

Proficiency Primer

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During this session, participants will:

- **Examine** characteristics of Novice, Intermediate and Advanced levels of the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines.
- **Identify** four elements of proficiency
- **Contrast** language proficiency with language performance.
- **Identify** appropriate proficiency targets for world language classes.

Benchmarks of Proficiency

Checkpoint A – one “unit” of study–
graduation requirement

Checkpoint B – three “units” of study
advanced diploma requirement choice

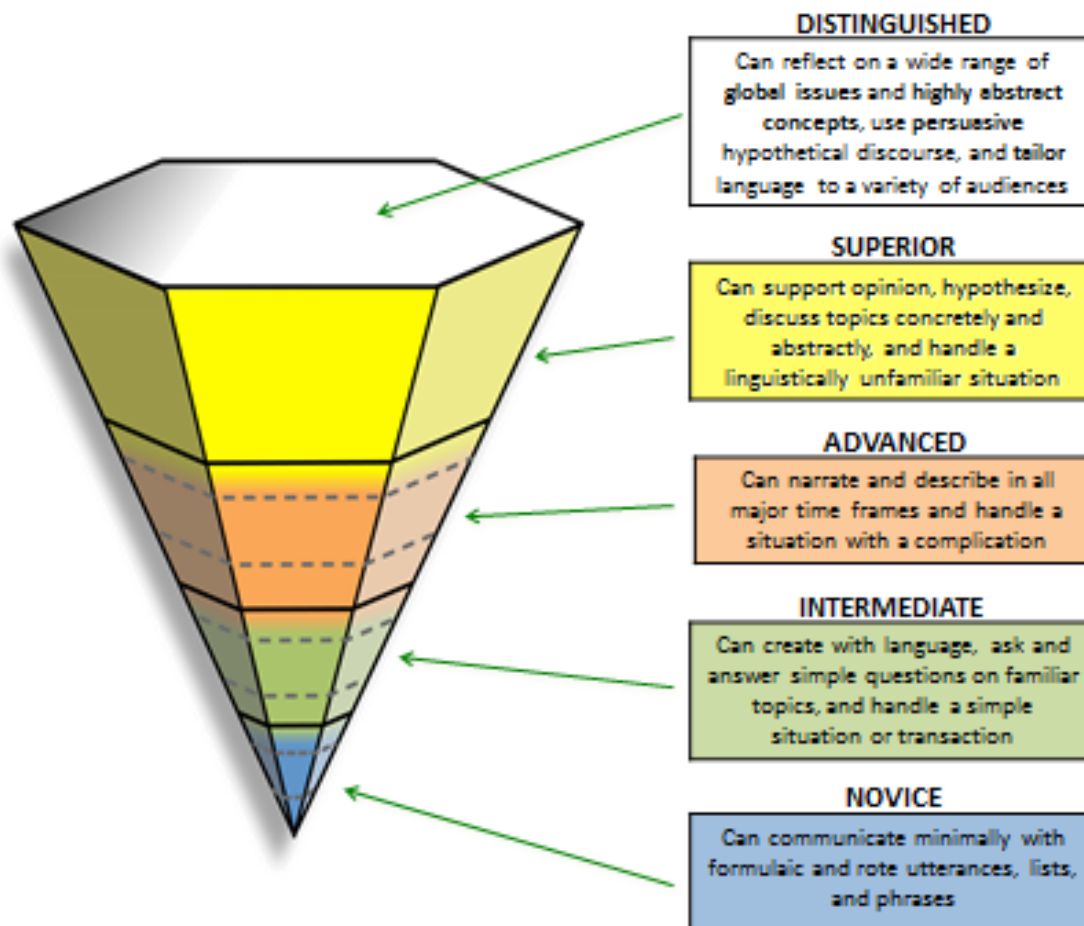
Checkpoint C – five “units” of study
commencement level

What is "proficiency"

ACTFL:

"a description 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."

