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First Nations Language Assessment Benchmarks

SPEAKING

STAGE ONE: **BEGINNER PROFICIENCY**

LOW BEGINNER:

- learner can speak very little; can respond to basic questions about simple personal information
- learner may be able introduce themselves, and say up to 50 words
- learner speaks in single words, yes/no answers, or strings of two or three words
- learner demonstrates very limited vocabulary
- learner makes very long pauses, often speaks words spoken
- learner often switches to English
- pronunciation difficulties restrict communication
- learner needs considerable assistance, and depends on gestures for communication

MID BEGINNER:

- learner can communicate in a limited way, some immediate and personal needs,
- learner is not able to use the phone
- learner can ask and answer simple questions, ie WH questions, from a teacher
- learner is still not well understood by Elders, only teachers and other learners
- uses single words and short 2-5 word sentences
- learner knows approximately 500 words; can recognize, if not say all of them properly
- learner demonstrates limited vocabulary and a few simple phrases
- learner demonstrates some use of very basic grammar (for example can use simple present/past for I/you forms)
- learner makes long pauses and depends on gestures to express meaning
- learner demonstrates use of vocabulary which is somewhat limited
- classroom training to reach this stage: approximately 100 intensive hours

HIGH BEGINNER:

- learner can take part in short routine conversations about simple, familiar subjects, can tell a simple story
- learner can communicate basic needs, ask and respond to simple familiar questions, and can describe things using short sentences
- learner knows approximately 1,000 words and can say most of them (at least the root word), though often not pronounced properly or with proper grammar
- learner demonstrates use of basic grammar, uses correct past tense
- learner demonstrates adequate use of vocabulary for basic communication
- pronunciation difficulties often restrict communication; needs a little assistance to understand/be understood
- learner can deliver beginner material to adult students
- classroom training to reach this stage: approximately 200 to 400 intensive hours

Adapted from Jack Miller's EdD Thesis (2004), itself adapted from American, Canadian, and European Benchmarks (ACTFL, CLB and CEFR). Several points added by Sʔímlaʔx^w (Michele Johnson) from CLB benchmarks, research, and teaching/learning experience (Oct. 24, 2013). These benchmarks represent Speaking only; benchmarks also exist for Listening, Reading, and Writing.

First Nations Language Assessment Benchmarks

SPEAKING

STAGE TWO: INTERMEDIATE PROFICIENCY

LOW INTERMEDIATE:

- learner can participate with effort in routine social conversations and can talk about needs and familiar topics of personal relevance
- learner can give a simple speech, narrate an event, or storytell for 5 minutes
- learner is able to communicate simple information on the phone
- learner is able to teach beginner material to adult students
- learner can teach beginner material to children in an immersion (nest) situation, though with considerable difficulty, has difficulty with immersion classroom management
- learner is unable to deliver more complex material (ie geography, animal habitats, etc.)
- learner can use a variety of simple structures and some complex ones. Grammar and pronunciation errors are frequent and sometimes impede communication
- at this stage, learner becomes understood by Elders (not just teachers and other learners)
- learner demonstrates a range of common everyday vocabulary; may avoid topics with unfamiliar vocabulary
- learner can speak using connectives (and, but, first, next, then, because)
- learner speaks with many hesitations and pauses, and errors are frequent
- classroom training to reach this stage: approximately 400-600 hours (1 year full-time)

MID INTERMEDIATE:

- learner can communicate comfortably in most common daily situations with Elders and other learners. grammar and pronunciation errors are still frequent, but rarely impede communication—learner is understood
- learner is able to teach in an immersion situation, (i.e. a nest), though still a challenge
- learner can participate in formal and informal conversations, involving problem solving and decision making situations in the classroom or home
- learner can speak on familiar concrete topics at a descriptive level
- can demonstrate a range of everyday vocabulary, including many common phrases
- learner can express all the simple grammar for present, past and future tense.
- learner can not yet create complex grammar such as complex compound words with transitive and intransitive forms
- learner can pray formally, and is able to learn the high grammar used in prayer
- classroom training to reach this stage: approximately 1,000 intensive hours (2 years)

HIGH INTERMEDIATE:

- learner can communicate effectively in most daily and social situations, including work
- learner can work more easily in an immersion setting, i.e. teaching in a nest
- learner can communicate more complex information over the phone
- learner can participate in conversations with Elders with confidence; grammar and pronunciation errors rarely impede communication
- learner can provide descriptions, opinions, and explanations about most topics
- in social interaction, the learner demonstrates an increased ability to respond appropriately to the formality level of the situation
- learner can use a variety of sentence structures
- learner can synthesize abstract concepts and provide a hypothesis (can speak about hypothetical situations)

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First Nations Language Assessment Benchmarks

SPEAKING

STAGE THREE: **ADVANCED** PROFICIENCY

LOW ADVANCED:

- learner can obtain, provide, and exchange key information for important tasks in complex situations
- learner can deal with complaints politely
- learner can give a presentation, speech, or storytell for 30 minutes
- learner can actively and effectively participate in 30 minute formal exchanges (debates) with a group of debaters about complex, abstract, and detailed information
- learner's grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation errors very rarely impede communication
- learner can use the full range of transitive and intransitive verb structures, and can create compound words with complex verb structures (for example: "we (plural) went hunting for you-all" is expressed as one word in Okanagan Interior Salish)
- learner's speech is mostly accurate in form, but may be slightly rigid in its structure
- classroom training to reach this stage: estimated at 2,000 intensive hours

MID ADVANCED:

- learner can satisfy social, school-related, university expectations for competent communication
- learner can actively participate in meetings and interviews which are complex, abstract, academic, and detailed
- learner can lead meetings and manage interactions in a small, familiar group session
- learner can contribute to extended 60 min. discussions which are complex, abstract, academic, and detailed
- learner's grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation errors do not impede communication

HIGH ADVANCED:

- learner can create or contribute to discussions in a broad range of (all) complex situations
- learner can deliver public presentations to audiences, using complex, accurate language
- learner can lead large, formal group discussions on complex topics
- learner can explain complex ideas to diverse groups, debate on complex topics,
- learner can teach high level, complex topics
- learner can negotiate and resolve conflicts in a variety of situations, including effectively responding to workplace sarcasm
- learner can create and co-create complex technical, high-level oral discourse in their specialized field of study

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