**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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**Intermediate Level Intercultural Can-Do Statements**

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| **GLOBAL BENCHMARK*:* Investigation of Products and Practices*****I can identify common patterns in the products and practices of a culture.*** |
| **1) I can explore and reference current and past examples of authentic culture.** | Yes | Yes, with assistance | One of my goals |
|  |  |  |
| *Examples:* * *I can understand the main idea and characters of a short stories, folk tales, or graphic novels.*
* *I can recognize and reference famous artists and their works.*
* *I can understand the main idea of a movie clip or documentary.*
* *I can talk about a historical figure.*
* *I can have a simple conversation about a festival.*
* *I can summarize the contributions of a culture in a blog or multimedia presentation.*
* *I can…*
 |
| **2) I can compare and contrast some common products of other cultures and my own.** | Yes | Yes, with assistance | One of my goals |
|  |  |  |
| *Examples:** *I can describe similarities and differences in artwork.*
* *I can have a simple conversation about educational systems.*
* *I can provide basic information about countries’ government.*
* *I can identify similarities among folk tales.*
* *I can…*
 |
| **3) I can compare and contrast some behaviors or practices of** **other cultures and my own.** | Yes | Yes, with assistance | One of my goals |
|  |  |  |
| *Examples:** *I can compare and contrast eating habits.*
* *I can compare and contrast how people buy and sell.*
* *I can compare and contrast how families interact.*
* *I can compare and contrast how people celebrate.*
* *I can compare and contrast how my peers socialize.*
* *I can…*
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| **GLOBAL BENCHMARK: Understanding of Cultural Perspectives*****I can compare familiar cultural beliefs and values.*** |
| **4) I can describe some basic cultural viewpoints.** | Yes | Yes, with assistance | One of my goals |
|  |  |  |
| *Examples:* * *I can talk about the individual role of family members and the importance of birth order.*
* *I can give examples that show the importance of academics vs. sports.*
* *I can describe the importance of time vs. money.*
* *I can make simple comparisons about the roles of men and women in society.*
* *I can describe the importance of religion.*
* *I can describe how other cultures view major historical events differently.*
* *I can…*
 |
| **5) I can make some generalizations about a culture.** | Yes | Yes, with assistance | One of my goals |
|  |  |  |
| *Examples:** *I can sometimes identify cultural stereotypes or exaggerated views of a culture.*
* *I can compare some religious beliefs.*
* *I can classify the political beliefs of a nation in simple terms.*
* *I can determine which TV shows and films are popular in a given culture.*
* *I can…*
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| **GLOBAL BENCHMARK: Participation in Cultural Interaction*****I can interact at a functional level in familiar cultural contexts.*** |
| **6) I can handle short interactions with peers and colleagues in familiar situations at school, work, or play.** | Yes | Yes, with assistance | One of my goals |
|  |  |  |
| *Examples:* * *I can usually accept and refuse invitations in a culturally appropriate way.*
* *I can usually offer and receive gifts in a culturally appropriate way.*
* *I can usually request assistance in a culturally appropriate way.*
* *I can respond in a culturally accepted way when someone sneezes, toasts,*

*or pays me a compliment, etc.** *I can use some appropriate cultural conventions such as body language, turn-taking, interrupting, and agreeing, when talking with others.*
* *I can…*
 |
| **7) I can recognize and refer to elements of traditional and pop culture.** | Yes | Yes, with assistance | One of my goals |
|  |  |  |
| *Examples:** *I can refer to the importance of a historical event.*
* *I can describe the outcome in a recent election.*
* *I can talk about the popularity of a hit song.*
* *I can mention the significance of a work of art in conversation.*
* *I can describe the difference between a traditional costume and a fashion trend.*
* *I can…*
 |
| **8) I can sometimes recognize when I have caused a cultural misunderstanding and try to correct it.** | Yes | Yes, with assistance | One of my goals |
|  |  |  |
| *Examples:** *I can identify the appropriateness of topics and usually participate in conversations about them when attending a social or family event.*
* *I can sometimes sense when my behavior or speech has offended someone and apologize appropriately.*
* *I can sometimes recognize when I have acted or spoken too informally and try to correct it.*
* *I can sometimes recognize when my attempt at humor is misguided.*
* *I can…*
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