**No. 14**


**Towards Common Goals in Foreign Language
Teaching and Learning: A Proposed Framework
Syllabus for the CLS**


**Teaching Development Committee**

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*Abstract*

Due to the need for a common orientation and direction in the teaching of foreign languages in the Centre for Language Studies, a committee comprising experienced teaching staff within the centre was set up. Its main objective was to discuss and propose a general framework syllabus which could serve as a basic reference document for language teachers for their teaching.

This framework syllabus is drawn up to provide guidelines for the design of syllabi and the development of curricula in the various language programmes in the CLS, and for teachers in planning and conducting lessons. It is also intended to inform readers of the approach which the Centre has chosen to realize its pedagogical objectives.

**History and Background**

The framework syllabus is a document written by members of the Teaching Development Committee (January 2003-January 2005) for the Centre for Language Studies (CLS). Since its formation by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) in July 2001, the Centre has operated as a Faculty Centre to serve three Divisions of the Faculty namely the Asian Studies, Humanities and Social Sciences. It has developed into a sizeable language teaching centre within the Faculty of Arts and Social Science and the university.

Currently, the centre has a total strength of approximately 34 full-time academic staff and 69 part-time staff teaching nine languages and an estimated sixty modules. These modules are offered to undergraduates from various faculties in the NUS. Many of the centre staff were language teachers in

various area studies department and were brought together with the formation of CLS.

Foreign language learning has become an important component of the university's broad-based education with the establishment of CLS. By offering to do a third language or a foreign language at the CLS, NUS undergraduates will be able to equip themselves with skills that will give them the competitive edge to participate in a globalized economy where the use of languages other than English is in high demand. Language skills acquired in the university will be an added asset for our undergraduates as this will mean more economic opportunities for them in this region and beyond.

Having this in mind, the centre feels strongly about the need for its teaching staff to work toward common goals of foreign language teaching and learning. To consolidate its effort to promote and improve the teaching and learning of languages, the CLS Teaching Development Committee (TDC) took on the task of preparing a framework syllabus .

## 2 Teaching Development Committee

Due to the need for a common orientation and direction in the teaching of foreign language in the Centre for Language Studies, a committee comprising of experienced teaching staff within the centre, was set up. Its main objective was to discuss and propose a general framework syllabus which could serve as a basic reference document for language teachers for their teaching.

The committee has taken into account common practices within the nine different language programmes to formulate the content of the framework syllabus. The Committee was aware that the different language programmes have their own niche areas and priorities. Hence the guide is meant only as a basis for future development of individual language programme and to orientate all centres' language programmes towards a certain direction based on a common philosophy of teaching and learning.

## 3 Content and Structure of Framework Syllabus

The Framework Syllabus contains two main sections. Section I highlights the teaching philosophy of the centre. Essentially, the philosophy reflects the belief that language learning is for effective communication. Another cornerstone of the Centre's teaching philosophy is based on the belief in the agency of the learner. Learning is an active process undertaken by learners, and the curriculum is shaped to provide opportunities for the active creation and acquisition of knowledge by the learners.

Section II outlines the Framework Syllabus. The Framework Syllabus contains the main objectives of the centre's language programmes. The objectives are to develop communicative competence (Canale & Swain 1980), cultural awareness, independent learning and social competence.

Within the Framework Syllabus, the teaching methodology section provides in greater detail the basic principles for further development of language syllabi giving emphasis to opportunities for students to engage in authentic and meaningful communication. The content section is included to provide an overview of some of the areas of language learning that would support these objectives including a section on grammar, communicative functions and notions, topics and themes.

A broad outline of themes and topics covered by all nine languages has been drawn up to help language teachers develop the necessary skills to move learners from one stage to another. Although it must be noted here, that language programmes may emphasize different aspects of the target language, depending on the requirement of their individual programmes.

A list of communicative functions and general notions is included to help foreign language teachers develop individually their own classroom teaching tasks. These general topics and themes are included to guide teachers towards building up new learners' language skills namely in listening, speaking, reading and writing.

