretive skills such as picking out key words, noting the structure of an argument, and so on.

The goal of instruction in Interpretive mode is to help students master strategies for gleaning meaning from a text. These include ‘top-down’ strategies (using what they already know in terms of background knowledge of the topic, observing contextual clues, reading between the lines), and ‘bottom-up’ strategies that make use of a more granular examination of a text (word forms, word order, intonation, gesture).

Unlike the interpersonal and presentational modes, in the interpretive, the instructor cannot ‘view’ the learner’s work because this takes place internally, in the learner’s mind. But we can devise methods for inferring whether and to what extent the learner has grasped the text.

Because interpretive capacity is generally more developed than productive capacity, learners can often understand much more in the target language than they can explain or express. Therefore, there should be opportunities for students to discuss target language texts in both the target language and in English. This is equally true for assessment—even at the advanced level: assessment of interpretive capabilities should not be entirely dependent on productive capabilities.

1. Language Function
Range of Topics – In the interpretive mode, learners at all levels should be able to deal with a much broader range of content in the target language than they are able to in the interpersonal or presentational modes. At the advanced level, learners should demonstrate an ability to interpret texts on a wide range of topics, including

- Current events/issues of public interest
- Work related issues
- Cultural products of interest (e.g., visual and performing arts, music, film, literature)
- Special interests/field of study
- Self and family
2. Text Type
Advanced learners should be fully comfortable with paragraph length texts of varying degrees of complexity and, in the interpretive mode, will be able to deal with much more complexity in grammatical form and vocabulary than they will be able to produce.

3. Strategies/Impact

*Whether the text is written, audio, or video will be an important consideration in terms of the cues learners will have. Each offers particular advantages and disadvantages.*

- In written mode (including email and text messages, graphic materials such as posters, schedules, ads), learners can use morphological and syntactic cues to identify word meaning and function
- In audio mode (including radio broadcasts/podcasts, voice messages), learners can use auditory cues such as intonation, pauses, etc. to derive meaning
- In video mode (including YouTube, short films, ads), learners can use visual cues such as gestures and facial expression to derive meaning

**Interpretive Skills & Strategies**

Given a paragraph length ‘text’ (to read, listen to, or view) on a topic with which the learner may or may not be familiar, the successful advanced learner will be able, using a range of strategies, to

- Identify a majority of key words and phrases in the text that provide clues as to what the text is about, its purpose
- Detect the main idea or ideas
- Identify the majority of supporting details in the text and provide information from the text to explain some of them
- Outline organizational features of a ‘text’
- Make plausible guesses at meaning, drawing on context
- Read between the lines, making inferences beyond what is literally in the text
- Identify the author’s perspective or purpose and provide supporting evidence
- Describe cultural content and compare with analogous elements of the home culture
- Identify the genre (is this a fairy tale? an advertisement? A personal letter? A resume? How can you tell?) Identify/describe styles of presenting materials/information that differ from styles in English, e.g., some languages require formulaic introductions.
- Express in some detail their reaction to the text

The ten items above correspond to the ten sections of the **Interpretation Guide**, a template for which is reproduced the end of this section. The **Interpretation Guide** makes it clear what to look for when dealing with a new text (be it written, audio or video). It can be used for any text, leading learners at any level through each of 10 interpretive strategies. Through regular use of interpretation guides, students will become more skillful at using a range of strategies for successfully navigating texts. Again, the **Interpretation Guide** is
meant to be used as BOTH a teaching tool and a tool for assessing student progress in using the target language in the interpretive mode.

Below is an **Interpretation Guide template**. This is drawn largely—with a few adjustments—from the Comprehension Guide developed in the IPA work of ACTFL (Adair-Hauck, Glisan and Troyan. 2013. *Implementing Integrated Performance Assessment*. ACTFL: Alexandria, VA 2013). Remember: Each of these ten strategies should be explicitly taught; only then will it be a fair method for assessing student achievement: “test only what you teach”.

You will notice that the **Interpretation Guide** (the template for which is the same for all levels) asks students to respond to the questions in English. This is to allow them to express their level of understanding, a level that may go beyond what they are capable of expressing in the target language. At advanced level, however; questions can often be posed in the target language.

