

Setting Proficiency Targets and Planning to Reach Them

A 5-part video series for the
South Carolina Department of Education

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Video 1

- What does “proficiency” mean?
- What role does motivation play in proficiency development?
- What are the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines and how can I use them?
- What does it mean to be a Novice speaker?

Video 2

- What does it mean to be an Intermediate speaker?
- What are the implications for teaching?

Each video will contain “can do” statements that are intended to focus learning and that, hopefully, you will be able to utter as the video concludes.

At the end of Video Two, I can ...

- tell someone the different levels of proficiency
- better recognize different proficiency levels when I see them
- describe what a Novice speaker can do
- describe what an Intermediate speaker can do
- use the ACTFL website to facilitate my own understanding about proficiency

Schools and districts that are really moving forward in foreign language education . . .

1. Setting proficiency targets
2. Designing instructional pathways to reach those targets
3. Testing (internally and externally) to see if they are hitting them

What we are getting in proficiency from secondary and college students after . . .

	<i>old data *</i> (N=7500, ca. 1999)	<i>new data *</i> (N=22,000, 2008)
<i>Level 1 ?</i>	<i>NL</i>	<i>NH</i>
<i>Level 2 ?</i>	<i>NM</i>	<i>NH</i>
<i>Level 3 ?</i>	<i>NH</i>	<i>NH</i>
<i>Level 4 ?</i>	<i>IL</i>	<i>NH / IL</i>

** data gathered by
using the
STAMP Test*

www.avantassessment.com

What we are getting in proficiency from secondary and college students after . . .

	<i>old data *</i> (N=7500, ca. 1999)	<i>new data *</i> (N=22,000, 2008)	<i>possible target</i>
<i>Level 1 ?</i>	<i>NL</i>	<i>NH</i>	<i>NH</i>
<i>Level 2 ?</i>	<i>NM</i>	<i>NH</i>	<i>IL</i>
<i>Level 3 ?</i>	<i>NH</i>	<i>NH</i>	<i>IM</i>
<i>Level 4 ?</i>	<i>IL</i>	<i>NH / IL</i>	<i>IM</i>

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What does it mean to
be proficient?

Government (FSI) Scale	Academic (ACTFL/ETS) Scale	Definition
5	Native	Able to speak like an educated native speaker
4+ 4 3+ 3	Distinguished Superior	Able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations
2+	Advanced High	Able to handle Superior level tasks much of the time but cannot sustain that level of language
2	Advanced Mid	Able to satisfy most work requirements and show some ability to communicate on concrete topics
	Advanced Low	Able to satisfy routine social demands and limited work requirements
1+	Intermediate High	Able to satisfy most survival needs and limited social demands
1	Intermediate Mid	Able to satisfy some survival needs and some limited social demands
	Intermediate Low	Able to satisfy basic survival needs and minimum courtesy requirements
0+	Novice High	Able to satisfy needs with learned utterances
0	Novice Mid	Able to operate in only a very limited capacity
	Novice Low	Unable to function in the spoken language No ability whatsoever in the language

Source: Judith E. Liskin-Gasparro. *ETS Oral Proficiency Testing Manual*. Princeton, N.J.: Educational Testing Service, 1982.

Novice Speakers



Novice Speakers

- Respond to simple questions on the most common features of daily life
- Convey minimal meaning to interlocutors experienced at dealing with foreigners by using
 - isolated words
 - lists of words
 - memorized phrases
 - some personalized recombinations of words or phrases

Novice Speakers

- Satisfy only a very limited number of immediate needs

Novice Speakers



Intermediate Speakers



Take 5 minutes to

- go to
www.actflproficiencyguidelines2012.org
- choose "Speaking"
- choose "Intermediate"
- read the Intermediate summary
- write down the principle
characteristics of Intermediate speech

Speaking » Intermediate

Speakers at the Intermediate level are distinguished primarily by their ability to create with the language when talking about familiar topics related to their daily life. They are able to recombine learned material in order to express personal meaning. Intermediate-level speakers can ask simple questions and can handle a straightforward survival situation. They

produce sentence-level language, ranging from discrete sentences to strings of sentences, typically in present time. Intermediate-level speakers are understood by interlocutors who are accustomed to dealing with non-native learners of the language.