An important aspect in foreign language learning which is also included under content is in the area of learning strategies. Learning strategies are "the thought and actions that individuals use to accomplish a learning goal." (Chamot, 2004: 14) These learning strategies are categorized as follows:

- � Metacognitive strategies
- � Cognitive strategies
- � Memory strategies
- � Communicative Strategies
- � Affective Strategies
- � Social Strategies

In our effort to allow learners to be agents of their own learning we recognize that the teaching of strategies allow the learner to have "metacognitive knowledge about their own thinking and learning approaches." (Chamot, 2004:14)

These strategies are explained further in the framework syllabus and are considered important

components of foreign language learning as learners use some or more of these strategies to become effective language learners.

The Content Section of the Framework Syllabus also includes grammar. Through the teaching of grammar and by understanding the structure of the target language, the students will be able to communicate accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately. Thus grammar is not just taught as a system of structurally related elements of the language per se but also for the meaningful transmission of language form, meaning and use.

The last section included in the Framework Syllabus is assessment. This section gives an overview of how assessment is carried out to assess and measure learners' achievement and progress.

## 4 Theoretical and methodological basis

A syllabus seeks to "describe the major elements that will be used in planning a language course and provides the basis for its instructional focus and content" (Richards 2001: 152). This framework syllabus thus seeks to outline important aspects of teaching, to direct and guide future refinement of specific syllabi depending on the requirements of the nine different language groups. Since there are nine language programmes in the centre, language convenors and other colleagues are responsible for the development of their own detailed language programmes.

In general, what underlies the nine language programmes in the centre is the belief that a language can be acquired most effectively through communication. A communicative-based approach in language learning summarizes the focus of our language programmes. The committee has selected this approach after considering the following factors:

## 4.1 Undergraduates, the learners

The framework has to take into account the undergraduate as the learner who is acquiring the language from the beginners' level. The undergraduate generally enters the language learning process as a beginner with no background in the target language (those with some background are admitted to the higher levels of the centre's language programmes through placement tests). Our framework syllabus outlines the course of study from the beginners' level.

With this in mind, we aim to develop students' ability to self-direct their own language learning beyond the classroom. Hence we had to take into consideration:

   a.  the students' needs with reference to their developmental, cognitive, social and affective needs, including, where appropriate, special requirements like preparation for an exchange programme, a field trip or research in target language

   b.  the students' level of entry

   c.   different motivations and expectations

   d.  the need for limited use of English as a bridging measure while learning the target language

   e.  the different learning styles and preferences acquired through their experience

## 4.2 Target culture

The language teacher has to be aware that the target culture forms part of a target language. As such our programme also incorporates activities which provide opportunities for our students to enrich their language. Through immersion and exchange programmes, study groups, tours and interaction with the communities of the target language, students are exposed to the language use in context. Teachers are aware of the benefits of the need for students to be exposed through the use of authentic materials. The teachers' main role are that of facilitators of learning in line with the philosophy of learning.

## 5 Teaching Methodology

Language teachers are constantly in search for effective teaching strategies. The strategies take into account the time constraint, the teaching input, the selected materials, the students' aptitude and other physical constrains like materials and environment to support learning. In line with the belief that language is learnt through communication and that the leaner is in control of his own learning, these principles are essential in the everyday applications to ground their classroom practices. The methodology is based on the following principles:

- &#9670; Task-based Learning
- &#9670; Learner-centredness
- &#9670; Culture based Learning
- &#9670; Project based Learning
- &#9670; Cooperative Learning
- &#9670; Integrative Learning
- &#9670; Authentic

These principles are reflected through our teaching approaches in our attempt to engage our undergraduates. These principles are discussed further in the framework syllabus (see Appendix 1).

**Assessment**

Assessment at the NUS consists of both continuous assessment component (e.g. projects, academic exercise, term tests, essays, tutorial participation) and the final examination with the ratio between them varying from course to course .  Bearing in mind the nature of language courses offered in the center, there is a wide range of assessment instruments applied at all levels of our language courses. In recent years, there has been a move towards a less summative assessment with the introduction of 100% continual assessment in many of the centre's courses.

The purpose of assessment in our language modules is to measure students' course performance in terms of their achievement and proficiencies.  Assessment is also necessary for students to self evaluate and adjust their own learning. Both summative and formative assessments instruments are used at various stages of language learning to allow language teachers to determine the level of language acquired by the students.

Attached is the Syllabus Framework.

References:

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5        O'Malley, J. Michael and Anna Uhl Chamot. 1990. *Learning Strategies in Second Language Acquisition. Cambridge*: Cambridge University Press. 227pp.
6        Richards, Jack C. (2001) *Curriculum Development in Language Teaching*, USA: Cambridge University Press.

