

An Introduction to the ACTFL Language Proficiency Scale

BYU-Pathway

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Introduction: Part 1

- In your groups, find out everyone's
 - Name
 - Language(s) they teach/speak
 - Birthday (month and day)
 - Favorite flavor of ice cream
- Your group leader is the person who will have the next birthday.
- The group leader will need to report their findings when we come back together.
- You have 3 minutes to complete this activity.

Timer



Introduction: Part 2

- Get in small groups (3-4) and find out what phone apps are used most frequently.
- What do people typically do with their phone on a daily basis?
- You have one minute to discuss.

Timer 1



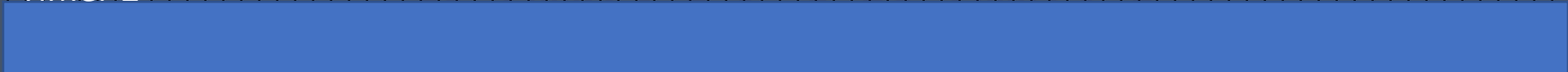
Introduction: Part 3

- Take out your smartphone and find a photo.
- Get into pairs and tell your partner the story behind the photo:
 - Setting
 - Sequence of Events Leading Up to Photo
 - What Happened Afterward
- You each have one minute

Timer 1



Timer 2



Introduction: Part 4

Find a different partner and discuss the following:

- The relative ease with which we can take an indefinite number of photos can be both a blessing and a curse. While it is now easy to “capture moments” that would have heretofore been impossible or impractical in times past, many find they have so many photos that storing and curating them is now the impossibility.
- Has the advent of easily accessible photography helped or hindered us as a society?
- What unintended consequences have arisen and how might they be mitigated?
- You have two minutes to explore this topic together

Timer



What would you do?

- **Setting**—It's the 1950's and World War II has ended with the United States emerging as a world leader.
- **Problem**—More conflicts are on the horizon (e.g. the Korean War, Iron Curtain, etc.), but there is no inventory of language ability among employees in the federal government other than self-reported, unverified labels such as *fluent*, *bilingual*, and *proficient*.
- **Challenge**—Create a classification system to describe language ability. It needs to be able to describe any language and simple enough that nonlinguists can understand and use it. Since current language teaching philosophies include Grammar-Translation, Audiolingualism and the Direct Method, this system needs to be agnostic to language method.

Set a timer for 10 minutes and brainstorm some of the the issues involved. Post it to the class discussion page. Read through at least two of your classmates posts and comment.

The Birth of the Proficiency Scale



A Brief History of Language Proficiency Scales in the US

1952

US Civil Service
charged to
inventory
government
language resources
No scale exists

1958

Scale split to
reflect four
different skill
areas and
standardized.

1976

NATO uses
the scale as
the basis
for the
STANAG
standards

1956

Foreign
Service
Institute (FSI)
develops 6-
level
integrated
scale

1968

The Interagency
Language
Roundtable (ILR)
is formalized.
Becomes known
as the ILR scale

1982

ACTFL
adopts the
scale and
adjusts it
for
academia

Proficiency Scale based on Functional Language

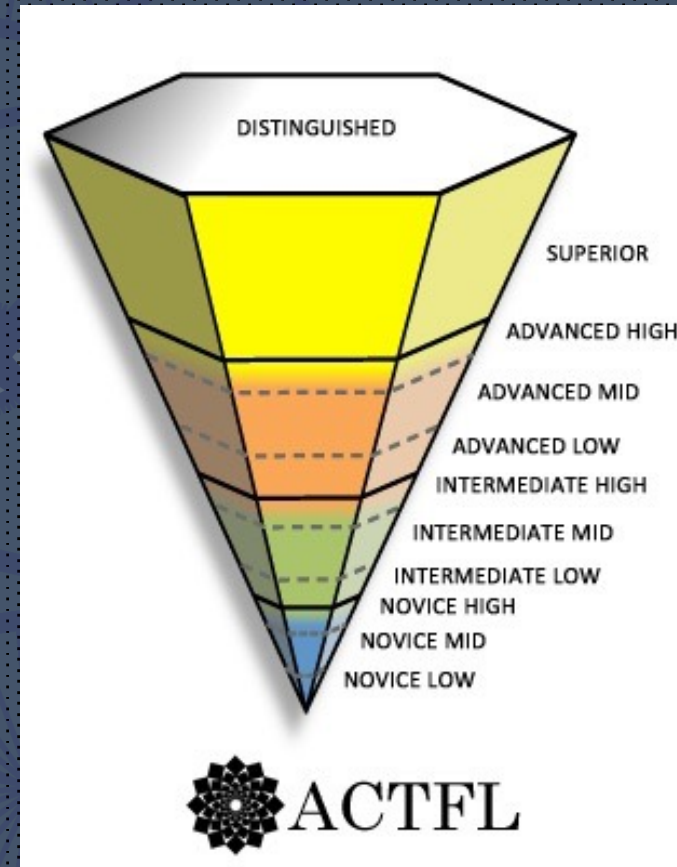
ILR/STANAG	ACTFL 2012
5	Distinguished
4	
3	Superior
2	Advanced
1	Intermediate
0	Novice

- Functional is defined by tasks speakers DO with language to communicate with each other in real world situations
- Each level contains unique tasks or functions that typically require a confluence of text type, content and accuracy expectations.
- What can speakers consistent DO at one level?
- What can they NOT do at the next level?

