

# Engaging students utilizing oral proficiency strategies and interviews

Assessment Symposium Presentation  
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The Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) is the main element in the standardized assessment of speaking in a language. This tool was developed by ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages). Their website describes the guidelines used for such assessment.

[http://www.actfl.org/files/public/ACTFLProficiencyGuidelines2012\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.actfl.org/files/public/ACTFLProficiencyGuidelines2012_FINAL.pdf)

The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines are descriptions of what individuals can do with language in terms of speaking, writing, listening, and reading in real world situations in a spontaneous and non rehearsed context. For

The Guidelines describe the tasks that speakers can handle at each level, as well as the content, context, accuracy, and discourse types associated with tasks at each level. They also present the limits that speakers encounter when attempting to function at the next higher major level.

The levels of proficiency are seen as ranges, and describe what an individual can and cannot do with language at each level, regardless of where, when, or how the language was acquired. Together these levels form a hierarchy in which each level subsumes all lower levels.

# Deciding the level

## Superior qualities

- Can defend opinions
- Can support hypotheses
- Speaks in extended discourse
- Errors do not interfere with communication
- No pattern of errors

## Advanced qualities

- Can describe
- Narrate in all major tenses
- Compare and contrast
- Speak concretely about autobiography, topics of community, national, or international interest
- Handle a complication
- Understood by native speakers unaccustomed to non native speakers
- Speak in paragraphs

# Deciding the level

## Advanced

- Describe
- Narrate in all major tenses
- Compare and contrast
- Speak concretely about autobiography, topics of community, national, or international interest
- Handle a complication
- Understood by native speakers unaccustomed to non native speakers
- Speak in paragraphs

## Intermediate

- Create with the language when talking about familiar topics related to their daily life.
- Ask simple

# Deciding the level

## Intermediate

- Create with the language when talking about familiar topics related to their daily life.
- Speak about self, family, home,





# Uses in MCLL

The full time faculty took the ACTFL OPI training in 2005, thanks to assessment funds from Academic Affairs and LAS. This was a 4 day intensive training combining theory with practice—carrying out actual interviews that were observed and assessed by the trainer and trainees.

Uses

# Uses in MCLL

Fulltime faculty trains TAs and lecturers about appropriate levels and expectations for beginning students. A debate—an advanced superior level activity—would not be useful. In fact, it would frustrate students. Similarly, having a 210 student tell the Spanish equivalent of an English word without context is equally useless—a beginning novice activity for one who should be near intermediate by end of semester.

# Uses in MCLL

The desire to help students achieve those levels of proficiency resulted in 1) a revamping of the curriculum—now two 3 hr courses in Spanish rather than three 2 hr courses— and 2) changes in the way we teach the conversation classes.

I will give you some examples of how the ACTFL levels have affected my courses.

## SPANISH 525 Major Topics:

The development of communication skills listening and speaking and improvement of speaking proficiency. The major topics to be covered in the course include, but are not limited to:

1. *Real life* situations in the form of cultural dialogues, *role playing*, cultural readings, and the required vocabulary to communicate successfully in the target language.
2. Improvement of pronunciation.
3. Listening comprehension and interpretation.
4. Fluency and cultural competency.
5. Increase and improve vocabulary specific to situations presented in the book.
6. Facilitate the use of certain linguistic functions in spoken Spanish.



