

**PROFICIENCY LEVEL CHECKLIST**

This is a checklist designed to help you establish personal language learning goals and to help you evaluate your language learning progress. Speaking proficiency is evaluated on a "0" to "5" scale, where "0" indicates no proficiency and "5" indicates native (or totally bilingual) speaker proficiency. Levels are based on the Foreign Service Institute system.

This checklist was developed by Dr. Orville Boyd Jenkins. Originally developed in 1985. Based upon the format by Brewster and Brewster in *LAMP*.

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 0 + I can use a minimum of 50 words in appropriate contexts YES NO  
 (not just count or recite the days of the week). \_\_\_\_\_  
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ELEMENTARY PROFICIENCY--Level One  
 Able to satisfy routine travel needs and minimum courtesy requirements.

Level One requirements should be mastered minimally in about three months of full-time language learning experience.

I can initiate conversations and use appropriate leave- takings to close conversations. \_\_\_\_\_

I can give a brief self-introduction. \_\_\_\_\_

I can make a social introduction of someone else. \_\_\_\_\_

I can understand and correctly respond to questions about my marital status, nationality, occupation, age, and place of birth. \_\_\_\_\_

I can order a simple meal. \_\_\_\_\_

I can ask and tell the time of day, the day of the week, and the date (complete, in proper form). \_\_\_\_\_

I can go to the market or butchery and ask for vegetables, fruit, milk, bread, and meat, and I can bargain when appropriate. \_\_\_\_\_

I can tell someone how to get from here to the post office, a restaurant, a hotel, my home or a church. \_\_\_\_\_

I can negotiate for a taxi ride or a hotel room and get a fair price. \_\_\_\_\_

I can buy an item of art, a curio or household tools or supplies. \_\_\_\_\_

I can get the bus or train I want, buy a ticket, and get off where I intended to. \_\_\_\_\_

I can understand when a national is rebuking, correcting or scolding me and at least minimally respond in an appropriate manner to clarify or rectify the problem. \_\_\_\_\_

I can express anger or frustration in a socially acceptable manner. \_\_\_\_\_

I can follow simple stories and anecdotes and laugh at appropriate places. \_\_\_\_\_

I can pray a simple prayer. \_\_\_\_\_

I can read and comment simply on a passage of scripture well enough that a Bible Study group can understand the main idea of the passage. \_\_\_\_\_

I can follow the Scripture readings and hymn numbers in a worship service. \_\_\_\_\_

I can use the language to elicit language help from ordinary people. \_\_\_\_\_

I can identify problem areas in grammar or usage well enough to get technical help from a special helper or tutor. \_\_\_\_\_

I can use the equivalents of the present, future, past and perfect tenses in the language correctly. \_\_\_\_\_

I can correctly use applied ("indirect object"), passive and causative verb aspects or equivalent structures. \_\_\_\_\_

I get personal subject prefixes/suffixes and possessives right almost every time. \_\_\_\_\_

I can use the subjunctive forms correctly in commands and requests. \_\_\_\_\_

I can distinguish and express simple ideas of distance, direction and position (locative forms). \_\_\_\_\_

I can use the language well enough to assist someone who does not know the language in coping with the situations and problems covered in Level 1. \_\_\_\_\_

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1 + I can meet all Level 1 requirements and at least three of the Level 2 requirements listed below. \_\_\_\_\_

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LIMITED WORKING PROFICIENCY--Level Two  
Able to satisfy routine social demands and limited work requirements.

Level Two requirements should be mastered minimally in about 6 to seven months of full-time study in the language.

I can give a brief autobiography and talk about my plans and hopes. \_\_\_\_\_

I can give detailed information about the weather, my family, my home and my living arrangements. \_\_\_\_\_

I can take and give simple messages over the telephone. \_\_\_\_\_

I can describe my most recent job or activity in detail. \_\_\_\_\_

I can use the language to hire an employee and agree on qualifications, salary, hours, and special duties. \_\_\_\_\_

I can express dissatisfaction with a worker or colleague without alienating the person or causing the person to lose face before others. \_\_\_\_\_

I can ask forgiveness when rebuked by a national supervisor or colleague, without becoming inappropriately defensive or losing face myself. \_\_\_\_\_

I can describe the basic structure of the government in both my home and host countries. \_\_\_\_\_

I can describe the geography of both my home and my host countries. \_\_\_\_\_

I can recognize and use appropriate social titles for people in various social roles (ministers of government, pastors, elders, chiefs, teachers, etc.). \_\_\_\_\_