The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012

- Not what you KNOW about the language, but what you can DO SPONTANEOUSLY in real world situations.
- Five major levels (each subsumes all lower levels) that describe a confluence of:
 - Function
 - Accuracy
 - Content/context
 - Text Type

*Keep your
FACTs straight
and you can
determine the
major level!*



Functions...

dictate the text-type, content and accuracy (e.g. grammar, pronunciation, sociopragmatic, etc.) needed to be successful.

ILR Level	ACTFL Level	Functions	ILR Level	ACTFL Level	Functions
0	Novice	• Communicate minimally • Use formulaic utterances • Produce words, lists and phrases	2	Advanced	• Narrate and Describe in all time frames • Past • Present • Future • Linguistically negotiate situations with complications
1	Intermediate	• Create with language • Participate in Simple Conversations • Ask and Answer Questions • Engage in simple transactions	3	Superior	• Discuss Abstract Topics Extensively • Support Opinions with Nuanced Language • Explore hypothetical realities vis-à-vis conjecture

Introduction: Part 1

- In your groups, find out everyone's
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 - Language(s) they teach/speak
 - Birthday (month and day)
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Timer



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2

Introduction: Part 3

- Take out your smartphone and find a photo.
- Get into pairs and tell your partner the story behind the photo:
 - Setting
 - Sequence of Events Leading Up to Photo
 - What Happened Afterward
- You each have one minute

Timer 1



Timer 2



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4

Introduction: Part 2

- Get in small groups (3-4) and find out what phone apps are used most frequently.
- What do people typically do with their phone on a daily basis?
- You have one minute to discuss.

Timer 1



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3

Introduction: Part 4

Find a different partner and discuss the following:

- The relative ease with which we can take an indefinite number of photos can be both a blessing and a curse. While it is now easy to “capture moments” that would have heretofore been impossible or impractical in times past, many find they have so many photos that storing and curating them is now the impossibility.
- Has the advent of easily accessible photography helped or hindered us as a society?
- What unintended consequences have arisen and how might they be mitigated?
- You have two minutes to explore this topic together

Timer



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5

How do these tasks differ from one another? What linguistic functions do each elicit? What text type is needed to minimally answer each question? What grammar is needed? Vocab knowledge?

Proficiency Model Selected: ACTFL

Level	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced	Superior
F unctions	- Communicate minimally - Use formulaic utterances - Produce words, lists and phrases	- Create with language - Participate in Simple Conversations - Ask and Answer Questions - Engage in simple transactions	- Narrate and Describe in all time frames - Past - Present - Future - Linguistically negotiate situations with complications	- Discuss Abstract Topics Extensively - Support Opinions with Nuanced Language - Explore hypothetical realities vis-à-vis conjecture
A ccuracy	Only understood by patient, sympathetic listeners accustomed to nonnative speakers	Understood by people accustomed to speaking to nonnative speakers	Can be understood without confusion by monolinguals not accustomed to speaking to nonnative speakers	No patterns of errors in basic structures. Errors virtually never distract or impede communication
C ontent	Self	Self Daily Life	Self Daily Life Non-autobiographical Topics Topics of General Interest	Self Daily Life Non-autobiographical Topics Topics of General Interest Abstract Topics Figurative Language Use
T ext Type	Words Lists	Sentences Strings of sentences	Oral paragraphs with a variety of text types including the use of complex sentences, transitions, and discourse markers	Extended Discourse

Keep your FACTs straight and you are at a major level.

Activity 1: Novice

- *Watch the following video clip.*
- *Que Hora Es?*
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=4cKGyOE_jOI
- What's difference between the way the man with the eye patch speaks vs. the others?

Novice-Level Speakers

- Can do all the Novice Functions consistently, but cannot sustain Intermediate Functions
- May know a lot ABOUT the language, but can't USE the language in a sustained manner for real-world communication.
- Are pre-functional (thus the reason for the 0 level for ILR).

ILR Level	ACTFL Level	Functions
1	Intermediate	• Create with language • Participate in Simple Conversations • Ask and Answer Questions • Engage in simple transactions
0	Novice	• Communicate minimally • Use formulaic utterances • Produce words, lists and phrases

Novice Example

- Watch the snippet :
 - https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/guidelines/speaking_novice.mp4
- Answer the questions on the following page.

Novice Questions

- **Function:** Can communicate minimally with formulaic and rote utterances, lists and phrases
- **Accuracy Expectation:**
- **Content:**
- **Text Type:**

Why is this an example of Novice level speech?

Novice Questions

- **Function:** Can communicate minimally with formulaic and rote utterances, lists and phrases
 - **Accuracy Expectation:**
 - **Content:**
 - **Text Type:**
- **Function:** Can communicate minimally with formulaic and rote utterances, lists and phrases
 - **Accuracy Expectation:** Can be understood by VERY sympathetic listener
 - **Content:** Self
 - **Text Type:** Words and phrases

Why is this an example of Novice level speech?

