

September 2024

Proficiency vs. Performance



The “What”

Proficiency-Based Instruction

“We want to highlight that *teaching for proficiency focuses first and foremost on what learners can do* with language, not simply what learners know about language. [For example], teaching for proficiency means that grammar is a tool for communication, not the primary focus or goal of instruction.”

Ritz, Catherine; Toro, Christina. Proficiency-Based Instruction (p. 15). ACTFL. Kindle Edition.



The “How”

“In proficiency-based instruction, the focus on **developing students’ proficiency means engaging them in performance in the classroom**. Proficiency levels indicate what students can do outside of the classroom when engaging with native speakers in unrehearsed, authentic contexts. Performance levels, on the other hand, indicate what students can do with support and appropriate scaffolds with learned and rehearsed material connected to their classroom learning.”

Ritz, Catherine; Toro, Christina. Proficiency-Based Instruction (p. 18). ACTFL. Kindle Edition.



Developing Proficiency
through Performance

INTERMEDIATE

PROFICIENCY BENCHMARK

I can understand the main idea and some pieces of information on familiar topics from sentences and series within texts that are spoken, written, or signed.

*What can I understand, interpret or analyze in authentic **informational texts** that I hear, read or view?*

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

INTERMEDIATE LOW

I can identify the topic and related information from simple sentences in short informational texts.

INTERMEDIATE MID

I can understand the main idea and key information in short straightforward informational texts.

INTERMEDIATE HIGH

I can usually follow the main idea and key information in various time frames and sometimes complex length informational texts.

EXAMPLES: Written

INTERMEDIATE LOW

I can... (customize with specific content).
I can understand some information on job postings.
I can understand a text message from a friend

INTERMEDIATE MID

I can... (customize with specific content).
I can understand the basic requirements for a career as described on a brochure.

INTERMEDIATE HIGH

I can... (customize with specific content).
I can understand information on a guide about an historical site.

“Can-Do” Statements and Proficiency

Performance Indicator “Can-Do”

I can + language function + context (+ proficiency level information).



Specific “Can-Do”

I can + verb + something specific tied to a task



The Differences

Assessing Performance

Based on instruction

Practiced

Familiar content and context

Demonstrated performance

Assessing Proficiency

Independent of instruction

Spontaneous

Broad content and context

Sustained performance across all tasks

Core Practices for World Language Learning

CORE PRACTICES For World Language Learning



Facilitate Target Language Comprehensibility

Students and teachers speak, listen, read, write, view, and create in the target language 90% or more during classroom time: comprehensible input, contexts, and interactions.

Guide Learners through Interpreting Authentic Resources

Present interactive reading and listening comprehension tasks using authentic cultural texts with appropriate scaffolding while promoting interpretation.



Design Oral Interpersonal Communication Tasks

Teachers design and carry out interpersonal communication tasks for pairs, small groups, and whole class instruction.

Plan with Backward Design Model

Instructors identify desired results THEN determine acceptable evidence THEN plan learning experiences and instruction.



Teach Grammar as Concept and Use in Context

Teach grammar as concept and use in context. Students focus on meaning BEFORE form.

Provide Appropriate Oral Feedback

Oral corrective feedback is a tool for mediating learning and language development.



World-Readiness Standards

Teaching for proficiency also asks you to build your curriculum and focus your instruction on the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages, which center around the 5 Cs: Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities.

Ritz, Catherine; Toro, Christina. Proficiency-Based Instruction (p. 16). ACTFL. Kindle Edition.