I can understand headline topics in a radio or TV newscast. \_\_\_\_\_

I can sometimes converse informally on topics for which I have not previously prepared, though at such times my speech may be halting and uncertain. \_\_\_\_\_

I can give a brief testimony or Christian witness. \_\_\_\_\_

I can describe the purpose and function of the mission as an organization and of missions as an enterprise. \_\_\_\_\_

I can relate basic Christian beliefs and the distinctives of my Christian denomination. \_\_\_\_\_

I can participate in an adult Sunday School class, making appropriate contributions on the topic in simple terms. \_\_\_\_\_

I can recite the Lord's Prayer with the congregation in a worship service. \_\_\_\_\_

I can work with a language helper almost entirely in the language. \_\_\_\_\_

I can elicit and accept help on language patterns or word usage from people within a normal conversation. \_\_\_\_\_

I can move the conversation back into the language when the national is trying to use English. \_\_\_\_\_

I can use compound tenses (or equivalent structures) to give precise ideas of the sequence of events. \_\_\_\_\_

I can usually understand and use conditional structures (tenses and sequences) correctly in most time frames. \_\_\_\_\_

I can use negative tenses and subject prefix sets, or personal pronouns for subjects, correctly for most persons and time frames. \_\_\_\_\_

I can correctly use relative structures for time and place and noun classes, though I may get class or gender forms confused sometimes. \_\_\_\_\_

I can correctly use adverbial structures (the grammatical or vocabulary equivalents of well, easily, therefore, since, as such, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

I can correctly use the most common conjunctions or equivalent structures. \_\_\_\_\_

I can precisely discuss distance, direction and position (locative forms), matching gender or class accurately. \_\_\_\_\_

I can recognize and use demonstratives (these, that, those, etc.) in singular and plural, though I may confuse gender or class forms. \_\_\_\_\_

I can correctly use and distinguish the forms and meaning of the stative, passive and causative structures and their combinations. \_\_\_\_\_

I can understand subjunctive forms and use them correctly for meanings related to uncertainty or supposition. \_\_\_\_\_

I feel confident that my pronunciation is always intelligible, even if noticeably foreign. \_\_\_\_\_

My intonation and tones are close enough that people can usually get the basic idea without my having to repeat more than once. \_\_\_\_\_

I feel confident that I understand what native speakers want to tell me on topics like those in Level 2 and that they understand me, at least 80% of the time. \_\_\_\_\_

I can use the language well enough to assist someone who does not know the language in coping with the situations and problems covered by Level 2. \_\_\_\_\_

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2 + I can meet all Level 2 requirements and at least three of the Level 3 requirements listed below. \_\_\_\_\_  
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MINIMUM PROFESSIONAL PROFICIENCY--Level Three  
Able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social, and professional topics.

Level Three requirements should be mastered minimally after about 9 months of full-time language learning, or after six months of full-time language learning plus six to twelve months of a regular continuing study program. A strong performance in Level Three should be demonstrated after about three to four years of study and work in the language.

I can handle emergencies such as a plumbing problem or a door that was hung backwards by the builder, or a traffic accident. \_\_\_\_\_

I am able to correctly understand any information given to me over the telephone. \_\_\_\_\_

I could cope with a social blunder, and apologize or make restitution in an acceptable manner, without losing face in a public situation. \_\_\_\_\_

I could discuss an undeserved traffic ticket, or other injustice adequately. \_\_\_\_\_

I can easily follow and contribute to a conversation between native speakers when they try to include me. \_\_\_\_\_

I can listen to the news on TV or radio and get the gist of each story, or follow an interview or discussion. \_\_\_\_\_

I can read the headlines and lead paragraphs of the daily newspaper, and the sports page. \_\_\_\_\_

I can read professional materials, e.g. a Christian newspaper or a journal in my professional area, well enough to get some ideas for my work. \_\_\_\_\_

I can listen, take notes, and summarize accurately a sermon or public speech by a native speaker. \_\_\_\_\_

I can discuss political and cultural questions in the light of my Christian identity and my national origin. \_\_\_\_\_

I can teach a TEE class, Women's group or adult Bible class, and handle questions and discussion. \_\_\_\_\_

I can understand and accurately answer most doctrinal questions asked me. \_\_\_\_\_

I can witness to an educated native speaker or preach the Gospel confident that I am communicating what I intend, without obviously amusing or irritating my audience linguistically. \_\_\_\_\_