Inverted Pyramid Representing the ACTFL Rating Scale



ACTFL Proficiency Descriptors

Novice



the parrot

self

Intermediate



the survivor

daily life

Advanced



the reporter

community

Superior



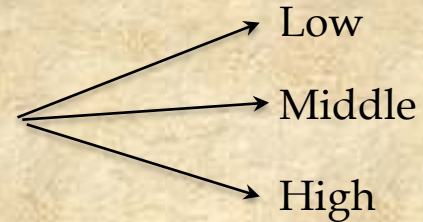
the judge

world

ACTFL Proficiency Descriptors

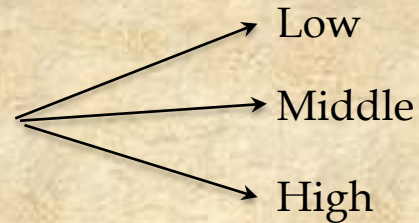
Novice:

Memorized expressions (formulaic language)
Word level discourse
Responds, usually does not initiate.



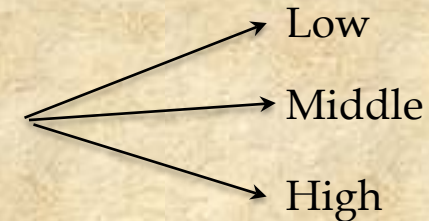
Intermediate:

Create with language
Sentence level discourse
Formulate questions; initiates



Advanced:

Control time frame
Paragraph level discourse
Handles complications



What are the elements of proficiency?

F. Function

A. Accuracy

C. Context

T. Text Type

Elements of Proficiency

+

	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced	Superior
F Function	formulaic responses in words, phrases & lists	create with language; ask & answer questions	narrate and describe in major time frames	support opinions and hypothesize
A* Accuracy	May be difficult to understand even by sympathetic interlocutor.	Generally understood with some repetition by sympathetic interlocutor	Can be understood without difficult by speakers not used to dealing with non-native speakers.	No pattern of errors in basic structures; Errors never interfere with communication or distract interlocutor from the message
C Context	common informal settings about most common aspects of daily life	informal and transactional situations; predictable familiar topics daily activities and personal environment	most informal and some formal settings; topics of personal and general interest	most formal and informal settings; wide range of public interest topics and some specialized topics
T Text Type	individual words, phrases and lists; formulaic language	discrete sentences and strings of sentences	paragraph level connected discourse	extended discourse

* Features of accuracy for all levels include vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, fluency, pragmatic competence and sociolinguistic competence.