---

**INTERPRETATION GUIDE TEMPLATE**

**Keyword Recognition**
Find in the article the word/phrase in the target language that best expresses the meaning of the following English words/phrases:

| XXX __________________________ | XXX __________________________ |
| XXX __________________________ | XXX __________________________ |
| XXX __________________________ | XXX __________________________ |

**Detecting Main Idea**
Describe the main idea(s) of the article in English.

______________________________________________________________________

**Supporting Details**
*Note to Instructor: In English, provide 5 correct details that support the main idea of the article and 3 distractors*
Circle the letter of each of the details that is mentioned in the article, write the letter of the detail next to where it appears in the text and write the information from the article in the space provided.

| A | XXX __________________________ |
| B | XXX __________________________ |
| C | XXX __________________________ |
| D | XXX __________________________ |
| E | XXX __________________________ |
| F | XXX __________________________ |
| G | XXX __________________________ |
| H | XXX __________________________ |

**Organizational Features**
How is this article organized? Circle the ones that apply.
*Note to instructor: provide 5 possibilities to choose from, with three being distractors. Some possible options include pros & cons, compare & contrast, chronological, step-by-step how-to, cause & effect*

| A | Chronological |
| B | Cause and effect |
| C | Step-cy-step, How-to |
| D | Pros & Cons |
| E | Compare & Contrast |

Justification from the article ___________________________________________
Guessing Meaning from Context

Based on this article, what do you think the following words probably mean?

*Note to instructor: Find three words or phrases in the article that students are unlikely to know, but should be able to understand from the context. Next to the word, copy the entire sentence in which it appears.*

4. xxxxxxx ____________________________
5. xxxxxxx ____________________________
6. xxxxxxx ____________________________

Inferences

[“Read/listen/watch between the lines” to answer the following questions, using information from the text.]

*Note to Instructor: For Novice level learners, provide a statement related to the topic of the text and ask them to indicate whether it is true or false and then to list evidence from the text that would help them to determine this, drawing on inferencing skills.*

Statement: _____________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Drawing on information in the text, I believe that this statement is **True** or **False** (circle one)

Evidence from the text.
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Author’s Perspective. Select the perspective or point of view you think the author adopts in this article and justify your answer with information from the text.

*Note to Instructor: Provide one correct answer and two distractors. Some possible options for describing points of view include moralizing, factual, questioning, defensive, zealous, critical, doubtful.*

A xxx
B xxx
C xxx

Justification from text ______________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Comparing Cultural Perspectives. Answer the following questions.

*Note to Instructor: Below are some possible types of questions, which for Novice level learners should be written in English. Questions with reference to specific cultural practices, products and perspectives in your questions.*

- What are the cultural similarities and differences between X and Y?
- How do the practices/products in the article reflect the target culture perspectives?
- What did you learn about the target culture from this article?
- How would this article have been different if it were written for a US audience?

Identifying Genres. What type of a text is this? Circle the one that best describes the text and explain your answer with reference to the text.

*Note to Instructor: Some possible genres include folktale, sermon, resume, personal letter, report, lecture, comic routine, instructional*

Xxxx
Xxxx
Xxxx

Justification ______________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Personal Reaction to the Text. Using specific information from the text, describe your personal reaction to the article/broadcast/video. Be sure to provide reasons to support your reaction.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
PRESENTATIONAL – At the end of the third year of study, students in Boston University’s African Language Program will be able to communicate information and express themselves in an organized and detailed manner on familiar and some new topics using full paragraphs or the equivalent thereof in oral presentations or other media.

The presentational mode is marked by lack of interaction with one’s audience. This means that there are no opportunities for the back and forth that aids in clarifying meaning in the interpersonal mode; the presentation must stand on its own. While students at the Advanced level should have increasing opportunities to make impromptu or minimally prepared presentations, attention should also be paid to the different genres of formal presentation and their definitional characteristics. Attention should also be paid to what makes a presentation in this language/culture group engaging.

The question is: How successful is the learner in getting his or her ideas across to an audience of native speakers? How engaging is he/she?

By the end of the third year of study, the successful student, ready to move on to Superior level courses, will be able to

1. Language Function – The Advanced level learner will be able to comfortably use the target language to make presentations on a range of topics.