I can "defend" my faith in Christ from attack by a non-Christian or anti-Christian adherent of another belief. \_\_\_\_\_

I can usually figure out new words I hear or read from the usage and context. \_\_\_\_\_

I can usually keep the discussion in the language instead of English even though the national keeps switching to English. \_\_\_\_\_

I now have sufficient vocabulary and grammatical structure to complete any sentence that I begin. \_\_\_\_\_

I can use all forms of compound sentences or equivalent structures, with all the conjunctions or adverbs necessary to express my ideas with precision. \_\_\_\_\_

I get all demonstrative forms right almost every time. \_\_\_\_\_

I can match gender or noun class and correct subject or object forms most of the time. \_\_\_\_\_

I do not try to avoid any of the grammatical features of the language. \_\_\_\_\_

I can speak at a normal rate of speech, with only rare hesitations. \_\_\_\_\_

I feel that I can carry out the professional responsibilities of my work in my new language. \_\_\_\_\_

I could serve as an informal interpreter in any of the Level Three situations. \_\_\_\_\_

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3 + I can meet all Level 3 requirements and at least three of the Level 4 requirements listed below. \_\_\_\_\_

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**FULL PROFESSIONAL PROFICIENCY--Level Four**

Able to use the language fluently and accurately on all levels normally pertinent to professional needs. The emphasis is more specifically on technical language skills.

It is possible to minimally attain Level Four requirements after learning and working in the language for about four years. Strong performance at Level Four will normally occur after five to seven years of working in the language. Skills in learning independently of special resources, and social involvement with people may be attained earlier than the specific language skills for Level Four.

I feel I have a comprehensive grasp of the local cultural world-view. \_\_\_\_\_

I can understand humor, idioms and puns, and I can actively participate in fun and humorous situations. \_\_\_\_\_

I can understand the details of a TV or radio newscast or interview program and discuss it with nationals. \_\_\_\_\_

I can use the language in any situation required, to discuss any topic that comes up. \_\_\_\_\_

I can read novels or non-fiction, such as a school history textbook, in the language. \_\_\_\_\_

I can read professional journals well enough to criticize ideas and concepts in peer group discussion or professional societies. \_\_\_\_\_

I can appropriately alter my speech style for a public lecture, or a conversation with a professor, an illiterate person, an employee, a close friend, a pastor or a national who supervises my work. \_\_\_\_\_

I can always understand native speakers when they talk with each other. \_\_\_\_\_

I can detect errors of style among speakers or in newspaper articles. \_\_\_\_\_

I practically never make grammatical mistakes. \_\_\_\_\_

I can often explain the meaning and usage of a word or phrase better than a national. \_\_\_\_\_

My vocabulary is always extensive and precise enough for me to convey my exact meaning in professional discussions. \_\_\_\_\_

I can edit a manuscript, such as a TEE book or other publication, written by a native speaker. \_\_\_\_\_

I think I can carry out my major job assignment as effectively in the language as in my mother tongue. \_\_\_\_\_

I think I can preach or teach as effectively in the language as in my mother tongue. \_\_\_\_\_

I could serve as an informal interpreter for an important guest from overseas or from another ethnic group at a professional or social function, or denominational meeting. \_\_\_\_\_

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4 + In discussions on all subjects, my vocabulary is always extensive and precise enough to enable me to convey my exact meaning. \_\_\_\_\_

I share the world-view of the people well enough that I can talk about and defend any of their beliefs or values. \_\_\_\_\_  
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NATIVE OR BILINGUAL PROFICIENCY--Level Five  
Speaking proficiency equivalent to that of an educated native speaker.  
Level Five may be reached in ten or twelve years.

Native speakers react to me just as they do to each other--I am usually considered an "insider." \_\_\_\_\_

I sometimes feel more at home in my second language than in my mother tongue. \_\_\_\_\_

I can do mental arithmetic as easily in the language as in my mother tongue. \_\_\_\_\_

My vocabulary is at least as extensive and precise as in my mother tongue. \_\_\_\_\_

I consider myself to be completely bilingual and bicultural, with equivalent ability in my mother tongue and in my second language. \_\_\_\_\_

I can amass whatever vocabulary, idiom or style feature that I need, independently of all special resources for foreigners. \_\_\_\_\_

I am in no way limited by language *per se* but only by my exposure and experience. \_\_\_\_\_

Any traces of foreignness in my usage and creativity in the language are almost imperceptible. \_\_\_\_\_

I consider myself a native speaker of the language. \_\_\_\_\_