Proficiency vs. Performance

Proficiency

- on demand
- no rehearsal
- no scaffolds

Performance

- practice or drafting
- scaffolds
- feedback and revision

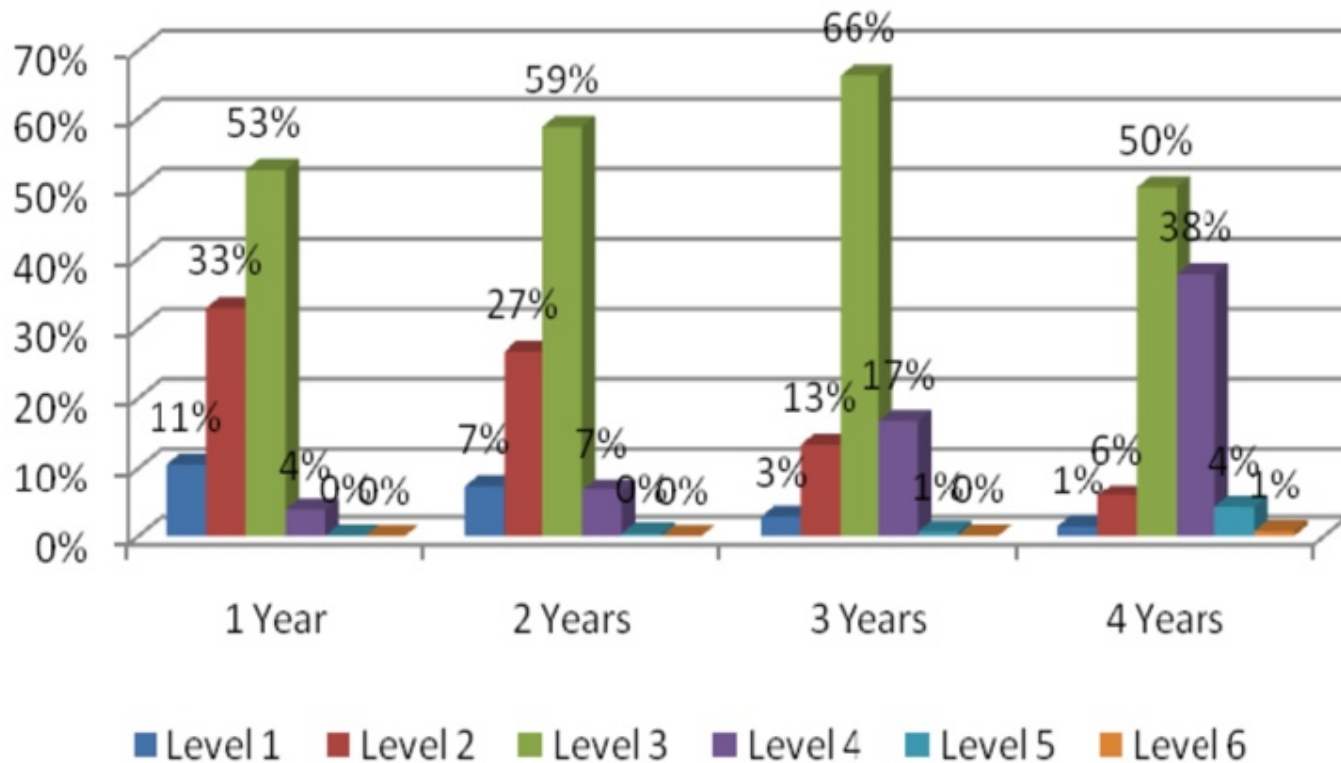
ORAL PROFICIENCY LEVELS IN THE WORKPLACE

ACTFL Level	ILR	Language Functions	Corresponding Professions/ Positions*	Examples of Who Is Likely to Function at This Level
Distinguished	5	<i>Ability to tailor language to specific audience, persuade, negotiate. Deal with nuance and subtlety.</i>	Foreign Service: Diplomat, Contract Negotiator, International Specialist, Intelligence Specialist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly articulate, professionally specialized native speakers Language learners with extended (17 years) and current professional and/ or educational experience in the target culture
	4			
Superior	3	<i>Discuss topics extensively, support opinions, hypothesize. Deal with linguistically unfamiliar situations.</i>	University Language Professor, Financial Services Marketing Consultant, Foreign Area Officer, Lawyer, Judge, Court Interpreter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well-educated native speakers Educated language learners with extended professional and/ or educational experience in the target language environment
Advanced High	2+	<i>Narrate and describe in past, present, and future. Deal effectively with an unanticipated complication.</i>	Physician, Human Resources Communications Consultant, Financial Services Senior Consultant, Quality Assurance Specialist, Marketing Manager, Financial Advisor, Broker, Military Linguist, Translation Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Language learners with graduate degrees in language or a related area and extended educational experience in target environment
Advanced Mid			Banking and Investment Services Customer Service Representative, Fraud Specialist, Account Executive, Medical Interpreter, Patient Advocate, Court Stenographer, Court Interpreter, Human Resources Benefits Specialist, Technical Service Agent, Collections Representative, Estimating Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heritage speakers, informal learners, non-academic learners who have significant contact with language Undergraduate majors with year-long study in the target language culture
Advanced Low			K–12 Language Teacher, Nurse, Social Worker, Claims Processor, Police Officer, Maintenance Administrator, Billing Clerk, Legal Secretary, Legal Receptionist, 911 Dispatcher, Consumer Products Customer Services Representative, Retail Services Personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undergraduate language majors
Intermediate High	1+	<i>Create with language, initiate, maintain, and bring to a close simple conversations by asking and responding to simple questions.</i>	Fire Fighter, Utilities Installer, Auto Inspector, Aviation Personnel, Missionary, Tour Guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Language learners following 6–8 year sequences of study (e.g., AP) or 4–6 semester college sequences
Intermediate Mid			Cashier, Sales Clerk (highly predictable contexts), Receptionist	
Intermediate Low			1	
Novice High	0+	<i>Communicate minimally with formulaic and rote utterances, lists, and phrases.</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Language learners following content-based language program in Grades K–6
Novice Mid	0			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Language learners following 2 years of high school language study
Novice Low				

*The levels of proficiency associated with each of the positions above are minimal levels of oral proficiency based on task analyses. The minimal levels were determined by subject matter experts from companies and agencies who use ACTFL proficiency tests.