   Types of Presentations (specific language/culture groups will put a premium on particular types of presentations such as spoken word, formal speeches, etc.).
   • Oral Presentations, including lectures, speeches, news reports, sermons, poetry, song (types of presentations may vary with the language/culture)
   • Written Presentations, including personal letters, business or official letters, articles, reports, stories, poetry
   • Multi-media presentations including podcasts, video

   Range of Topics (topics deemed pertinent and appropriate will vary with language/culture group).
   • Make presentations on
     o Current events
     o Academic topics, particularly those in his/her field
     o Personal history
     o Topics of contemporary interest and debate (e.g., climate change, migration, women’s role in contemporary politics)
     o Cultural issues (gender and sexuality, changing family structures, significance of specific rites and rituals)

Specific topics addressed in class on aspects of the target culture/history/current events can provide material for presentations, as can special research on a specific topic, or group work preparing a presentation. Cultural comparisons are particularly fruitful topics.
2. **Text Type**
   - Use connected sentences, paragraph-length discourse
   - Appropriately use a range of gestures, facial expressions, and body language in the target language

3. **Strategy/Impact**
   - Make a clearly organized and detailed presentation that shows originality
   - Make use of supporting materials such as visuals
   - Engage the audience

4. **Comprehensibility**
   Presentations by the successful advanced learner can generally be understood—with some minimal effort—by native speakers, even those who are not accustomed to the speech/writing of non-native speakers.

5. **Language Control**
   The successful advanced learner, at the end of the third year of study, is able to
   - Produce fluent, for the most part grammatically correct, utterances
   - Narrate events in
     - Present
     - Past
     - Future
     (most of the time with correct use of aspectual markers)
   - Control a vocabulary sufficiently rich to allow discussion of the range of topics indicated above
   - Use situationally appropriate language (formal presentation vs. casual YouTube video) as well as facial expressions, gestures and body language appropriate to the situation.
The Second ‘C’: CULTURES

Students at the advanced level should have a solid understanding of the cultural perspectives/values, practices and products of the target language community and how they compare with those of their home culture(s).

As students in third year become more fluent in the language and culture of the target speech community, they will become familiar with a range of practices (the way things are done) and products (things both tangible and intangible that are valued) of the culture (see diagram below). These practices and products provide insight into the cultural perspectives and values of the group(s) whose language we are studying.

Careful examination of Practices and Products of the culture can help students understand the underlying values and collective worldview of the target language community. What do people consider most worthy of effort? Enjoyable? Beautiful? Wise? Fair?
Teaching cultural content entails teaching students to use the language in ways that are appropriate to their social location and to be aware of what is appropriate for others in various situations. This means mastering forms of address, gestures and other non-verbal forms of communication, and becoming knowledgeable about the range of cultural practices (e.g., rituals around birth, marriage, and death), holidays, gender and age specific behaviors, etiquette. And it means becoming knowledgeable about the things—be they tangible or intangible—that people in the target language culture value: laws and social conventions, the built environment (dwellings, community layouts, places of worship), art forms, design, sports, and so on.

Students completing a third year of language study should have fairly well-developed understanding of the culture of the target language speakers and be able to behave in a manner that, although perhaps a bit odd, is unremarkable to native speakers. Below are performance-based outcomes for students completing the third year of language study in the African Language Program at Boston University.