As you watch the video, use the Intermediate Activity Sheet to occasionally write down some statements that Guadalupe says. Write them down verbatim.



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by permission of ACTFL

Intermediate Speakers

- participate in simple, direct conversations
- ask and answer questions
- handle basic, uncomplicated communication needed in daily life (survival language)
- create with the language
- use discrete sentences and strings of sentences; can use sentence “connectors”

How Accurate are Intermediate Speakers?



- Do better with interlocutors who are accustomed to non-native speakers of the language (more patient);
- Speak mostly in present tense but can sprinkle in past and future;

How Accurate are Intermediate Speakers?

- Pronunciation, stress patterns, and grammar may all be flawed but there is sufficient accuracy for communication at the sentence level.



What did you hear as *Guadalupe* spoke?

Using the Intermediate Activity sheet, determine which Intermediate characteristics your examples correspond to.
Take 5 minutes.

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Speaking » Intermediate

Speakers at the Intermediate level are distinguished primarily by their ability to create with the language when talking about familiar topics related to their daily life. They are able to recombine learned material in order to express personal meaning. Intermediate-level speakers can ask simple questions and can handle a straightforward survival situation. They produce sentence-level language, ranging from **discrete**

sentences to **strings of sentences**, typically in present time. Intermediate-level speakers are understood by **interlocutors** who are accustomed to dealing with non-native learners of the language.



[View 4 samples](#)

Intermediate High

Intermediate High speakers are able to converse with ease and confidence when dealing with the routine tasks and social situations of the Intermediate level. They are able to handle successfully uncomplicated tasks and social situations requiring an exchange of basic information related to their work, school, recreation, particular interests, and areas of competence.

Intermediate High speakers can handle a substantial number of tasks associated with the Advanced level, but they are unable to sustain performance of all of these tasks all of the time. Intermediate High speakers can narrate and describe in all major **time frames** using **connected discourse** of **paragraph** length, but not all the time. Typically, when Intermediate High speakers attempt to perform Advanced-level tasks, their speech exhibits one or more features of **breakdown**, such as the failure to carry out fully the narration or **description** in the appropriate major time frame, an inability to maintain **paragraph-length discourse**, or a reduction in breadth and appropriateness of vocabulary.

Intermediate High speakers can generally be understood by native speakers unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives, although interference from another language may be evident (e.g., use of **code-switching**, false **cognates**, literal translations), and a pattern of gaps in communication may occur.

Take 10 minutes to view the four samples of Intermediate speech at the ACTFL website and to read the rationale for each.

Simplifying Proficiency

NL NM NH

IL IM IH

AL AM AH

S

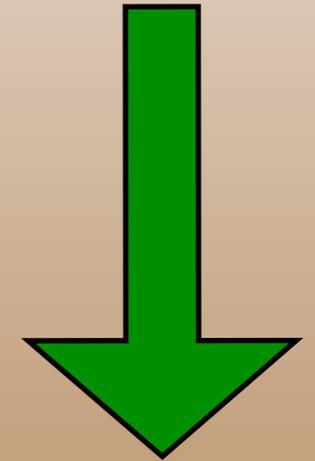
Proficiency Families

NL NM

NH IL IM

IH AL AM

AH S



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- Satisfy only a very limited number of immediate needs

Intermediate Speakers

- participate in simple, direct conversations
- ask and answer questions
- handle basic, uncomplicated communication needed in daily life (survival language)
- create with the language
- use discrete sentences and strings of sentences; can use sentence "connectors".

Advanced Speakers

- participate actively in conversations in most formal and informal settings on concrete and factual topics of personal and public interest;
- narrate and describe in major time frames with good control;
- deal effectively with unanticipated complications through a variety of communicative devices;
- sustain communication by using, with suitable accuracy and confidence, connected discourse of paragraph length and substance;
- satisfy the demands of work and/or school situations.

Superior Speakers

- can fundamentally do anything in their second language that they can do in their first language;
- speak in detail, hypothesize, handle unfamiliar topics and situations;
- evidence excellent control of grammar in every aspect except possible idiomatic usage;
- can produce linguistic subtlety and nuance.

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Video 3

- What does it mean to be an Advanced speaker?
- What are the implications for teaching?