**INTERCULTURALITY**

The need for language competence in a global society touches every sector of life. From career preparation in an international workforce to citizen diplomacy and national defense to one’s role in a social or virtual community, communication across cultures is the key. Learners today must have the

linguistic proficiency to communicate with global audiences, insight into the cultural perspectives that shape those audiences, and the ability to behave appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts. The following series of can-do statements organized around the language proficiency levels (*2012*

*ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines*) guide learners in their development of such linguistic and intercultural competences.

Intercultural competence, therefore, is the demonstration of interaction between the use of language skills and cultural knowledge. The national *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* highlights the need for learners to understand the relationship between a culture’s perspectives and

its products and practices. A culture’s perspectives reflect the values, beliefs and attitudes of its people. Through contact with products (i.e., monuments, laws, music, etc.) developed by a culture and practices (eating habits, shopping behaviors, use of space, etc.) demonstrated by its people, we come to understand the perspectives (i.e., values, attitudes, beliefs, etc.) of a people.

Demonstrating intercultural competence requires both the ability to use the language and behave appropriately in cultural contexts. This may be particularly challenging for learners in the early stages of language learning who may not have the linguistic skill to address cultural perspectives in the language of study. It is the responsibility of all those who facilitate language learning be they teachers in FLES, immersion, middle/ high school, virtual or after-school programs, to provide opportunities for learners to experience language and culture together. Learners and educators must recognize that language and culture are inseparable. This requires the near exclusive use of the language of study. Thus, as language proficiency grows, so will intercultural competence.

Just as the proficiency level can-do statements of novice, intermediate, advanced, and superior are cumulative in nature for language competencies, they are cumulative for intercultural competencies as well. Learners demonstrate evidence of novice-level competencies first, then add evidence of intermediate-level competencies and so forth. They continually add to their repertoire as they move up the proficiency continuum, applying knowledge of products and practices before developing and applying an understanding of perspectives. The interaction of language and cultural competencies thus results in interculturality.

Unlike the language benchmarks and indicators, the interculturality can-do statements are not divided into low, mid, and high sublevels. Learners are expected to demonstrate the interculturality benchmarks when they have demonstrated the highest language proficiency sublevel. For example, learners who have

demonstrated *novice high* language competencies should also be demonstrating the *novice level* interculturality competencies.

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**Advanced Level Intercultural Can-Do Statements**

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| **GLOBAL BENCHMARK*:* Investigation of Products and Practices**    ***I can explain some diversity among the products and practices in other cultures and my own.*** | | | |
| **1) I can explain some of the factors that contribute to why products and practices vary across cultures.** | Yes | Yes, with assistance | One of my goals |
|  |  |  |
| *Examples:*   * *I can explain how cultural factors influence art.* * *I can explain how popular songs reflect the culture in which they were created.* * *I can explain how a country’s cuisine is influenced by its regional culture.* * *I can explain how creators of advertisements use elements of culture to market their products.* * *I can describe the use of cultural elements in film making* * *I can…* | | | |
| **2) I can explain how peoples’ practices and behaviors reflect their cultures.** | Yes | Yes, with assistance | One of my goals |
|  |  |  |
| *Examples:*   * *I can explain why people worship on a certain day(s) of the week.* * *I can explain why practices of disciplining children differ among cultures.* * *I can explain some dietary preferences between cultures.* * *I can explain some voting practices between cultures.* * *I can explain why some cultures prefer certain sports.* * *I can sometimes tell the difference between a fashion choice that is personal versus one that is a cultural norm.* * *I can…* | | | |
| **3) I can explore topics of personal and professional interest.** | Yes | Yes, with assistance | One of my goals |
|  |  |  |
| *Examples:*   * *I can look up some facts about the genealogy of my family in other countries.* * *I can research study or internship opportunities abroad.* * *I can gather information about topics of personal interest such as hobbies, music, and entertainment from those in other cultures.* * *I can research career options and job opportunities in other countries.* * *I can research driving regulations in other countries.* * *I can…* | | | |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **GLOBAL BENCHMARK: Understanding of Cultural Perspectives**  ***I can analyze and explain some cultural perspectives of individuals and institutions***  ***within a society.*** | | | |
| **4) I can explain how peoples’ actions reflect their cultural beliefs.** | Yes | Yes, with assistance | One of my goals |
|  |  |  |
| *Examples:*   * *I can explain why people place importance on long vacations in some cultures.* * *I can explain why families in some cultures spend more time at meals than others.* * *I can explain why people hold certain professions in higher regard than others.* * *I can explain why people arrange marriages in a culture.* * *I can…* | | | |
| **5) I can explain how social, political, religious, and economic institutions**  **reflect cultural beliefs.** | Yes | Yes, with assistance | One of my goals |
|  |  |  |
| *Examples:*   * *I can explain why universal health care is provided in some cultures.* * *I can explain why a country has a democracy instead of a monarchy.* * *I can explain why certain symbols are found on places of worship.* * *I can explain the practice of how and why business cards are presented.* * *I can…* | | | |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **GLOBAL BENCHMARK: Participation in Cultural Interaction**  ***I can interact at a competent level in familiar and some unfamiliar cultural contexts.*** | | | |
| **6) I can comfortably interact and converse with peers and colleagues at**  **school, work, or play.** | Yes | Yes, with assistance | One of my goals |
|  |  |  |
| *Examples:*   * *I can collaborate on a project with peers from another culture.* * *I can interact appropriately when I am a guest in the home of a friend from another culture*   *(bring a proper gift, converse on non-taboo topics, use proper etiquette, etc.)*   * *I can engage in social conversations at a sporting event with peers.* * *I can differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate topics and participate in conversations about most of them.* * *I can…* | | | |
| **7) I can interact with people in some situations outside of my normal**  **routine.** | Yes | Yes, with assistance | One of my goals |
|  |  |  |
| *Examples:*   * *I can participate in a professional meeting in a somewhat unfamiliar situation, such as a job interview.* * *I can participate in a community service learning project, such as volunteering at a health*   *fair for immigrants.*   * *I can interview someone for a research project or news article.* * *I can carry on a conversation with someone during a job shadowing experience.* * *I can…* | | | |
| **8) I can navigate some formal and official procedures.** | Yes | Yes, with assistance | One of my goals |
|  |  |  |
| *Examples:*   * *I can follow the steps to make an online purchase from a foreign website.* * *I can help fill out forms for visas, travel and work permits, and registrations.* * *I can explain my point of view in a minor legal procedure such as a traffic violation.* * *I can…* | | | |
| **9) I can understand that a cultural faux pas has occurred and understand how to correct.** | Yes | Yes, with assistance | One of my goals |
|  |  |  |
| *Examples:*   * *I can recognize when something is culturally inappropriate from the use of language,*   *from the tone of voice, or from the body language.*   * *I can understand why a gift I gave was inappropriate and decide what to give the next*   *time.*   * *I can understand why a comment I made was offensive and decide what to say next time.* * *I can understand why what I wore was inappropriate and decide what to wear next time.* * *I can understand why the food I served was not appreciated and decide what to serve next*   *time.*   * *I can write an apology to repair a relationship.* * *I can…* | | | |

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