### Recognizing cultural practices and how they reflect the culture’s values and perspectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Practice</th>
<th>Cultural Values &amp; Perspectives</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greetings &amp; Leave takings</td>
<td>Social hierarchies, roles and responsibilities, notions of respect and seniority, beliefs about life’s transitions, value of cultivating human relationships</td>
<td>Demonstrates an awareness of who can/must say what to whom and when by consistently greeting peers as well as those in a range of different social categories (e.g., children, religious leaders, teachers, elders) appropriately, depending on the circumstances (time of day, special feast days/holidays, births, deaths, marriages, baptisms, etc.) Uses appropriate honorifics and titles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversational Etiquette</td>
<td>Notions of ‘personal space’, appropriate relations between the genders and different age groups, respect and cultivation of relationships</td>
<td>Consistently maintains appropriate distance from interlocutor (which may vary depending on the persons involved), is adept at engaging in appropriate ‘small talk’, adjusts physical contact appropriately for specific interlocutor, and follows the rules of turn taking...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical proximity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical contact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Small talk’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differential use of right and left hand</td>
<td>Ideas about cleanliness, associations with right and left.</td>
<td>Consistently uses the right hand in interactions with others (greetings, taking and giving, eating, gesturing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating together with family, friends, co-workers</td>
<td>Attitudes towards food and those who grow and prepare it, social hierarchies within the family and among friends and co-workers, restraint</td>
<td>Knows and can practice basic table manners (use of hand/utensils; turn taking, how to accept/refuse/ask for more; complimenting or thanking the cook/host; what you can talk about/if you can talk/who can talk at meals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious practices in daily life</td>
<td>Centrality (or not) of religion in peoples’ daily lives. Value placed on charity, reflection, humility, etc.</td>
<td>Can list and describe the major religions of the language community and a bit about each group of co-religionists and its beliefs. Can describe how this plays out in the daily life of each group. (e.g., going to morning mass, praying five times a day, giving alms, group chanting/singing, reading/reciting scriptures)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Practice (cont. from previous page)</td>
<td>Cultural Values &amp; Perspectives (cont. from previous page)</td>
<td>Outcome (cont. from previous page)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrating major holidays</td>
<td>What is the meaning of the holidays observed by the language community? What are the different stories surrounding them? What is important about each of them?</td>
<td>Can describe at all major holidays and when and how they are observed by different people (e.g., children, women, men, elders), as well as what they celebrate or commemorate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dress codes</td>
<td>Respecting others by putting your best foot forward vs. being natural, casual, not trying to impress. What is appropriate in different contexts (at home, going out, visiting, etc.) Keyed to social roles (gender and age)</td>
<td>Is able to describe the features of appropriate dress for different occasions for self and for others (e.g., students, office workers, farmers, children, elders). Can recognize inappropriate dress and explain why it is so.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dance (the practice of dancing to mark social occasions, for recreation, entertainment)</td>
<td>Expressing emotion through the body, community solidarity, attitudes towards the body, beauty. Culturally valued stories enacted through dance.</td>
<td>Can name occasions when dancing is appropriate and for whom. Can describe what makes a ‘good dancer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gift giving</td>
<td>Collective vs. individual orientation, weaving a fabric of mutual obligation or interdependence; notions of respect, stewardship and sharing</td>
<td>Can point to a number of occasions/situations when it is appropriate to offer gifts. Who can offer gifts to whom? How are gifts acknowledged? Reciprocated?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stages of life</td>
<td>What it means to be human, how one becomes human, place of children, responsibilities of adults</td>
<td>Can describe how childrearing practices differ from those in one’s ‘home culture’ and what this reveals about the culture (e.g., feeding of children, sleeping arrangements, children’s responsibility for siblings, behavior toward parents)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Kinship                                   | Who is family, the roles and responsibilities of different family members relative to each other, how one becomes family. | In addition to knowing names for immediate and extended family members, can describe their roles in the family and point out any that are particularly surprising to the learner
### Recognizing cultural products and how they reflect the culture’s values and perspectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Product</th>
<th>Cultural Values &amp; Perspectives</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘National’ Sport</td>
<td>Attitudes towards the body and strength, competition and collaboration. Relationship between sports and the arts.</td>
<td>Can describe the sports that hold an important place in the culture, who plays them, where, the objectives, and the subculture around them. Describe appropriate behavior for fans/spectators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing (as distinct from dress codes)</td>
<td>Attitudes towards the body, gender, climate, sexuality, color, ‘standing out’ or ‘fitting in’, materials and their provenance</td>
<td>Can describe typical styles of clothing for men, women and different age groups, with reference to color, cut, type of cloth. Can explain what makes a piece of clothing stylish.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Games</td>
<td>What skills are valued? How does learning take place?</td>
<td>Can describe one children’s game and one adult’s game, their objectives, what’s needed to play (e.g., board, stones, kites, cards), who can play, where the game is played. Is able to actually play one of them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwellings</td>
<td>What is the physical form? What parts are public? Private? What are the functions of different parts of the dwelling?</td>
<td>Can describe typical rural and urban houses, how they are laid out (shape, orientation), functions (e.g., where people sleep, eat, cook). What do people consider to be the ideal house? Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Places of worship</td>
<td>What is the physical form? Where is it located relative to other structures? Natural features?</td>
<td>Can describe distinctive characteristics of the places of worship for each of the major religions (e.g., mosque, cathedral, church, temple)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Arts/Music/Dance/Theatre/Other art forms</td>
<td>Notions of beauty, social commentary, religious and spiritual values,</td>
<td>Can describe three of the principal art forms of the culture (e.g., song, theater, dance, puppetry, spoken word). Can name and describe specific dances and their contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Songs</td>
<td>Value of singing/singing together; themes treated in songs;</td>
<td>Can sing (or recite) one or more songs in the target language, discuss the meaning of the song, when and by whom it is sung.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animals and what they represent</td>
<td>Qualities of the animal (strength, patience, loyalty). What the animal ‘gives’ to people (milk, meat, transportation, companionship).</td>
<td>Presented with the image of an animal, can name it, explain what it is associated with, and why it is valued/feared/worshipped in the culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyday household objects/tools</td>
<td>Reveals household tasks, organization of the household, functions (privacy, neatness, warmth), division of labor</td>
<td>Can name essential tools/household objects and their uses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceremonies</td>
<td>Reveal what is considered important and worthy of note.</td>
<td>Presented a major life transition such as birth, death or marriage, can describe in some detail the ceremony and associated ritual objects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gift giving</td>
<td>Collective vs. individual orientation, weaving a fabric of mutual obligation/interdependence; notions of respect, stewardship, sharing</td>
<td>Can name appropriate gifts for a range of occasions, offered to people in varying social positions relative to oneself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stages of Life</td>
<td>What it means to be human, how one becomes human, the place of children, responsibilities of adults.</td>
<td>Can name and describe the purpose of organizations or groups that adults may belong to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Third C: CONNECTIONS

