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### First Nations Language Assessment Benchmarks

**SPEAKING STAGE ONE: BEGINNER PROFICIENCY**

### LOW BEGINNER:

- learner can speak very little; can respond to basic questions about simple personal information
- learner may be able introduce themself, and say up to 50 words
- learner speaks in single words, yes/no answers, or strings of two or three words
- learner demonstrates very limited vocabulary
- learner makes very long pauses, often speaks words spoken
- learner often switches to English
- pronunciation difficulties restrict communication
- learner needs considerable assistance, and depends on gestures for communication

### MID BEGINNER:

- learner can communicate in a limited way, some immediate and personal needs,
- learner is not able to use the phone
- learner can ask and answer simple questions, ie WH questions, from a teacher
- learner is still not well understood by Elders, only teachers and other learners
- uses single words and short 2-5 word sentences
- learner knows approximately 500 words; can recognize, if not say all of them properly
- learner demonstrates limited vocabulary and a few simple phrases
- learner demonstrates some use of very basic grammar (for example can use simple present/past for I/you forms)
- learner makes long pauses and depends on gestures to express meaning
- learner demonstrates use of vocabulary which is somewhat limited
- classroom training to reach this stage: approximately 100 intensive hours

### HIGH BEGINNER:

- learner can take part in short routine conversations about simple, familiar subjects, can tell a simple story
- learner can communicate basic needs, ask and respond to simple familiar questions, and can describe things using short sentences
- learner knows approximately 1,000 words and can say most of them (at least the root word), though often not pronounced properly or with proper grammar
- learner demonstrates use of basic grammar, uses correct past tense
- learner demonstrates adequate use of vocabulary for basic communication
- pronunciation difficulties often restrict communication; needs a little assistance to understand/be understood
- learner can deliver beginner material to adult students
- classroom training to reach this stage: approximately 200 to 400 intensive hours

Adapted from Jack Miller’s EdD Thesis (2004), itself adapted from American, Canadian, and European Benchmarks (ACTFL, CLB and CEFR). Several points added by Sʔiməłʔaxʷ (Michele Johnson) from CLB benchmarks, research, and teaching/learning experience (Oct. 24, 2013). These benchmarks represent Speaking only; benchmarks also exist for Listening, Reading, and Writing.
First Nations Language Assessment Benchmarks

**SPEAKING STAGE TWO: INTERMEDIATE PROFICIENCY**

### LOW INTERMEDIATE:

- learner can participate with effort in routine social conversations and can talk about needs and familiar topics of personal relevance
- learner can give a simple speech, narrate an event, or storytell for 5 minutes
- learner is able to communicate simple information on the phone
- learner is able to teach beginner material to adult students
- learner can teach beginner material to children in an immersion (nest) situation, though with considerable difficulty, has difficulty with immersion classroom management
- learner is unable to deliver more complex material (i.e. geography, animal habitats, etc.)
- learner can use a variety of simple structures and some complex ones. Grammar and pronunciation errors are frequent and sometimes impede communication
- at this stage, learner becomes understood by Elders (not just teachers and other learners)
- learner demonstrates a range of common everyday vocabulary; may avoid topics with unfamiliar vocabulary
- learner can speak using connectives (and, but, first, next, then, because)
- learner speaks with many hesitations and pauses, and errors are frequent
- classroom training to reach this stage: approximately 400-600 hours (1 year full-time)

### MID INTERMEDIATE:

- learner can communicate comfortably in most common daily situations with Elders and other learners, grammar and pronunciation errors are still frequent, but rarely impede communication—learner is understood
- learner is able to teach in an immersion situation, (i.e. a nest), though still a challenge
- learner can participate in formal and informal conversations, involving problem solving and decision making situations in the classroom or home
- learner can speak on familiar concrete topics at a descriptive level
- can demonstrate a range of everyday vocabulary, including many common phrases
- learner can express all the simple grammar for present, past and future tense.
- learner can not yet create complex grammar such as complex compound words with transitive and intransitive forms
- learner can pray formally, and is able to learn the high grammar used in prayer
- classroom training to reach this stage: approximately 1,000 intensive hours (2 years)

### HIGH INTERMEDIATE:

- learner can communicate effectively in most daily and social situations, including work
- learner can work more easily in an immersion setting, i.e. teaching in a nest
- learner can communicate more complex information over the phone
- learner can participate in conversations with Elders with confidence; grammar and pronunciation errors rarely impede communication
- learner can provide descriptions, opinions, and explanations about most topics
- in social interaction, the learner demonstrates an increased ability to respond appropriately to the formality level of the situation
- learner can use a variety of sentence structures
- learner can synthesize abstract concepts and provide a hypothesis (can speak about hypothetical situations)

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### SPEAKING

#### STAGE THREE: ADVANCED PROFICIENCY

**LOW ADVANCED:**

- learner can obtain, provide, and exchange key information for important tasks in complex situations
- learner can deal with complaints politely
- learner can give a presentation, speech, or storytell for 30 minutes
- learner can actively and effectively participate in 30 minute formal exchanges (debates) with a group of debaters about complex, abstract, and detailed information
- learner’s grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation errors very rarely impede communication
- learner can use the full range of transitive and intransitive verb structures, and can create compound words with complex verb structures (for example: “we (plural) went hunting for you-all” is expressed as one word in Okanagan Interior Salish)
- learner’s speech is mostly accurate in form, but may be slightly rigid in its structure
- classroom training to reach this stage: estimated at 2,000 intensive hours

**MID ADVANCED:**

- learner can satisfy social, school-related, university expectations for competent communication
- learner can actively participate in meetings and interviews which are complex, abstract, academic, and detailed
- learner can lead meetings and manage interactions in a small, familiar group session
- learner can contribute to extended 60 min. discussions which are complex, abstract, academic, and detailed
- learner’s grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation errors do not impede communication

**HIGH ADVANCED:**

- learner can create or contribute to discussions in a broad range of (all) complex situations
- learner can deliver public presentations to audiences, using complex, accurate language
- learner can lead large, formal group discussions on complex topics
- learner can explain complex ideas to diverse groups, debate on complex topics,
- learner can teach high level, complex topics
- learner can negotiate and resolve conflicts in a variety of situations, including effectively responding to workplace sarcasm
- learner can create and co-create complex technical, high-level oral discourse in their specialized field of study

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