# Appendix 1

**NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE**

**FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**CENTRE FOR LANGUAGE STUDIES**

# FRAMEWORK SYLLABUS

Prepared by:

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## INTRODUCTION

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## SYLLABUS

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       4.2 Cultural Awareness

       4.3 Independent Learning

       4.4 Social Competence

5 Methodology

**INTRODUCTION**


**The Centre for Language Studies in the Educational Context
of the NUS**


The Centre for Language Studies (CLS) was established in the

Faculty of Arts and Social Science (FASS) in 2001 to teach language courses not only to students of the three divisions in the Faculty, i.e. Asian Studies, Humanities and Social Sciences, but also to interested students from other faculties in the university. The languages currently taught are Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Japanese, Malay, Tamil, Thai and Vietnamese.

This framework syllabus is drawn up to provide guidelines for the design of syllabi and development of curricula in the various language sections and modules in the CLS, and for teachers in planning and conducting lessons. It is also intended to inform readers of the approach which the Centre has chosen to realize our pedagogical objectives.

The foreign language programme at the CLS forms an integral part of the National University of Singapore's (NUS) broad-based academic curriculum. Hence in line with the university's aspiration for a broad-based education and dynamic learning environment, the CLS provides opportunities for our students to excel in the study of foreign languages.

The programme will help prepare our graduates develop a cross-cultural outlook to operate in a global economy. The study of a foreign language will equip students with the necessary skills to interact with people of different cultures and languages. The programme aims to provide both undergraduate and postgraduate students with opportunities to acquire an optimal level of proficiency for academic and career-related purposes. The modules offered support research and the acquisition of knowledge beyond the English-speaking domains. The programme also encourages and guides students to engage in independent learning, which will in turn support the University's objective of promoting lifelong learning.

**2 Teaching Philosophy**

The purpose of language learning is to enable learners to communicate effectively in the target language. Learning for communication is one cornerstone of the Centre's teaching philosophy. Students are guided to acquire and create knowledge in the process of language learning. This knowledge entails not just declarative knowledge, or knowledge about the language, but also procedural knowledge, or knowledge for using the language.

Another cornerstone is the belief in the agency of the learner. Learning is an active process undertaken by learners, and the curriculum is shaped to provide opportunities for the active creation and acquisition of knowledge. It has been developed in view of the learners' needs, interests, language proficiency and existing knowledge. The language programme is to provide insights into the target cultures, with the aim of developing greater cultural awareness and sensitivity.

## 3 Target Groups

The CLS offers language courses to both undergraduate and postgraduate students. The main target group comprises undergraduate students of area studies in FASS. Currently, the area studies subjects supported by the CLS are European Studies, Japanese Studies, Malay Studies, South Asian Studies, and Southeast Asian Studies. Undergraduates of the NUS can read foreign language modules to fulfil their Faculty or University requirements. It also supports the language preparation of students going on exchange to non-English speaking countries under the University's Student Exchange Programme (SEP). Postgraduate students can also pursue the study of a language relevant to their respective areas of study to satisfy their academic interests or needs.

**FRAMEWORK SYLLABUS**

## 4        Overall Objectives

The foreign language programme of the CLS pursues the following objectives:

- ◆ Communicative Competence
- ◆ Cultural Awareness
- ◆ Independent Learning
- ◆ Social Competence

## 4.1 Communicative Competence (Canale,M.& Swain,M: 1980)

Communicative competence refers to the capacity to communicate in the target language

i.e. in listening, speaking, reading and writing, in authentic

situations. Communicative competence comprises the following

four sub-competencies:

4.1.1. Grammatical competence: Knowledge of formal aspects of language, such as phonetics, syntax, morphology, orthography and vocabulary, and ability to apply this knowledge in interactions.

4.1.2. Discourse competence: Knowledge and ability to build up sentences to larger units of text; such texts are conversations or narratives in listening and speaking, and paragraphs or essays in reading and writing.

4.1.3. Socio-cultural competence: Knowledge of society and culture entails the use of the language appropriately and meaningfully in the socio-cultural context, as well as skills to adjust one's language within the scope of particular topics, situations and pattern of interaction.