Connections refers to the range of information and perspectives that fluency in the target language allows you to access that would otherwise be unavailable to you. This becomes more important at the advanced levels; indeed, it is often the reason for which students embark upon language study in the first place. Such information/perspectives are accessed through such things as news broadcasts about local and international events, literature & film, archival materials, and interactions with native speakers/members of the speech community.

The Fourth C: COMPARISONS

The Fourth ‘C’ is about learners’ ability to compare and contrast the sounds, structures, semantic fields, and cultural practices and products of the target language with those of their home language(s). Students at the advanced level will have a growing understanding of their own culture(s) as well as that of the target language community, and of the fact that theirs is but one in a wide range of languages and cultures, each with its own systems, values and perspectives. This knowledge breeds the humility required to interact effectively in the global community. This ‘C’ does not have its own assessment standards, but is incorporated into those of the Communication, Cultures, and Communities.

The Fifth C: COMMUNITIES

The Fifth ‘C’ concerns sharing what is being learned with one’s own communities and participating in authentic activities of the target community. The key is participation. Students are not rated on the quality of their participation but on the fact of having participated. By the end of the third year of study, the successful student will have

- Extensive experience exchanging communications with native speakers via email, text, and/or video chat.
- Met face-to-face with native speakers in the diaspora (by attending community/cultural events, engaged in academic exchanges with target language speakers who are students at BU, or engaged in conversation with native speakers on topics of mutual interest—in-person or virtually).
- Shared language/culture skills with the BU and wider university communities through preparing and presenting a skit for African Language Theatre Night.
- Have spent an extended time living in a community of native speakers, through study abroad or immersion in a community of immigrants.
- Set and met goals for using the language for enjoyment, enrichment and advancement. (This could be viewing films or listening to music, doing online research, reading or writing for pleasure in the new language, conducting field research.)
Assessment Criteria for Level 4:
Superior Level
Assessment Criteria for Level 4: Superior Level

By the fourth year of study, or superior level, content courses are ideal for providing the depth and breadth of experience in actually using a language to engage with ideas, to interact with others, and to become familiar with variety in a language. Below are just a few examples of content courses taught in African languages that would be appropriate and challenging for students at the Superior level.