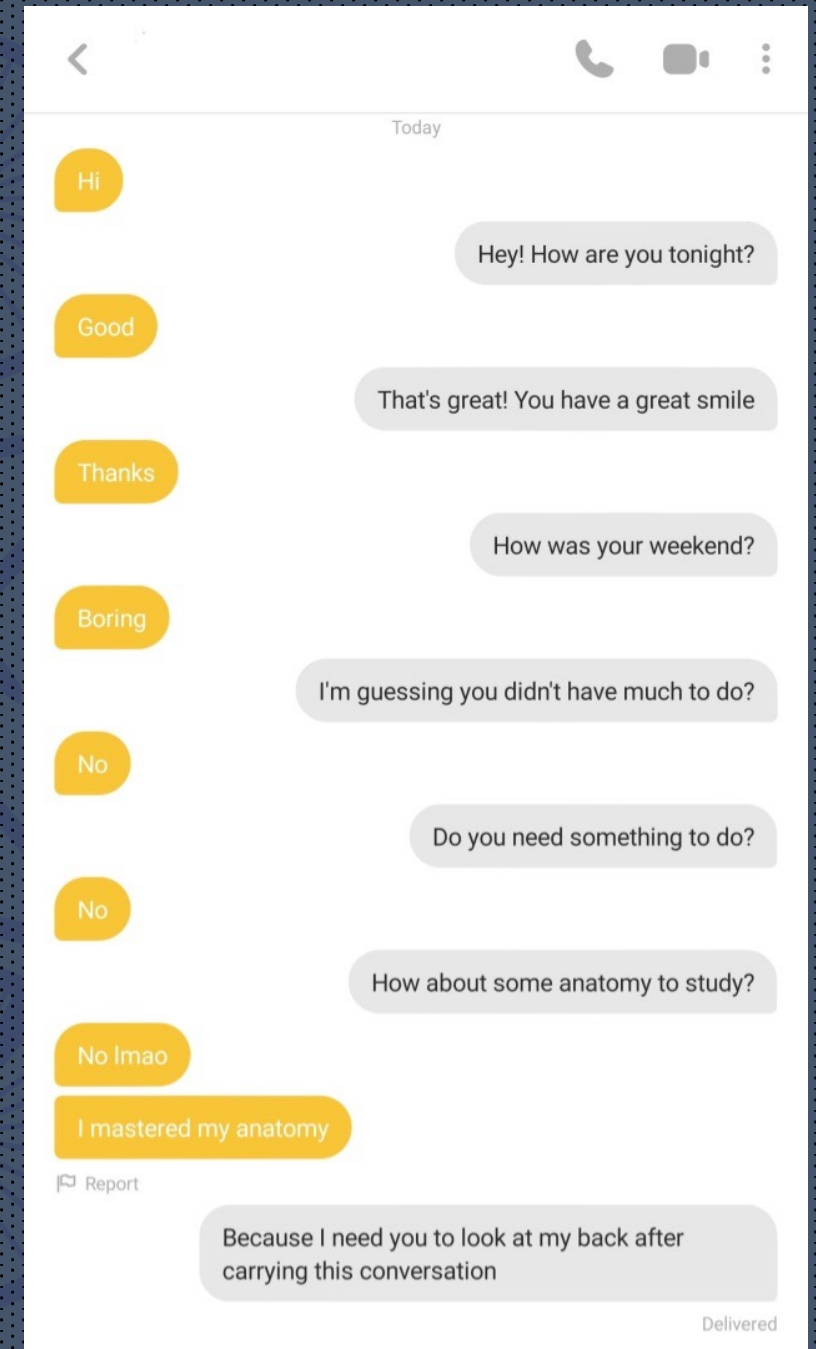
Novice Characteristics

Level	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced	Superior
F unctions	- Communicate minimally - Use formulaic utterances - Produce words, lists and phrases	- Create with language - Participate in Simple Conversations - Ask and Answer Questions - Engage in simple transactions	(1) Narrate and (2) Describe in all time frames - Past - Present - Future - Linguistically negotiate situations with complications	- Discuss Abstract Topics Extensively - Support Opinion with Nuanced Language - Explore hypothetical realities vis-à-vis conjecture
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Keep your FACTs straight and you are at a major level.

Activity 2: Intermediate

- Does this conversation look like it could occur between two native speakers of English?
- What, if any, grammatical errors do you find?
- What is the text type (words, sentences, paragraphs, etc.) that is predominantly found by each of the speakers?
- Which would be Novice? Intermediate? Why?



Intermediate Speakers

- Can do all Intermediate Functions consistently, but cannot sustain Advanced Functions.
- Create with language. They can and will say things they have never heard before (even if it is nonstandard) but be understood.
- Limited to transactional language that takes place in the here-and-now.
- Will have some features of Advanced (e.g. use of tense) but can't sustain across different content areas and/or when speaking at the appropriate text type of paragraphs.