4.1.4. Strategic competence: Verbal and non-verbal communication strategies to compensate for breakdowns in communications and to maintain

discourse.

## 4.2 Cultural Awareness

Learning a language requires learning a complex set of behaviours, determined by the culture and conventions of the target language community. Students need to get a sense of how native speakers view themselves, such as how they live, how they think, what they value and what they do. Our objective is to develop such cultural awareness. This is essential for interaction with the international community, as it promotes a deeper understanding of different ways of life, values, thoughts, expectations, fears and problems. Such cultural awareness also leads to greater and a more differentiated reflection of one's own culture and values.

## 4.3 Independent Learning

Since learning a language is a process that is not exclusive to formal education, our objective is beyond just teaching the language. We aim to develop students' ability to self-direct their own learning beyond the classroom. To achieve this, students should be made aware of and exposed to various language learning strategies (refer to section 6.4 Learning to Learn). They should gradually assume responsibility for their own learning. As independent learners, they can plan, monitor and evaluate their own learning, and actively construct knowledge and skills which they can transfer to other domains.

## 4.4 Social Competence

It is important to develop social interaction skills such as how to collaborate, discuss, and negotiate with others. This is essential not only for life as students but also life as professionals and members of society. In addition, this entails raising learners' awareness to socio-cultural sensitivities. This objective is

consistent with communicative language teaching which aims to enable learners to use language appropriately in a social context and in a culturally meaningful way. Such social competence can be exercised and fostered in pair or group work through peer interaction. Learning a language will create a mutual support system as well as help to develop a sense of community in and outside class.

## 5 Methodology

It is essential for foreign language students to learn by communicating in the target language.  The main focus of our teaching methodology is to provide opportunities for students to engage in authentic and meaningful communication. Students play an active role in the learning process. Though there may be variations in the methodology adopted depending on the target language, the goals of the different language courses and the target groups, the following principles will largely apply to the way the courses are organized and conducted:

### 5.1   Learner-centredness

Learner-centredness assumes the agency of the learner in learning.  The curriculum is designed and organized according to the characteristics of the students, including especially their needs, interests and learning preferences.   It also entails the active involvement of the students in the learning process.  The teacher is the facilitator providing opportunities, guidance, assistance, and resources for learning.

### 5.2 Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning provides the opportunity to share and negotiate the construction of meaningful knowledge. Where appropriate, teachers should provide opportunities for pair and group work in the classrooms as well as opportunities for

interaction with other learners and target language communities. Such interactions include project work, online discussions and meetings, and tandem learning arrangements.

## 5.3 Authenticity

Through authentic materials and sources, students are exposed to and experience the kind of context and type of language they would encounter in the countries where the target language is spoken. This exposure will enhance students' ability to communicate in the real world as well as their interest and motivation in learning the target language.

## 5.4 Integrative Learning

Learning a language entails developing listening, speaking, reading, writing skills and the acquisition of grammar and vocabulary. The language curriculum seeks to integrate the learning of all these skills and language aspects as language acquisition and production are dependent on appropriate target language input. Authentic listening and reading materials usually form the basis of speaking and writing tasks. Similarly the acquisition of grammar and vocabulary usually precedes the production of language.

## 5.5 Culture-based Learning

The language modules of the CLS promote the exploration of the culture of the target language. This helps to develop sociolinguistic competence and equips students with necessary skills and knowledge to communicate appropriately in a wide range of situations.

An intercultural principle is applied allowing students to reflect on and develop a greater awareness of their own culture. Ultimately, in discovering the foreign culture, they learn to be

sensitive to and respectful of the differences between their own and other cultures.

## 5.6 Task-based learning

Task-based learning enables learners to engage in meaningful activities that require them to draw on different communicative competence areas and language skills. Tasks require learners to negotiate, mediate, and express ideas and intentions in order to achieve communicative goals. Through role plays, project work, pair work or small group discussions, and meaningful and authentic communicative activities, students are prepared to communicate effectively in real life situations.

## 5.7 Project-based Learning

Project-based learning promotes active and meaningful student engagement with language and content. Project work gives students greater responsibility for their own learning and will stimulate higher-order thinking skills. Incorporating project work into the curriculum creates an environment of inquiry involving authentic communication, cooperative learning and problem solving.

