

ILR Levels and 6-Phrase Program

Relating the progress in the Six-Phase Programme to another widely known scale of progress. Excerpts from the U.S. government Interagency Language roundtable (IRL) definitions of proficiency levels; Hours under first “Time to reach” column from Alice Omaggio-Hadley *Teaching Language in Context*. Now in most cases there is no one qualified to assess GPs through an Oral Proficiency Interview and assign an ILR rating. Still we can have broad expectations related to the six phases, as stated in the table.

	Listening	Speaking	Time to reach	6-Phase Program	Time to reach
ILR 0+ “Memorized Proficiency” or “Pre-functional Proficiency” (ACTFL “Novice-High”)	Sufficient comprehension to understand a number of memorized utterances in areas of immediate needs... Understands with reasonable accuracy only when short memorized utterances or formulae are involved	satisfy immediate needs using rehearsed utterances... ask questions or make statements ... only with memorized utterances. Attempts at creating speech are unsuccessful.	Less than 480 hours!	Phase 1: Lexicarry-style utterances can be considered “memorised”. Information-gap activities require non-memorised speech, already in Phase 1. Understood utterances are mostly <i>not</i> memorised, but truly comprehended.	Less than 325 hours!
ILR 1 “Elementary Proficiency” or “Survival Proficiency” (ACTFL “Intermediate”; note that the ACTFL labels give a misleading impression of how advanced the person	Sufficient comprehension to understand utterances about basic survival needs and minimum courtesy and travel requirements.	Able to satisfy minimum courtesy requirements and maintain very simple face-to-face conversations on familiar topics. (From ACTFL Guidelines, not until high in this level can people “narrate”	480 hours for all but easiest langs	Phase 3: We expect the level of ability described here by mid-phase three, but for some people by the end of Phase 2. Time is based on mid-Phase 3	325 hours

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is, and therefore we avoid them)		and then not consistently.)			
ILR 2 “Limited Working Proficiency” (ACTFL “Advanced”)	understand conversations on routine social demands and limited job requirements. Able to understand face-to-face speech in a standard dialect, delivered at a normal speaking rate with some repetition and rewording, by a native speaker not used to dealing with foreigners, about everyday topics, etc.	routine work-related interactions that are limited in scope. In more complex ... work-related tasks, language usage generally disturbs the native speaker. ... with confidence, but not facility, most normal high-frequency social conversational situations, ... (In ACTFL Guidelines narrative ability quite strong)	720 hours	Phase 4: We expect the ability suggested here by mid-Phase 4	750 hours
ILR 3 “Professional Proficiency” (ACTFL “Superior”)	Comprehends most of ...pertinent to professional needs, as well as general topics and social conversation...many sociolinguistic and cultural references... may miss some subtleties and nuances. ... Increased ability to understand native speakers talking quickly,	participate effectively in most ... conversations on practical, social, and professional topics. Nevertheless, the individuals limitations generally restrict the professional contexts of language use to matters of shared knowledge and/or international convention. ... some noticeable	In excess of 1320 hours, as much as 2760 hours	Phase 5: We certainly aim for this level of comprehension ability by Phase 6. “Near total understanding” is part of the definition of Phase 6.	1500 hours

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	using nonstandard dialect or slang; however, comprehension not complete.	imperfections; yet, errors virtually never interfere with understanding ...			
ILR 4 “Advanced Professional Proficiency” or “Near Mother Tongue Proficiency” (ACTFL “Superior”)	understand fully all of speech with extensive and precise vocabulary, subtleties, and nuances in all standard dialects on any subject relevant to professional needs within the range of his experience, including social conversations; all intelligible broadcasts and telephone calls; and many kinds of technical discussions and discourse.	ability only rarely hinders him in performing any task requiring language; yet, the individual would seldom be perceived as a native. Speaks effortlessly and smoothly and is able to use the language with a high degree of effectiveness, reliability, and precision	Average of 17 years (Betty Lou Leaver)	Given enough time, Phase 6 should lead to such ability as described.	Thousands of hours of listening and interacting. Second language users who reach this level constitute a small percentage .
ILR 5 “Functionally Native Proficiency” or “Educated Native Speaker Proficiency” (ACTFL “Superior”)	Comprehension equivalent to that of the well-educated native listener.	equivalent to that of a highly articulate, well-educated native speaker	No info		One may need to complete a university degree in one’s field in the host country to have any hope of

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					reaching this level

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