ILR Level	ACTFL Level	Functions
2	Advanced	• (1) Narrate and (2) Describe in all time frames • Past • Present • Future • Linguistically negotiate situations with complications
1	Intermediate	• Create with language • Participate in Simple Conversations • Ask and Answer Questions • Engage in simple transactions

Intermediate Example

- Watch the snippet :
 - https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/guidelines/Speaking_Intermediate_Guadalupe_typicalday1.m4v
- Answer the questions on the following page.

Intermediate Questions

- What **functions** (or questions) was the person being asked to respond to?
 - Did the interviewee understand all of them?
 - What evidence do you have?
- How did **accuracy** (grammar, pronunciation, socio pragmatic, etc.) affect the mental effort needed to understand the interviewee?
 - Huge amounts?
 - A lot?
 - Some?
 - Almost none?
- What **content area** was the interviewee asked to respond to?
 - Self?
 - Daily life?
 - General Community Interest?
 - World/Abstract Topics?
- What **text type** did the interviewee respond with?
 - Words?
Phrases?
 - Complete sentences?
Strings of sentences?
 - Paragraphs?
 - Extended Discourse?

Why is this an example of Intermediate level speech?

Intermediate Characteristics

Level	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced	Superior
F unctions	- Communicate minimally - Use formulaic utterances - Produce words, lists and phrases	- Create with language - Participate in Simple Conversations - Ask and Answer Questions - Engage in simple transactions	(1) Narrate and (2) Describe in all time frames - Past - Present - Future - Linguistically negotiate situations with complications	- Discuss Abstract Topics Extensively - Support Opinion with Nuanced Language - Explore hypothetical realities vis-à-vis conjecture
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T ext Type	Words Lists	Sentences Strings of sentences	Oral paragraphs with a variety of text types including the use of complex sentences, transitions, and discourse markers	Extended Discourse

Keep your FACTs straight and you are at a major level.

Activity 3: Moving from Intermediate to Advanced

Directions

We introduce ourselves throughout our lives, but whether we do it with Intermediate or Advanced language depends on where we are and who we are talking to. Read the following two examples and note the differences.

- Does this introduction look like it could be given by a native speaker of English?
- What, if any, grammatical errors do you find?
- What is the text type (words, sentences, paragraphs, etc.) that is predominantly found by each of the speakers?
- Go to the next slide and read the introduction of the same person and answer the same questions.

Example 1

My name is Troy Cox. I am a professor at Brigham Young University. I have worked here for 23 years. I am in the Linguistics Department and am part of the Center for Language Studies. I am married to Heidi and we have three children. They are Cameron, Hannah and Millie. We have a dog. Her name is JoJo. When I don't work, I like to ride my bike, take photos, cook, and practice yoga.

Activity 3 — Example 2

My name is Troy Cox, and I've been working full-time at Brigham Young University since 1996. While I am currently in the Center for Language Studies (CLS), the first 17 years of my work at the Y had me at the English Language Center where I worked concurrent with my pursuit of a PhD. After receiving my doctorate, I applied for a faculty position at the CLS as the research and assessment coordinator, was hired, and began working there in 2013. But while my assignment is to the CLS, my home department is Linguistics. As a scholar, I do research in second language learning, teaching and assessment. I've been married to the wonderful Heidi Cox for a few months longer than I've been at BYU, and we are the parents of three children: Cameron, Hannah and Millie. We've finally hit empty-nester status and are the owners of a Boston Terrier named JoJo who the kids call "the little angel" and claim is the new favorite child. The byline from my social media account sums my life up fairly well: Disciple; Husband & Father; Amateur Cyclist, Yogi, Cook & Photographer; Professor (Applied Linguistics/Language Testing). I identify first and foremost as a man of faith and one who loves his family, but when I am not engaged in activities with my church or work, you'll find me road cycling, practicing yoga, cooking or working on my photography skills.

How do the two examples differ?

Example 1

My name is Troy Cox. I am a professor at Brigham Young University. I have worked here for 23 years. I am in the Linguistics Department and am part of the Center for Language Studies. I am married to Heidi and we have three children. They are Cameron, Hannah and Millie. We have a dog. Her name is Cookie. When I don't work, I like to ride my bike, take photos, cook, and practice yoga.

Example 2

My name is Troy Cox, and I've been working full-time at Brigham Young University since 1996. While I am currently in the Center for Language Studies (CLS), the first 17 years of my work at the Y had me at the English Language Center where I worked concurrent with my pursuit of a PhD. After receiving my doctorate, I applied for a faculty position at the CLS as the research and assessment coordinator, was hired, and began working there in 2013. But while my assignment is to the CLS, my home department is Linguistics. As a scholar, I do research in second language learning, teaching and assessment. I've been married to the wonderful Heidi Cox for a few months longer than I've been at BYU, and we are the parents of three children: Cameron, Hannah and Millie. We've finally hit empty-nester status and are the owners of a Boston Terrier named JoJo who the kids call "the little angel" and claim is the new favorite child. The byline from my social media account sums my life up fairly well: Disciple; Husband & Father; Amateur Cyclist, Yogi, Cook & Photographer; Professor (Applied Linguistics/Language Testing). I identify first and foremost as a man of faith and one who loves his family, but when I am not engaged in activities with my church or work, you'll find me road cycling, practicing yoga, cooking or working on my photography skills.