## 6 Curricular Contents

The contents of the language modules in the CLS are organized mainly around communicative functions, general notions, and themes which address the needs and interests of students as well as its general objectives, as stated in this syllabus. This is consistent with the methodological principles of task-based learning and learnercentredness.

Grammar is taught not as an end by itself but mainly as a means towards achieving communicative competence. The grammar

topics and structures included in this syllabus enable students to perform the communicative tasks specified in the individual modules' curricula. These structures should always contextualized, i.e. embedded in specific authentic contexts and situations which will allow learners to see their pragmatic functions and apply them effectively in communication.

## 6.1 Communicative Functions/General Notions

In the following are examples of important functions and notions included in the curricula of the language modules of the CLS:

### 6.1.1 Common Communicative Functions

� Socialising: Greeting, introducing, leave-taking, expressing wishes, thanking, using different modes of address

� Exchanging information: Describing one's families, hobbies, likes and dislikes; comparing, narrating personal experiences

� Expressing attitudes: expressing approval, interest, and surprise; making an apology, complaint

� Getting things done: offering, requesting, suggesting, refusing, negotiating, making arrangements.

� Maintaining communication: writing letters, conversing over the telephone, attracting attention, seeking confirmation

### 6.1.2 General Notions

� People, places, things, actions/events, ideas, presence/absence

� Characteristics: qualities, physical appearance, colors.

� Time: Clock time, dates, points in time, duration

� Quantity: numbers, measurements

� Space: location, distance

## 6.2 Addressing the needs of students: Topics and Themes

The following themes and topics are generally found in language teaching.  The list below is meant to provide examples and is by no means exhaustive:

| Theme | Communicative Tasks | Communicative Functions |
|---|---|---|
| **Self** | People, events, places, numbers | -Greeting -Introducing oneself -Introducing one another -Leave-taking -Thanking -Using different modes of address (formal and informal) -Giving personal information: age, address, telephone number |
| **Daily Routine** | Clock times, times of day, commencement, termination, continuation, sequence, duration, frequency | -Asking for and giving information about one's daily routine |
| **Family and Friends** | People, relationship, presence, absence, qualities, physical appearance. | -Describing one's family -Describing the physical appearance and qualities |
| **Food and Drink** | Taste, smell, colour, measurement, preference, consistency | -Discussing choices -Choosing a meal from the menu -Talking about preferences - Ordering food |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **University and Campus Life** | People, places, actions, events, time: points in time, present time, past time, future time | -Talking about studies, subjects, daily activities at school, time table -Finding information about each other -Socialising |
| **Modes of Transportation** | Space, location, movement, duration, distance, comparison | -Asking for directions -Asking how one goes to school, how far and how long for each mode of transport -Asking for and giving information about the different kinds of transport -Asking of and informing for schedules |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Travel and Excursions** | Place, location, qualities, comparison, time, day, date | -Discussing the favourite places to go on holidays, the reasons for the preferences -Comparing cities, countries -Collecting information from travel agencies, asking for advice -Making travel plans -Recounting travel experience |
| **Buying** | Shopping for groceries, bargaining, events, places, numbers, people, qualities, physical appearances, currency | -Going shopping -Buying groceries -Bargaining -Purchasing items -Making payment -Talking about quality of goods |
| **Health & Illness** | Body parts, events, people, symptoms, measurements | -Expressing feelings -Making appointments -Describing state of body & mind -Conversations at doctors & pharmacies -Asking about well-being -Giving health advice |
| **Learning a Foreign Language** | Vowels, sounds, words, sentences, strategies for language learning | -Making gestures -Asking about cultural practices -Different speech styles -Conversation about cultural practices -Comparing language learning strategies - |
| **History** | History of culture Customs and Traditions | -Asking and understanding different cultural gestures -Asking about cultural practices -Making conversations about cultural practices -Explaining cultural history and practices -Comparing cultures and practices -Understanding cultural practices |

Specific art and craft of the

**Art and**

-Following instructions

target culture

**Culture**

-Making conversation about artifacts Types of Art
-Making references to a particular craft Features of
Popular culture

-Showing
preference for a particular Architecture

c

raft
Clothes

-
Understandi
ng popular
culture
-Making
comparisons

## 6.3 Grammar

The structural view of language is that language is a system of structurally related elements for the transmission of meaning. These elements are usually described as

◆ phonological units (phonemes)