Speaking 7-12: European



What Proficiency Level Do High School Students Achieve?

-based on ~13,000 – 16,500 student test results on proficiency tests

<https://casls.uoregon.edu/wp-content/themes/caslstheme/pdfs/tenquestions/TBQProficiencyResults.pdf>

Identifying Proficiency Targets

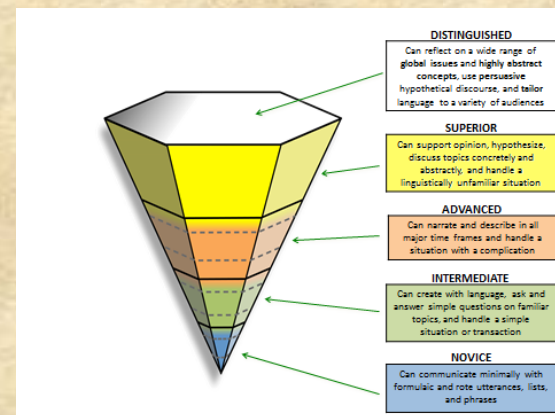
Grade 7 – 12 – Romance Languages

Checkpoint A: Year 1 – Novice Mid

Checkpoint A: Year 2 – Novice High

Checkpoint B: Intermediate Low

Checkpoint C: Intermediate Mid/High



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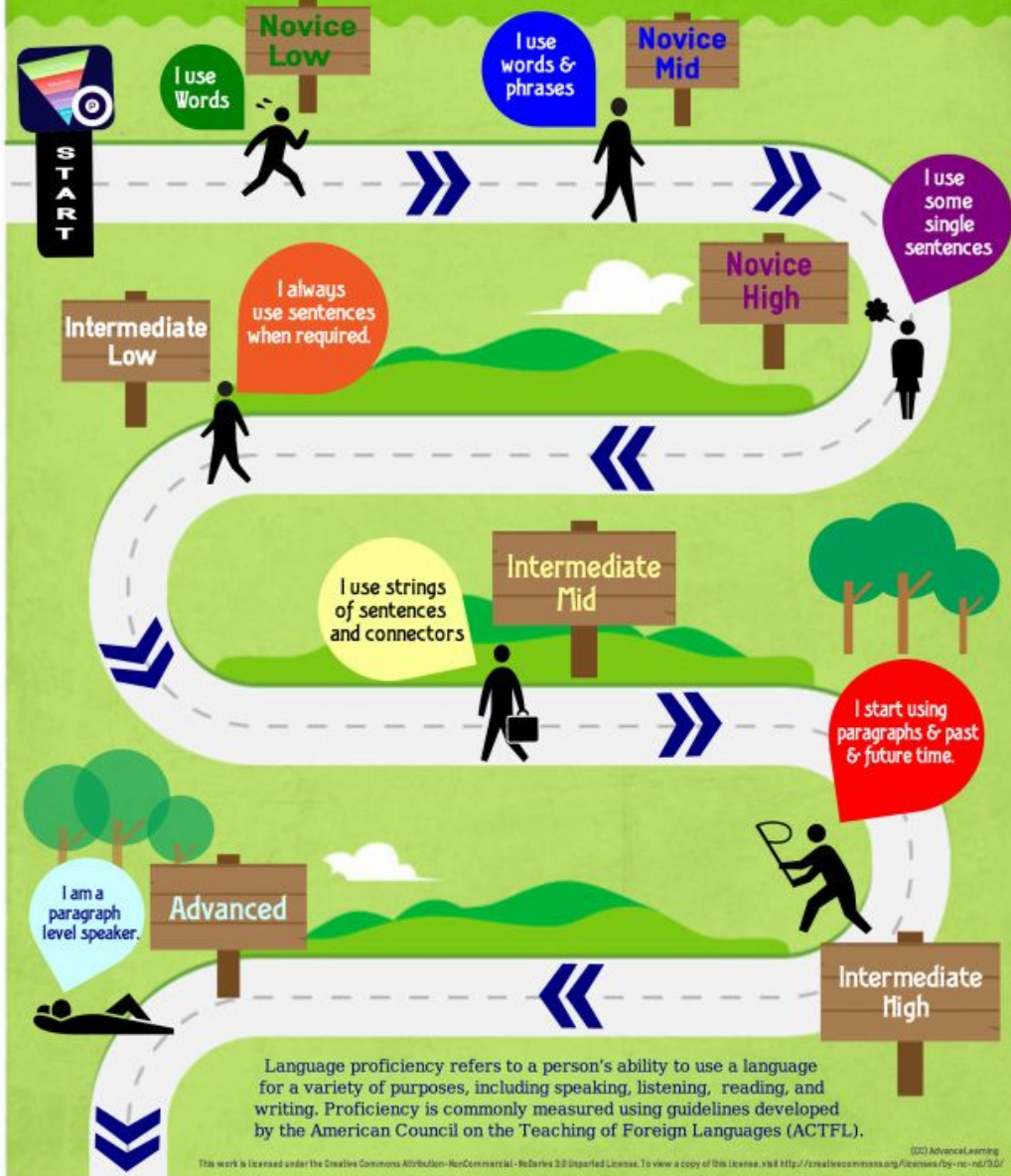
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Instructional Tasks for ACTFL Proficiency Levels, Grades 7-12