Post something somewhere in which you note the differences.

Activity 3 — Example 1

My name **is** Troy Cox. I **am** a professor at Brigham Young University. I **have worked** here for 23 years. I **am** in the Linguistics Department **and am** part of the Center for Language Studies. I **am married** to Heidi **and** we **have** three children. They **are** Cameron, Hannah **and** Millie. We **have** a dog. Her name **is** Cookie. **When** I **don't work**, I like to **ride** my bike, **take** photos, **cook**, and **practice** yoga.

- Is this primarily present tense or does it span time frames?
- Can the sentences be reordered fairly easily without needing to make changes to the grammar?
- Are the transitions additive or do they contain subordination and show relationships?
- Is the content primarily daily life or does it include areas beyond the autobiographical?

Total word count :	36
Number of different words :	35
Complexity factor (Lexical Density) :	97.20%
Average Syllables per Word :	1.59
Sentence count :	10
Average sentence length (words) :	8.33
Max sentence length (words) :	17
Min sentence length (words) :	4

<http://textalyser.net/index.php?lang=en#analysis>

Activity 3 — Example 2

My name **is** Troy Cox, **and** **I've been working** full-time at Brigham Young University **since** 1996. **While** **I am** currently in the Center for Language Studies (CLS), **the first** 17 years of my work at the Y **had** me at the English Language Center **where** **I worked** concurrent with my pursuit of a PhD. **After receiving** my doctorate, **I applied** for a faculty position at the CLS as the research and assessment coordinator, **was hired**, and **began** working there in 2013. **But while** my assignment **is** to the CLS, my home department **is** Linguistics. **As** a scholar, **I do** research in second language learning, teaching and assessment. **I've been married** to the wonderful Heidi Cox for a few months longer **than** **I've been** at BYU, **and** we are the parents of three children: Cameron, Hannah and Millie. We've finally **hit** empty-nester status and **are** the owners of a Boston Terrier **named** JoJo who the kids **call** "the little angel" and **claim is** the new favorite child. The byline from my social media account **sums** my life up fairly well: Disciple; Husband & Father; Amateur Cyclist, Yogi, Cook & Photographer; Professor (Applied Linguistics/Language Testing). **I identify first and foremost** as a man of faith **and** one **who loves** his family, **but** when **I am not engaged** in activities with my church or work, **you'll find** me road **cycling**, **practicing** yoga (vinyasa for the most part), **cooking** or **working** on my photography skills.

- Is this primarily present tense or does it span time frames?
- Can the sentences be reordered fairly easily without needing to make changes to the grammar?
- Are the transitions additive or do they contain subordination and show relationships?
- Is the content primarily daily life or does it include areas beyond the autobiographical?

Total word count :	123
Number of different words :	105
Complexity factor (Lexical Density) :	85.40%
Average Syllables per Word :	1.65
Sentence count :	14
Average sentence length (words) :	17.62
Max sentence length (words) :	49
Min sentence length (words) :	1

<http://textalyser.net/index.php?lang=en#analysis>

Advanced speakers can

- Describe using
 - Adjectives (agreement with gender of nouns)
 - Subordination (e.g. The elder, **who is in my district**, is from Utah.)
- Narrate using
 - Tenses (past, present & future)
 - Aspect (habitual, perfect or completed actions & progressive actions)
 - Mood (indicative, conditional, imperative, subjunctive, etc.)
 - Transitions
- Negotiate complicated situations with
 - Hypotheticals/Conditionals
 - Exploring different possible resolutions
- Use transitions that demonstrate relationships between ideas
- Be easily understood

Advanced Speakers

- Can do all Advanced Functions consistently, but cannot sustain Superior Functions.
- Still have noticeable errors, but those errors do not impede the functions.
- Use a variety of text types depending on context and desired affect on the audience.
- Are *story-tellers* and can share details about their past and plans for the future.
- Are *reporters* and can discuss concretely what is happening in the world around them.

ILR Level	ACTFL Level	Functions
3	Superior	• Discuss Abstract Topics Extensively • Support Opinions with Nuanced Language • Explore hypothetical realities vis-à-vis conjecture
2	Advanced	• (1) Narrate and (2) Describe in all time frames • Past • Present • Future • Linguistically negotiate situations with complications

Advanced Example

- Watch the snippet :
 - https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/guidelines/speaking_advanced_past_narr.mp4
- Answer the questions on the following page.

Advanced Questions

- What **functions** (or questions) was the person being asked to respond to?
 - Did the interviewee understand all of them?
 - What evidence do you have?
- How did **accuracy** (grammar, pronunciation, socio pragmatic, etc.) affect the mental effort needed to understand the interviewee?
 - Huge amounts?
 - A lot?
 - Some?
 - Almost none?
- What **content area** was the interviewee asked to respond to?
 - Self?
 - Daily life?
 - General Community Interest?
 - World/Abstract Topics?
- What **text type** did the interviewee respond with?
 - Words?
Phrases?
 - Complete sentences?
Strings of sentences?
 - Paragraphs?
 - Extended Discourse?

