

APPENDIX E
American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages
(ACTFL) PROFICIENCY STANDARDS

ACTFL PROFICIENCY STANDARDS: LISTENING

Intermediate-Low

Able to understand full length spoken sentences in content areas referring to personal background, personal needs, and routine social practices (ordering meals, receiving instructions, and receiving directions). Listening is primarily fact to face. Understanding is often uneven; repetition and rewording may be necessary. Misunderstandings arise frequently.

Intermediate-Mid

Able to understand full length spoken sentences in additional content areas referring to more difficult tasks (lodging, transportation, and shopping), personal interests, activities, and greater diversity of receiving instructions and directions. Listening tasks will also pertain to short routine telephone conversations and some deliberate speech (simple announcements and news reports) Understanding continues to be uneven.

Intermediate-High

Able to understand longer stretches of dialogue on additional content areas pertaining to different times and places. Understanding may be inconsistent due to difficulty in grasping main ideas and/or details. Topics are not significantly different from an Advanced level listener, but comprehension will be poorer.

Advanced

Able to understand main ideas and most details of longer stretches of dialogue on a variety of topics that may fall outside of the immediate situation, however comprehension may be uneven due to topic familiarity or other factors. Dialogue will frequently involve different time frames (present, past, regularly occurring, or seldom occurring), and may include interviews, short lectures on familiar topics, and reports on factual information. Listener is aware of cohesive devices, but may not be able to use them to follow the sequence of thought when listening.

Advanced Plus

Able to understand the main ideas of most speech in the standard dialect, however it may be difficult to sustain understanding during lengthy or especially complex communication. Listener is beginning to become aware of culturally implied meanings beyond the surface meanings of the dialogue, but may fail to understand the subtle sociocultural meanings in the message.

Superior

Able to understand the main ideas of all speech in the standard dialect, including technical discussion in a particular field of specialization (academic/ professional settings, lectures, speeches, and reports). Listener shows some appreciation of aesthetic norms (idioms, colloquialisms, register shifting), and can understand subtle sociocultural meanings. Rarely misunderstand, except during fast paced, highly colloquial speech, or speech with highly strong cultural references.

Distinguished

Able to understand virtually all forms and styles of speech, has a strong understanding of social and cultural references. Understands plays, movies, academic debates, literary readings, and most jokes and puns. May have some difficulty with non standard dialects and slang.

ACTFL PROFICIENCY STANDARDS: SPEAKING

Intermediate-Low

Able to successfully handle limited, face-to-face, conversation involving tasks and social situations such as introducing self, ordering meals, asking directions, and making purchases. Strong inference from native language may occur and misunderstands are frequent.

Intermediate-Mid

Able to successfully handle a variety of simple conversation involving tasks and social situations beyond their most immediate needs (personal history, leisure time activities). Speech length increases slightly, but frequent long pauses are likely. Pronunciation may still be strongly influenced by native language. Misunderstandings still arise.

Intermediate-High

Able to successfully handle most simple conversations involving task and social situations, as well as general conversation on a range of circumstances and topics. Errors are evident and limited vocabulary may cause speaker to hesitate and ramble. Simple narration and/or description is improved.

Advanced

Able to successfully handle conversations required in everyday situations, and routine school and work requirements. Complicated tasks and social situations (elaborating, complaining, apologizing) may still be difficult. Can narrate and describe with some details, linking sentences together smoothly. Can communicate facts and talk casually about topics of current public and personal interest, using general vocabulary. Weaknesses can be smoothed over by pause fillers and different rates of speech. Some groping for words may still be evident.

Advanced Plus

Able to successfully handle a broad variety of everyday, school, and work conversations, as well as discuss concrete topics relating to interests and special fields of competence. Speaker is beginning to be able to support opinions, explain in detail, and hypothesize. Has a well-developed ability to compensate for weaknesses by paraphrasing. Can communicate fine shades of meaning with inflection and differentiated vocabulary.

Superior

Able to speak the language with sufficient accuracy to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social, professional, and abstract topics. Can discuss special fields of competence and interest with ease. Can support opinions and hypothesize, but may not be able to tailor language to audience or discuss in depth highly abstract or unfamiliar topics. Speaker commands a wide variety of interactive strategies and shows good awareness of discourse strategies. Can distinguish main ideas from supporting information. No patterns of error are evident.

ACTFL PROFICIENCY STANDARDS: READING

Intermediate-Low

Able to understand main ideas and/or some facts from the simplest text about basic personal and social needs. Examples of texts include messages with social purposes and information for the widest possible audiences, such as public announcements and short, straightforward instructions dealing with public life. Some misunderstandings will occur.

