



Second Language Proficiency Assessment Models

Language proficiency assessment is an important part of language learning and revitalization. It helps us know how well we are developing our language skills and if our teaching and learning methods are effective. This fact sheet summarizes a few different models used for assessing language fluency.

American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)

The ACTFL proficiency guidelines are used for evaluating *functional language ability*. This means they describe language abilities in terms of speaking, writing, listening and reading in everyday, real-world situations. The guidelines include five levels from beginner to advanced and describe tasks that speakers can manage at each level.

Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB)

The CLB were designed for English as a Second Language (ESL) and are recognized as the official Canadian standard for describing, measuring and recognizing the proficiency of adult English language learners. The CLB focus on functional language use and are designed to reflect the experiences of language learners in everyday communication. The benchmarks include descriptive

statements about levels of language ability along a continuum.

First Nations Language Benchmarks (FNLB)

Dr. Jack Miller produced *A Language Teacher's Guide to Assessing First Nations Language Proficiency* (2013) for his doctoral research. He created the FNLB to be practical, culturally appropriate and user-friendly. The FNLB are influenced by other assessment models but are mostly adapted from the CLB 2000.

Assessments of language competency and proficiency are based on social interactions, following and giving instructions, and information sharing. Dr. Michele

Johnson adapted Miller's model of the FNLB based upon the abilities of First Nations language learners using the Paul Creek method for language learning.

NETOLNEW: 'One mind; one people'

The NETOLNEW Language Learning Assessment Tool was developed for Indigenous adult language learners to help them understand their language learning and to keep track of their progress. The tool assesses general language skills rather than grammar and vocabulary and is meant to reflect what speakers can do in the language.

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)
www.actfl.org

ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012
www.actfl.org/publications/guidelines-and-manuals/actfl-proficiency-guidelines-2012

Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB)
www.language.ca

CLB Can Do Statements
http://www.language.ca/wp-content/uploads/2000/01/CLB_Can_Do_Statements_S_02.pdf

First Nations Language Benchmarks (FNLB) by Dr. Jack Miller
www.interiorsalish.com/languageassessment.html

First Nations Language Benchmarks (FNLB) adapted by Dr. Michele Johnson
http://www.fpcc.ca/files/PDF/Language/MAP/FNLB_Johnson_2013.pdf

NETOLNEW: 'One mind; one people'
www.uvic.ca/research/partner/home/currentprojects/language-assessment-tool/index.php

NETOLNEW focuses on assessing speaking and understanding the language and asks speakers to describe their language abilities based on a scale of definitions provided.

Stages of Second Language Proficiency

As a quick reference, we summarize below the most common descriptions of the stages of second language proficiency. The three stages are Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced. Each stage has three levels — Low, Mid and High — that indicate the speaker's progression within each stage. The time that it takes to progress between each level and stage will vary depending on the learners and their exposure to and practice with the language.

Beginner Proficiency

Low Beginner speakers have limited vocabulary and difficulties with pronunciation, restricting communication. Speakers can respond to basic questions about simple information, use single words or memorized sentences, and rely heavily on gestures and actions to communicate.

Mid Beginner speakers can use short (two to five) word sentences, ask and answer simple content questions (who, what, when, where), use memorized introductions and phrases, and use basic present/past tense.

High Beginner speakers can participate in short routine conversations about familiar topics, communicate basic needs, talk about things in the past and present, and have enough vocabulary for basic communication.

Intermediate Proficiency

Low Intermediate speakers can participate more fully in certain social situations. They can participate — with effort — in routine social conversations about topics such as weather or food, communicate simple information on the phone, and use connective words (but, then, and, because). They still speak with hesitation and pauses.

Mid Intermediate speakers can communicate comfortably in most daily situations with fluent speakers, problem solve and make decisions in certain situations, and talk about the present, past and future.

High Intermediate speakers can confidently participate in daily conversations with fluent speakers and provide descriptions and opinions on most topics. Communication is less restricted

and fluent speakers can more easily understand the speakers.

Advanced Proficiency

Low Advanced speakers can communicate accurately and effectively in most educational and social contexts. Speakers can incorporate humour into their conversations, engage in debates, and discuss abstract topics like the future and politics.

Mid Advanced speakers can participate in meetings and interviews using complex academic language, and can lead meetings and manage interactions in small, familiar groups. Grammar and pronunciation errors no longer affect communication.

High Advanced speakers can lead large, formal group discussions on complex topics and can speak accurately in a specialized field of study.



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