Why is this an example of Advanced level speech?

Advanced Characteristics

Level	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced	Superior
F unctions	- Communicate minimally - Use formulaic utterances - Produce words, lists and phrases	- Create with language - Participate in Simple Conversations - Ask and Answer Questions - Engage in simple transactions	(1) Narrate and (2) Describe in all time frames - Past - Present - Future - Linguistically negotiate situations with complications	- Discuss Abstract Topics Extensively - Support Opinion with Nuanced Language - Explore hypothetical realities vis-à-vis conjecture
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T ext Type	Words Lists	Sentences Strings of sentences	Oral paragraphs with a variety of text types including the use of complex sentences, transitions, and discourse markers	Extended Discourse

Keep your FACTs straight and you are at a major level.

Activity 4: Moving from Advanced to Superior

Example 1

Read the article below and then compare it to the article on the next page.

A Man Ate \$120,000 Duct-Taped Banana Art: 'I really love this installation. It's very delicious'

By Hannah Yasharoff

Days after Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan's duct-taped banana work went viral, the art piece saw a splitting new development: A man ate the real-life \$120,000 banana stuck to the wall at Art Basel in Miami. Video footage showed artist David Datuna approaching the exhibit, as others had done to take photos. He peeled the banana off the wall, announced he was participating in "performance art" and dubbed himself a "hungry artist."

"I love Maurizio Cattelan artwork and I really love this installation," he later captioned an Instagram post. "It's very delicious."

"Are you kidding?" Gallery Director Peggy Leboeuf can be heard asking moments later. "This is so stupid."

"No," Datuna replied.

Leboeuf told BBC Datuna was asked to leave but not arrested. "We can go further, but I don't think we will," she added. USA TODAY has reached out to Art Basel for further comment.

Don't worry: The banana was replaced after the incident.

The first edition of the banana art, titled "Comedian," was already sold from Emmanuel Perrotin's gallery, Galerie Perrotin, which has locations in New York and Asia, the site reports, and more editions also have been selling.

Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan's piece "Comedian" at Art Basel in Miami on Dec. 5, 2019.

The second edition sold to a man at the annual art festival, the site reports, and Perrotin and Cattelan agreed to raise the price to \$150,000 before selling the third edition to a museum. USA TODAY has reached out to Galerie Perrotin for comment.

CNN previously reported that there are no clear instructions for buyers on whether the bananas start to decompose. The Miami Herald reported that owners can replace the banana as needed.

Before the reported sales, Perrotin told CNN that bananas are "a symbol of global trade, a double entendre, as well as a classic device for humor," adding that Cattelan turns normal objects into "vehicles of both delight and critique."

Activity 4: Example 2 (Page 1 of 2)

Compare this to the article on the previous page.

A (Grudging) Defense of the \$120,000 Banana

By Jason Farago

Art may be long, and life short, but the existence of a hand fruit is most ephemeral of all. This week at Art Basel Miami Beach, the art world's premier Champagne-steeped swap meet, no work drew more grins, guffaws and selfies than a new sculpture by the semiretired Italian trickster Maurizio Cattelan: a banana duct-taped to the wall, its peel already speckled with brown spots.

It's titled "Comedian." By Wednesday it had already won art-world notoriety, and on Saturday it achieved a public visibility that any artist would envy, after a self-promoting wag tore the banana off the wall and gobbled it up. (Not many iconic art works can also be said to be a rich source of potassium.)

Suffice it to say that works of contemporary art rarely make the cover of the New York Post, but this is Mr. Cattelan's second recent appearance on the tabloid's front page; in 2016, he emerged from semiretirement to install a functional 18-karat-gold toilet in a restroom of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, which drew snaking lines of art lovers. Now the Italian artist is back in the headlines and the Instagram stories, and his purloined banana has offered the perfect weapon to those who think that contemporary art is one big prank. I can only imagine the "60 Minutes" segment this would elicit if Morley Safer were still alive.

"Comedian" was withdrawn from view at Art Basel on Sunday, because of the crowds and the hullabaloo, so let us first settle the matter of whether the artwork has been destroyed or defaced. I don't have much good to say about the random guy who munched Mr. Cattelan's banana, though it continues a long tradition of literalists who like bringing conceptual art from the realm of ideas back down to Earth. Numerous artists have relieved themselves in "Fountain," Marcel Duchamp's upturned urinal; John Lennon, in 1966, notoriously picked up an apple in Yoko Ono's first London exhibition and took a bite. And thus they met.

For when it comes to the banana's ontological status as art or produce, I thought we had settled this already. If you buy a light work by Dan Flavin and the fluorescent bulb starts flickering, you can replace it with a new one. If you buy a Sol LeWitt wall drawing and you move house, you can erase the old one and draw a new one. A banana, even more than a light fixture, was always going to require replacement; Mr. Cattelan had already drawn up instructions for the lucky collectors to replace the fruit every week to 10 days ("Everybody changes flowers regularly," his dealer Emmanuel Perrotin observed.)