# Grading of final interview

60 points	Student has improved one or more steps at end	3/8 Pat





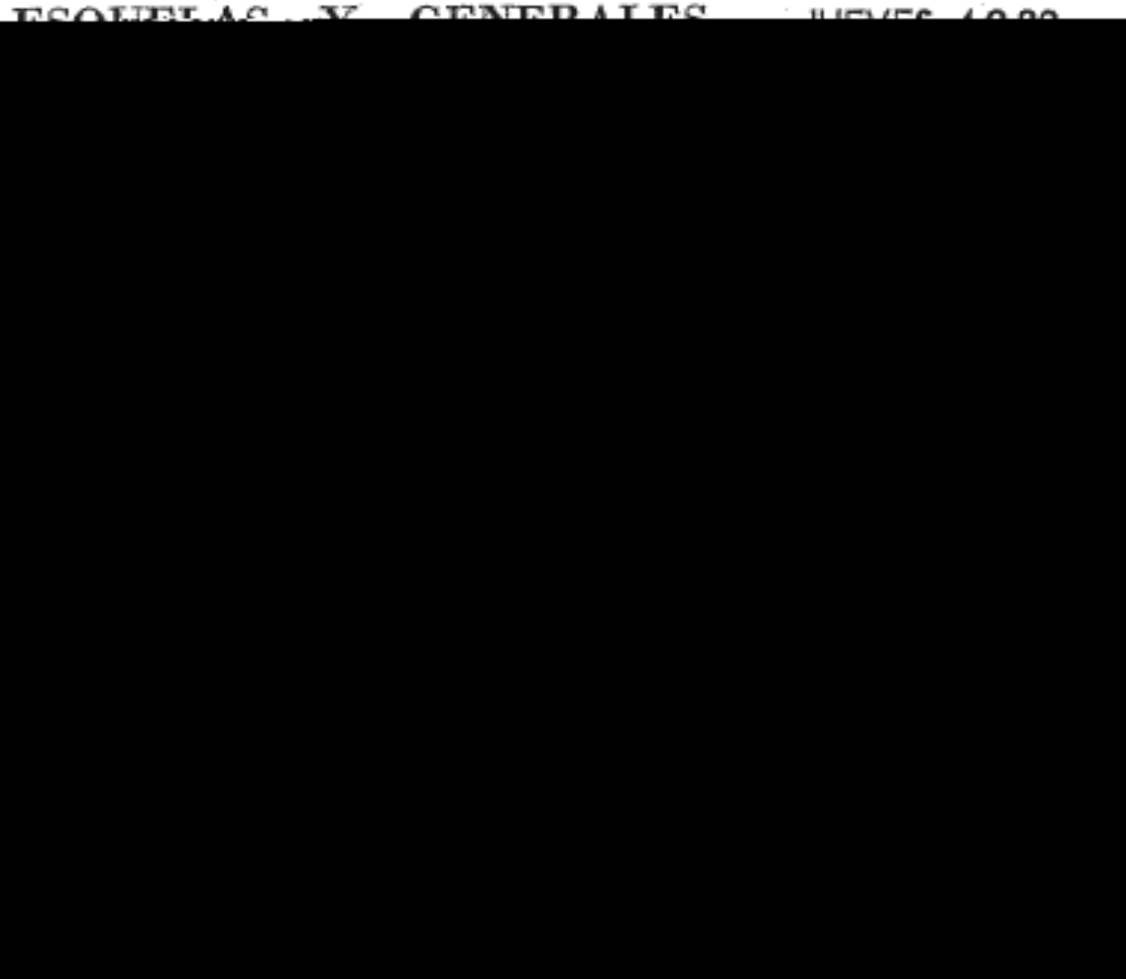
KEY: **Green** = intermediate level; **Red** = advanced; **Purple** = superior & distinguished

7 Oct.	News items about the Spanish-speaking world from the internet (an article written in Spanish from a newspaper/magazine published in a Spanish-speaking country); 1-2 minute summary reports 10 points: You will state the news <i>in your own words</i> and turn in your printed version.
10 Oct.	Day to <b>Green</b> speak about your interests/hobbies
12 Oct.	Food vocab ( <i>Portafolio</i> 130-31) + On web: meats 13, fruits 39, vegetables 47 + <b>Green</b> practice with authentic menus
14 Oct.	<b>Red</b> Practice using situation cards, including spontaneous skits ALL LEVELS

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# Conclusion

Assessment can inform curriculum and courses. It can positively influence how faculty teach and students learn. My Spanish 525 hardly