- The Writings of Julius Nyerere (taught in Swahili)
- The Life and Writings of Cheikh Ahmadu Bamba (taught in Wolof)
- Contemporary Electoral Politics in Kenya (taught in Swahili)
- Kwame Nkrumah and PanAfricanism (taught in Akan/Twi)
- Post-Apartheid Political Movements (taught in Zulu)
- The Politics of Oil (taught in Igbo)
- Introduction to the Yoruba Religion (taught in Yoruba)
- Meeting Educational Challenges – the Case of Niger (taught in Hausa)
- Congolese Music and the Language of Contemporary African Song (taught in Lingala)

Through the content, students reach a level where they are comfortable working with article/chapter length texts, be they written, audio or video. Content courses expose students to regional dialects and social registers, specialized terminology, proverbial speech, modes of inquiry, styles of argumentation.

Assessment of students completing fourth year of study in Boston University African Language Program will draw on the content of the courses offered and how well the content has been mastered, revealing the ability of the student to actually use the language as a tool for learning, getting things done, and expanding their world view.

At the same time, there are specific markers of a successful student completing fourth year. While they are unlikely to be mistaken for native speakers, students should be able to interact with communities of native speakers with little ‘noise’ created by their language skills.
They should be able to accomplish the tasks for advanced level, but in greater depth and with more accuracy. In addition, they should be able to:

- Produce original chapter length texts (written, audio and video) that are understandable to native speakers not used to interacting with learners.
- Accurately summarize chapter length texts, to identify key ideas, discuss how the text is organized, what the author’s apparent goal is, and relate the content to their own life/interests.
- Begin to develop specialized vocabulary relative to the material being studied.
- Engage with literary texts such as poetry and fiction, as well as academic texts.
- Do the above in scripts (other than the Latin script) used by the speech community.
- Identify salient varieties of the language, be they regional or social.
- Use the language and generally behave in culturally appropriate ways in a range of contexts, as well as being able to notice when someone is behaving inappropriately and what it is that makes the behavior inappropriate.

A note of caution: At this level, it is important to distinguish between acquired language facility and personality. Not everyone is going to be an outgoing, gregarious person in their new language and we must find ways to be sure we are not assessing students on their personalities, but rather on their ability to be themselves in the new language. Clear performance-based outcomes are thus extremely important at this level. Drawing on the list above, and in light of the content your course covers, pull out specific tasks you want your students to master by the end of the year. This kind of roadmap will simplify both the task of building your syllabus as well as assessing your students’ progress.
Appendix A:
Performance-based Outcomes Reference Tables
**Novice (Level One)**

The table below presents a quick summary of what students should be able to do upon completing the first year of study in the African Language Program at Boston University.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit of Mastery</th>
<th>Words, phrases and short sentences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>In each of the following Communication Modes, students will be able to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal:</td>
<td>Express themselves in conversations on familiar topics using a variety of words, phrases, simple sentences, and questions that have been practiced and memorized;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretive:</td>
<td>Understand words, phrases, and formulaic language that have been practiced and memorized to grasp the main ideas and derive meaning of from simple, highly-predictable oral or written texts;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentational:</td>
<td>Communicate information on familiar topics using a variety of words, phrases and sentences, and using a range of mediums, including oral or written presentation, audio or video.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensibility</td>
<td>The speech and writing of students should be comprehensible, with some effort, to native speakers accustomed to interacting with people just learning their language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mastery of Writing System</td>
<td>If learning another writing system, students will be able to recognize and write each of the letters/characters and diacritics (if any) in the writing system. They will be able to decipher as well as write one- and two-syllable sequences, as well as short words, in the language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context/ the Language Community</td>
<td>Students will be able to identify where and by whom the language is spoken, approximate number of speakers, general history of those speakers' communities, and information about their presence in the diaspora.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Competency</td>
<td>In terms of cultural competency as reflected in both verbal and non-verbal behaviors, students will be able, among other things, to greet and take leave of people in ways appropriate to the time of day, use appropriate forms of address, engage in basic formulaic small talk, explain the basics of eating etiquette, name the terms for various family members, name and briefly explain major religions of the target language speakers, name major holidays or cultural observances and when they take place over the course of the year, identify and observe major cultural taboos (e.g., avoiding use of left hand for greeting or eating, avoidance behaviors).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Intermediate (Level Two)