◆ grammatical units (phrases, clauses, sentences)

◆ grammatical operations (adding, shifting, joining or transforming elements)

◆ lexical items (function words and structure words)

However depending on the nature of the language, the following represent some elements of grammar structures or a selection thereof that may be included in the individual language curricula:

◆ Sentence structure:

Basic word order
Single/multiple clause sentences
Main clauses and sub-clauses
Conjunctions for text cohesion
Sentence complements
Affirmative and negative forms

◆ Nouns

Gender
Grammatical case

◆ Articles

Definite
Indefinite

◆ Pronouns

Interrogative
Personal
Indefinite
Demonstrative
Reflexive

Possessive

◆ Adjectives

Comparison
Declension
Degree

◆ Adverbs

◆ Prepositions

◆ Verbs

Verb groups
Conjugations
Declension
Tense
Mood
Mode
Auxiliaries
Voice: Active & Passive

◆ Numbers

Ordinal and cardinal numbers
Counters

◆ Classifiers

◆ Particles

politeness
confirming & reconfirming • ordering
questions
passive
subject & object

◆ Word Formation

Word composition
Prefixes & Suffixes

◆ Speech Styles

## 6.4 Learning to Learn

Besides learning communicative functions and grammar in various topics, our goal is also to:

◆ raise learners' awareness of the strategies they may already possess

◆ encourage them to use strategies they already know in an appropriate manner

◆ facilitate the acquisition of new strategies for learning and communication

◆ guide them to reflect on and evaluate their own

strategy use

Some language learning strategies include:

### 6.4.1 Metacognitive Strategies

Metacognitive strategies are strategies for regulating and directing learning. Within the language learning context, these strategies will allow the learner to make informed choices, to plan, monitor and evaluate any learning process effectively. Metacognitive strategies also help the learner build on their metacognitive knowledge such as knowledge about individual learning styles and preferences, different strategies and the nature and demands of different learning tasks. Examples of metacognitive strategies are over viewing task demands and linking with previous knowledge, setting goals and objectives, planning for a language task, self-monitoring, and self-evaluation.

### 6.4.2 Cognitive strategies

Cognitive strategies are varied but share the common objective of allowing learners to manipulate or restructure language items and tasks. These strategies facilitate the processing of language tasks and enhance the effectiveness of their communication and learning. Such strategies include highlighting and marking items in a text, analysing words and expressions, linguistic transfer from first language to target language, repeating, and using learning aids.

### 6.4.3 Memory strategies

Memory strategies aid the storage and retrieval of (new) linguistic knowledge. They are important tools for language learning as they help learners remember and recall vocabulary items, and grammar rules and structures. Examples include grouping, using visual aids, semantic mapping, and periodic and structured reviewing.

### 6.4.4　Communicative strategies

Communicative strategies (sometimes called compensation strategies) aim to support the learners' efforts to communicate effectively in the target language. These strategies can be observed easily in good communicators of a foreign language. They often rely on strategies such as using international words or facial expressions and gestures to communicate, paraphrasing, and using contextual clues for comprehension.

### 6.4.5　Affective Strategies

Since language learning is a long and sometimes difficult process, emotional aspects need to be addressed as well. Anxiety, frustration, fear of failure and the pressure of grades can act as mental and emotional blocks impeding progress and preventing any positive feelings of success. Affective strategies enable the learner to correct and counter such negative affects.  The use of such strategies can help build confidence in oneself and promote greater interest and a positive motivation towards the target language and the learning process. Ultimately, affective strategies can help to create or maintain positive attitudes and to change negative attitudes over time.  This can be achieved through strategies such as learning to relax, making encouraging statements, and discussing one's feelings

### 6.4.6 Social strategies

Social strategies involve exercising interpersonal and interaction skills to enhance the learning process and create opportunities for communication. They facilitate the organisation of cooperative learning arrangements such as group work or pair work as well as the establishment of contact with native speakers or advanced speakers of the target language. They can thus contribute to the ability to communicate, negotiate and work with others. They can serve as affective strategies as well as they provide opportunities for discussing anxieties and learning problems and soliciting help from others, including teachers and peers.