Intermediate-Mid

Able to read consistently with increased understanding simple texts dealing with basic personal and social needs about which the reader has personal interest and/or knowledge. Texts provide basic information and guesswork is minimal for the reader. Examples include short, straightforward descriptions of persons, places, and things written for a wide audience.

Intermediate-High

Able to read consistently with full understanding simple texts dealing with basic personal and social needs about which the reader has personal interest and/or knowledge. Can understand some main ideas from texts at next higher level featuring description and narration. Basic grammatical relations may be misinterpreted. Tests do not differ significantly from those at the Advanced level, comprehension is less consistent. May have to read several times for understanding.

Advanced

Able to read longer prose with familiar sentence patterns. Reader gets the main ideas and facts, may miss some detail. Comprehension comes from situational and subject matter knowledge as well as increasing control of the language. Texts include descriptions and narrations such as simple short stories, news items, social notices, correspondence, and simple technical material written for a the general reader.

Advanced Plus

Able to follow essential points at the Superior level in areas of special interest or knowledge. Able to understand parts of texts which are conceptually abstract and have complex language, and/or texts with unfamiliar topics, situations, or cultural references. Awareness of aesthetic properties of languages is emerging permitting comprehension of a wider variety of texts. Misunderstandings may occur.

Superior

Able to read with almost complete comprehension at normal speed on unfamiliar subjects and a variety of texts. Readers is not expected to thoroughly comprehend texts requiring a high degree of knowledge of the target culture. Texts feature hypotheses, argumentation, grammatical patterns, and academic/professional vocabulary. Occasional misunderstandings may still occur due to use of uncommon phrases. Material includes a variety of literary texts, editorials, correspondence, general reports, and technical material in professional fields. Rereading is rarely necessary.

Distinguished

Able to read fluently and accurately most styles and forms. Able to understand references in text to real-world knowledge and almost all sociolinguistic and cultural references. Able to understand nuance and subtlety, and follow unpredictable turns of thought. Text include sophisticated

editorials, specialized journal articles, novels, plays, poems, as well as any subject matter area directed to the general reader.

ACTFL PROFICIENCY STANDARDS: WRITING

Intermediate-Low

Able to write short messages, postcards, and simple notes. Can create statements or questions within the scope of limited language experience. Writing produces consists of simple sentences on very familiar topics.

Intermediate-Mid

Able to write for practical needs. Content involves personal preferences, daily routine, everyday events, and other topics grounded in personal experience. Can express present time and at least one other time frame (nonpast, habitual, imperfective). Writing tends to be a loose collection of sentences or sentence fragments on a given topic and provides little evidence of conscious organization.

Intermediate-High

Able to meet most practical writing needs and limited social demands. Can take notes in some detail on familiar topics and respond in writing to personal questions. Can write simple letters, brief synopses and paraphrases, summaries of biographical data, work and school experience. Can express time, tense, or aspect rather consistently, but not always accurately. An ability to describe and narrate in paragraphs is emerging.

Advanced

Able to write routine social correspondence and join sentences in simple discourse of at least several paragraphs in length on familiar topics. Can write simple social correspondence, take notes, write cohesive summaries and resumes, as well as narratives and descriptions of a factual nature. May still make errors in punctuation, spelling, or the formation of nonalphabetic symbols. Makes frequent errors in producing complex sentences. Uses a limited number of cohesive devices accurately. Writing may resemble literal translation from the native language, but a sense of organization is emerging.

Advanced Plus

Able to write about a variety of topics with significant precision and in detail. Can write most social and informal business correspondence. Can describe and narrate personal experiences fully but has difficulty supporting points of view in written discourse. Can write about the concrete aspects of topics relating to particular interests and special fields of competence. Often shows remarkable fluency and ease of expression, but under time constraints and pressure writing may be inaccurate. Generally strong in either grammar or vocabulary, but not in both. Weakness and unevenness in one of the foregoing or in spelling or character writing formation may result in occasional miscommunication. Some misuse of vocabulary may still be evident. Style may still be obviously foreign.

Superior

Able to write clearly in most formal and informal writing. Good control of a full range of structures, spelling or nonalphabetic symbol production, and a wide general vocabulary allow the writer to hypothesize and present arguments or points of view accurately and effectively. An

underlying organization, such as chronological ordering, logical ordering, cause and effect, comparison, and thematic development is strongly evident, although not thoroughly executed.