The table below presents a quick summary of what students should be able to do upon completing the second year of study in the African Language Program at Boston University.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit of Mastery</th>
<th>Full sentences, strings of sentences, short paragraphs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>In each of the following Communication Modes, students will be able to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Interpersonal:</em> express themselves and participate in conversations on familiar topics using sentences and series of sentences, handle short social interactions in everyday situations by asking and answering a variety of questions, and communicate about themselves, others, and activities of everyday life;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Interpretive:</em> identify main ideas and some supporting details in short, paragraph length texts—be they written, audio or video—on familiar topics;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Presentational:</em> communicate information and express their own thoughts about familiar topics using full sentences, strings of sentences, and short paragraph length discourse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensibility</td>
<td>The speech and writing of students completing the first year of study should be readily understood by native speakers accustomed to interacting with non-native speakers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mastery of Writing System</td>
<td>If learning another writing system, students will be able to recognize and write each of the letters/characters and diacritics (if any) in the writing system. They will be able to decipher as well as write full sentences, strings of sentences, and short paragraphs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context/ the Language Community</td>
<td>Students will have developed detailed knowledge about some aspects of the history and contemporary life of the language community (or communities).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Competency</td>
<td>In terms of cultural competency as reflected in both verbal and non-verbal behaviors, our students will have a growing awareness of social distinctions and associated language registers, as well as distinctions between formal and informal registers. They will be able to describe/explain the boundaries between personal/family space and public space and associated communication styles. They will be able to describe childrearing practices and the socially proscribed life cycle and to contrast it with their own cultural practices/beliefs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Advanced (Level Three)

The table below presents a quick summary of what students should be able to do upon completing the third year of study in the African Language Program at Boston University.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit of Mastery</th>
<th>Paragaphs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>In each of the following Communication Modes, students will be able to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal:</td>
<td>maintain conversations on a range of social, academic, and work-related topics, with a significant level of detail and organization, and sharing of points of view;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretive:</td>
<td>identify the theme, main ideas and supporting details in paragraph length texts of varying complexity; identify how the piece—be it written, audio or video—is structured, and to discuss the theme and the issues it raises, as well as their own opinions.;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentational:</td>
<td>Communicate information and express themselves in an organized and detailed manner on familiar and some new topics using full paragraphs or the equivalent thereof in oral presentations or other media.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensibility</td>
<td>The advanced learner can generally be understood—with some minimal effort—by native speakers, even those who are not accustomed to the speech/writing of non-native speakers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mastery of Writing System</td>
<td>If learning another writing system, students will be able to recognize and write each of the letters/characters and diacritics (if any) in the writing system and will be familiar with common variants. They will be able to decipher as well as write paragraph length texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context/ the Language Community</td>
<td>In terms of context, students will have become well-versed on the language community or communities and familiar with their culture and history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Competency</td>
<td>In terms of cultural competency as reflected in both verbal and non-verbal behaviors, students will be aware of and (most of the time) able to act appropriately vis-à-vis a limited range of interlocutors (children, elders, and peers). Students will be able to describe key cultural values and how those compare and contrast with the students’ own cultures.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Superior: Level Four

The table below presents a quick summary of what students should be able to do upon completing the fourth year of study in the African Language Program at Boston University.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit of Mastery</th>
<th>Chapter length discourse (series of related paragraphs that form a coherent whole)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>In each of the following Communication Modes, students will be able to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Interpersonal</em>: engage in extended conversation on a range of concrete as well as abstract topics, employ a significant level of detail and organization, share and support points of view, and deal gracefully with unexpected developments;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Interpretive</em>: identify main ideas, supporting details and organizational structure and the development of arguments in more complex texts dealing with abstract topics;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Presentational</em>: Communicate information and express themselves in an organized and detailed manner on familiar and some new topics using full paragraphs or the equivalent thereof in oral presentations or other media.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensibility</td>
<td>While unlikely to be mistaken for native speakers, students at the superior level can be readily understood by native speakers who are not accustomed to interacting with non-native speakers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mastery of Writing System</td>
<td>If learning another writing system, students will be able to recognize and write each of the letters/characters and diacritics (if any) in the writing system, as well as to recognize a range of variants. They will be able to decipher as well as write chapter length texts, i.e., a series of related paragraphs that form a coherent whole.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context/ the Language Community</td>
<td>Courses in the fourth year tend to be content courses, that is, courses on a particular subject, taught in the target language. Students will have become experts on the language community or communities, familiar with their history and conversant with current events of importance to them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>