# 7 Assessment

## 7.1 Role of Assessment

Language modules offered by the CLS cater mostly to undergraduate students from all faculties seeking to fulfill graduation requirements. FASS students are given an alphabetical grade (A to D/F). Students from other faculties may choose to be awarded an alphabetical grade (A to D/F) or an S/U (satisfactory/unsatisfactory) grade. Individual learners' module performance is determined by assessing a variety of skills and competencies using appropriate formative and summative assessment tools.

## 7.2 Purposes of Assessment

### 7.2.1 For Students

Through regular periodic formal assessment, students can obtain a measure of their individual progress in relation to the course syllabus and in comparison with their peers. In addition, students should be enabled and encouraged to carry out regular self-evaluation which will help them become more aware of their own learning processes and outcomes.

### 7.2.2  For Teaching Staff

Assessment allows teachers to monitor and determine individual students' progress, achievements and proficiency levels. It will also provide them with indicators for the continued planning and execution of the courses as well as opportunities for critical reflection of their teaching practices and for necessary adjustments to the curriculum.

### 7.2.3 For the Institution

Assessment provides the basis for the institution to measure and compare students' performance and rank them in a normative manner for the award of grades.

## 7.3 Forms of Assessment

Assessment can be both, formative and summative, formal and informal. Formative assessment measures learners' mastery of certain topics, knowledge or skills covered in the syllabus. The continuous assessment (CA) of students through a variety of instruments throughout the semester lends itself to formative assessment. Summative assessment, usually carried out through extended tests or

semester examinations, allows one to determine students' overall competence and performance in comparison with their peers. The relative weight of CA and the semester examination can vary from course to course, depending on the specific curricula of the courses. French and German modules at the elementary and intermediate levels are currently assessed entirely through CA (100% CA).

Assessment is formal when it results in a mark which is used to assess and grade students. Both continuous assessment and examination tools like written or oral tests, composition and other homework assignments, project work as well as semester examinations can be utilized to formally assess students. Informal assessment can play an important role in evaluating students' language development. Some possible means of informal assessment are teachers' observations of students' attendance, performance, involvement and motivation, discussions with individual students or groups of students, forum discussions, and students' self-evaluation.

## 7.4 Principles of Assessment

Where assessment is designed by teachers, it is based on the following principles:

### 7.4.1 Validity

An assessment test is said to be valid if its task demands match the assessment objectives. For example, to test students' ability to understand the gist of a reading text, teachers should pick an appropriate text and design tasks that require no more than a general understanding of the text.

### 7.4.2 Reliability

The principle of reliability requires that assessment tests accurately measure the students' competence in

the topic/communicative task (e.g. talking about one's family) or skill (listening, speaking etc.) to be tested. Assessment tools should have a high differentiated value and the results should accurately reflect students' competence.

### 7.4.3 Objectivity

Objectivity is ensured when the same set of assessment and grading criteria is applied to all students and if students are provided with the same materials and conditions for the assessment tasks.

## 7.5   Tools of Assessment

The tools of assessment used for both formative and summative assessment frequently mirror the exercise and task types performed by students in classroom and independent learning. The following table is not meant to be exhaustive but provides instead some examples of assessment tools, classified into three broad categories: limited response tasks, structured response tasks and free response tasks. It is important to note that these task types can occur together in one single test.

| Task types | Examples |
|---|---|
| **Limited Response Tasks** | Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs) Matching Tasks Jumbled Sentences (word order) True/False Tasks |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Structured Response Tasks** | Gapfill Tasks/Cloze Passages Short Answer Tasks Sentence Formation Transformation (of Phrases/Sentences) Guided Writing Completion of Dialogues/Texts Guided Conversation/Dialogues |
| **Free Response Tasks** | Dialogue Writing Composition Writing Letter Writing Summary Writing Free Conversation/Dialogue Role Play Reporting Dicto-glos* |

*\* Dicto-glos refers to a listening exercise which requires students to rewrite in prose what they have heard.*

## 7.6    Project Work

Project work is also a tool of assessment which involves students more deeply and promotes independent learning. It helps students acquire and develop a greater degree of responsibility for their learning as well as skills for lifelong learning. The assessment will take into account how:

� students control their pace, the place, the time of learning and the learning approaches used in their projects.

� research skills, metacognitive skills as well as presentation skills are applied both orally and in written form.

� students takes learning beyond the formal classroom and employ additional resources found in libraries, databases and the Internet.

� make use of collaborative learning and develop negotiation and social interaction skills.

-end-

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