ACTFL Level	Approximate Traditional Course Levels	Skills to Maintain Daily No Scaffolding Needed (Complete Control)	Skills to Practice Frequently Begin to Remove Scaffolding (Partial Control)	Skills to Introduce With Scaffolding (Conceptual Control)
Novice Low	Level Ia	(None)	Listing Vocabulary Answering Questions Memorized Expressions Talk about Self	Creating with Language Sentence Level Discourse Asking Questions
Novice Mid	Level Ib, Level II	Listing Vocabulary Answering Questions Memorized Expressions	Creating with Language Sentence Level Discourse Asking Questions	
Novice High	Level II, Level III	Listing Vocabulary Answering Questions Memorized Expressions	Creating with Language Sentence Level Discourse Asking Questions Negotiate Survival Situations	Past/Future Narration Paragraph Discourse Description with Details Handling Complications
Intermediate Low	Level III, Level IV	Creating with Language Sentence Level Discourse Asking Questions	Expand Vocabulary and Negotiating Survival Situations	Past/Future Narration Description with Details Paragraph Discourse Handling Complications
Intermediate Mid	Level V	Creating with Language Sentence Level Discourse Asking Questions	Past/Future Narration Paragraph Discourse Description with Details Negotiate Complications	Connected Discourse Supporting Opinions Hypothesizing Unfamiliar Situations
Intermediate High (Pre-advanced)	Possible in Extended K-12 Sequences	Creating with Language Sentence Level Discourse Asking Questions	Past/Future Narration Paragraph Discourse Description with Details Negotiate Complications	Connected Discourse Supporting Opinions Hypothesizing Unfamiliar Situations

Path to Proficiency



Language proficiency refers to a person's ability to use a language for a variety of purposes, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Proficiency is commonly measured using guidelines developed by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL).

Bookmark this site!

What does proficiency sound like?

ACTFL YouTube Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCiBeZAsXz-RvyL67GJzzlRw>

The screenshot shows the YouTube channel page for ACTFL. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the YouTube logo, a search bar, and icons for home, grid, notifications, and profile. Below this is a banner image with the text "PROVIDING vision leadership support FOR THE LANGUAGE EDUCATION COMMUNITY" and social media icons for ACTFL, Google+, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The channel name "ACTFL" is displayed with a subscriber count of "1,588 subscribers" and a "SUBSCRIBED 1.5K" button. The navigation menu includes "HOME", "VIDEOS", "PLAYLISTS", "CHANNELS", "DISCUSSION", and "ABOUT". The main content area features a video titled "Core Practices: A Free Overview" with a thumbnail showing a book cover and a person. The video description states: "Core Practices are highly-effective and research-based teaching methods designed specifically for your world language classroom. This Virtual Learning Module (VLM) created by ACTFL offers practical...". To the right, there is a "FEATURED CHANNELS" section with a link to "Lead with Languages" and a "SUBSCRIBE" button.

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