As to why Mr. Cattelan's banana has gripped the public imagination, it has something to do with its price — \$120,000 to \$150,000, in an edition of three and two artists' proofs — and the emperor's-new-clothes impression of the international collecting class fawning over it at Art Basel. (When Lucille Bluth, the doyenne of "Arrested Development," said, "It's one banana, Michael, what could it cost? Ten dollars?," it turns out she was off by a factor of 10,000.) Something to do, also, with the comic potential of bananas. I don't think that a taped-up pineapple would have got this much viral traction.

I wasn't in Miami this week, and I feel a little hesitant delivering a critical judgment about a work I haven't seen in person. Though even writing that, I recognize I am exposing myself to derision. What kind of critic treats a piece of fruit with the same seriousness as a Rembrandt? It's just a banana, you nitwit!

Activity 4: Example 2 (Page 2 of 2)

Well, is it art? Is Mr. Cattelan taking us for a ride? Did you have to be there? Isn't this banana just a banana, and not a wry commentary on male sexuality, genetic monocultures, or Central American geopolitics? (I am sparing you a lecture on the Guatemalan coup d'état of 1954, and the origin of the phrase "banana republic"....)

Let me reassure you, you are not a hopeless philistine if you find this all a bit foolish. Foolishness, and the deflating sensation that a culture that once encouraged sublime beauty now only permits dopey jokes, is Mr. Cattelan's stock in trade. But perhaps you will find more to appreciate in Mr. Cattelan's work if you take note of two points: one formal, one social.

First, I have been dismayed to discover that for a work that has been endlessly photographed and parodied over the course of its one-week life, almost nobody has discussed that it is not just "a banana." It is a banana and a piece of duct tape, and this is a significant difference. "Comedian" is not a one-note Dadaist imposture in which a commodity is proclaimed a work of art — which would be an entire century out of date now, as dated as a film director mimicking D.W. Griffith. "Comedian" is a sculpture, one that continues Mr. Cattelan's decades-long reliance on suspension to make the obvious seem ridiculous and to deflate and defeat the pretensions of earlier art.

His renowned "Novecento" (1997), a taxidermied horse suspended from a Baroque ceiling like a drooping chandelier, collapses both the martial pomposity of the Fascists and the futility of modern art to live up to classical architecture. "La Rivoluzione Siamo Noi" (2000) consists of a miniature doll representing the artist, suspended from a coat rack and dangling like an air-cured prosciutto. By 2011, when Mr. Cattelan opened his retrospective at the Guggenheim, he diminished all his previous works by suspending them from hooks in the center of the gallery, like laundry hung out to dry.

Suspension via duct tape, in particular, has a history in Mr. Cattelan's art. Perhaps the most important antecedent for the banana sculpture is his notorious "A Perfect Day" (1999), for which Mr. Cattelan used duct tape to fasten his dealer Massimo De Carlo to a white wall, who stayed taped above the ground for the show's opening day. The banana should be seen in the context of this earlier work, which places the art market itself on the wall, drooping and pitiful.

But perhaps you have read all this and thought: this Times critic is as bad as the poseurs at the fair! In which case you have already anticipated my second point: Mr. Cattelan directs these barbs at art from inside the art world, rather than lobbing insults from some cynical distance. His entire career has been a testament to an impossible desire to create art sincerely, stunted here by money, there by his own doubts.

In this way Mr. Cattelan is wholly unlike Banksy, the ultra-bankable street artist whose default stance is populist mockery: using an auction house to sell a work that self-destructs, or selling a print of a painting sale with the title "I Can't Believe You Morons Actually Buy This" (The title has one unprintable last word.) Banksy's juvenile, notably British stance satisfies a dismayingly common belief that all artists are con artists, and that museums, collectors and critics are either dupes or hustlers. Indeed, it's exactly because of frauds like Banksy that audiences believed Mr. Cattelan arranged the theft of his own gilded commode in September from Blenheim Palace, as if every artist was putting something over.

Actually, real artists are not out to hoodwink you. What makes Mr. Cattelan a compelling artist, and what makes Banksy a tedious and culturally irrelevant prankster, is precisely Mr. Cattelan's willingness to implicate himself within the economic, social and discursive systems that structure how we see and what we value. It makes sense that an artist would find those systems dispiriting, and the duct-taped banana, like the suspended horse, might testify to his and all of our confinement within commerce and history. In that sense, the title "Comedian" is ironic — for Mr. Cattelan, like all the best clowns, is a tragedian who makes our certainties as slippery as a banana peel.

Differences Between the Examples

Example 1

- Author is reporting (through description and narration) what happened.
- The author's opinion on the event is unknown.
- Language conveys factual information and is fairly neutral

Example 2

- Author is editorializing through supported opinion and a larger discussion on the abstract topic of contemporary art.
- The author's voice is made manifest through nuanced word choice, deliberately chosen anecdote and grammatical complexity.

Superior Speakers

- Can sustain Superior Functions across a variety of concrete and abstract topics.
- Use a variety of text types depending on context and desired affect on the audience.
- May have sporadic errors but those errors do not detract from the functions

ILR Level	ACTFL Level	Functions
3	Superior	• Discuss Abstract Topics Extensively • Support Opinions with Nuanced Language • Explore hypothetical realities vis-à-vis conjecture

Superior Example

- Watch the snippet :
 - https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/guidelines/Speaking_Superior.m4v
- Answer the questions on the following page.

Superior Questions

- What **functions** (or questions) was the person being asked to respond to?
 - Did the interviewee understand all of them?
 - What evidence do you have?
- How did **accuracy** (grammar, pronunciation, socio pragmatic, etc.) affect the mental effort needed to understand the interviewee?
 - Huge amounts?
 - A lot?
 - Some?
 - Almost none?
- What **content area** was the interviewee asked to respond to?
 - Self?
 - Daily life?
 - General Community Interest?
 - World/Abstract Topics?
- What **text type** did the interviewee respond with?
 - Words?
Phrases?
 - Complete sentences?
Strings of sentences?
 - Paragraphs?
 - Extended Discourse?

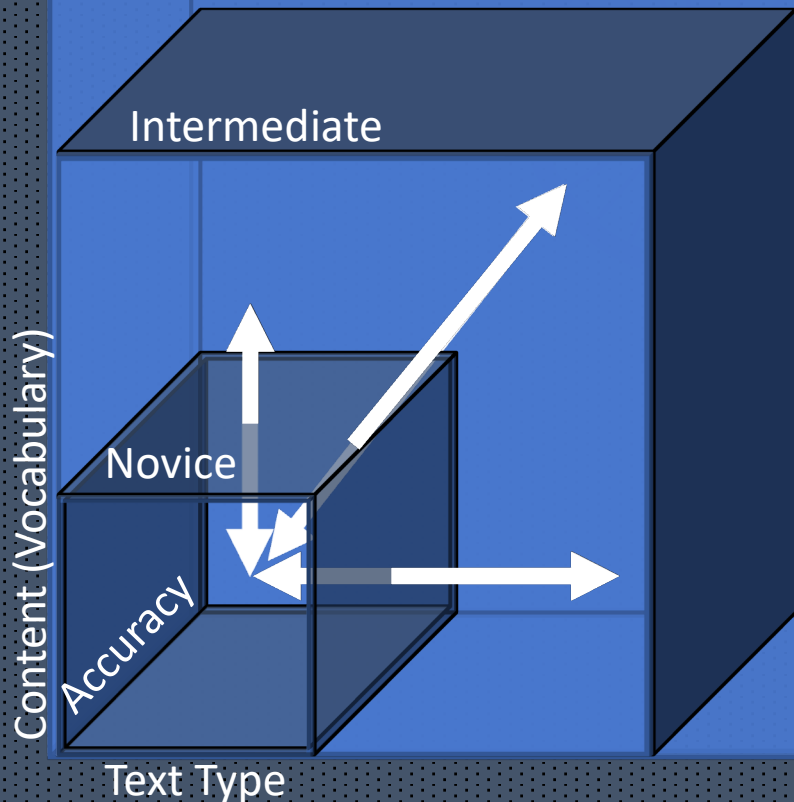
Why is this an example of Superior level speech?

Superior Characteristics

Level	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced	Superior
F unctions	- Communicate minimally - Use formulaic utterances - Produce words, lists and phrases	- Create with language - Participate in Simple Conversations - Ask and Answer Questions - Engage in simple transactions	(1) Narrate and (2) Describe in all time frames - Past - Present - Future - Linguistically negotiate situations with complications	- Discuss Abstract Topics Extensively - Support Opinion with Nuanced Language - Explore hypothetical realities vis-à-vis conjecture
A ccuracy	Only understood by patient, sympathetic listeners accustomed to nonnative speakers	Understood by people accustomed to speaking to nonnative speakers	Can be understood without confusion by monolinguals not accustomed to speaking to nonnative speakers	No patterns of errors in basic structures. Errors virtually never distract or impede communication
C ontent	Self	Self Daily Life	Self Daily Life Non-autobiographical Topics Topics of General Interest	Self Daily Life Non-autobiographical Topics Topics of General Interest Abstract Topics Figurative Language Use
T ext Type	Words Lists	Sentences Strings of sentences	Oral paragraphs with a variety of text types including the use of complex sentences, transitions, and discourse markers	Extended Discourse

Keep your FACTs straight and you are at a major level.

Differences between Major Levels



- Are geometric differences that are dictated by Functions that require different levels of among Accuracy, Content/context, and Text type.
- Creating tasks with aligned FACTs that measure two adjacent (Floor and Ceiling), major levels is the ONLY way to assess proficiency.
- Breakdown at the ceiling level occurs in one or more of the criteria

Review

- What are the 4 major levels and the functions of each?
- What is the accuracy expectation, content/context and text type of each major level?
- What is the difference between floor and ceiling performance?

The **PACE** Approach

