

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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Glossary of Terms

These definitions are intended to be context-specific to the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines and to the Foreign Language Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools and are not intended to be comprehensive or exhaustive.

abstract language	Expression that signifies a concept, quality, or idea rather than material or physical reality. (Opposite of concrete language)
aspect	A verbal category that refers to some characteristic of the activity or state of a verb. It indicates whether an action or state is viewed as completed or in progress (I went/I was going), instantaneous or enduring (The sun came out/The sun was shining), momentary or habitual (They vacationed at the shore/They used to vacation at the shore). Aspect is often indicated by prefixes, suffixes, infixes, phonetic changes in the root verb, and the use of auxiliaries.
authentic materials	Also “culturally authentic materials,” meaning materials that have been created for and by native speakers of the language and that have been derived from the culture itself.
authentic text	Oral and written communication produced by native language users and directed to an audience of native language users in the target culture, such as a newspaper article. This contrasts with a text that is created for learners in the target language solely for instructional or assessment purposes, such as many textbook reading passages.
circumlocution	The use of language that one does know in order to explain a specific word that one does not know.
code-switching	Switching from one language to another to complete an idea, thought, or sentence, often when one lacks the word or phrase in the language in which one started.
cognates	Words between languages that have a common origin and are therefore readily understood. For example, the French word <i>leçon</i> and the English word “lesson.”
cohesive devices	Language components that link ideas for smooth flow within and among sentences and paragraphs, such as conjunctions, relative pronouns, pronoun substitutions (subject, verb), adverbs of time, and subordinate clauses.
communicative competence	The ability to function in a communicative setting by using not only grammatical knowledge but gestures and intonation, strategies for making oneself understood, and risk-taking in attempting communication. [Shrum & Glisan, 13]

communicative modes

interpersonal Direct communication (e.g., face-to-face or telephonic) between individuals who are in personal contact; direct written communication between individuals who come into personal contact.

interpretive Receptive communication of oral or written messages; facilitated communication via print and nonprint materials; listener, viewer, reader works with visual or recorded materials whose creator is absent.

presentational Productive communication using oral or written language; spoken or written communication for people (an audience) with whom there is no immediate personal contact or which takes place in a one-to-many mode; author or creator of visual or recorded material not known personally to listener. (*Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century*. [1996], p. 33)

comprehensible input Students should be able to understand the essence of what is being said or presented to them. This does not mean, however, that teachers must use only words students understand. In fact, instruction can be incomprehensible even when students know all of the words. Students learn a new language best when they receive input that is just a bit more difficult than they can easily understand. In other words, students may understand most, but not all, words the teacher is using. (Retrieved from www.teachervision.fen.com/learning-disabilities/bilingual-education/10260.html)

connected discourse Coherent, sequential speech or writing.

connected sentences A series or string of sentences or text that is topically related. Unlike paragraphs, sentences are interchangeable; altering the order of the sentences does not affect the meaning of the message.

concrete language Language that is used to refer to particular persons, places, and objects.

context The meanings that words or texts have for listeners or readers that are dependent on situational factors, such as the other words that surround them, the physical setting in which words are uttered, gestures and other non-linguistic signs that accompany speech, the history of the relationship between a speaker and listener, and so on. <http://labspace.open.ac.uk/mod/oucontent/view.php?id=445539§ion=1.4>

contextual clues Hints within the communication or its context that facilitate the comprehension of unfamiliar words.

conventions of language Matters of implicit mutual agreement among language users such, as grammar and vocabulary. Such agreement is necessary for successful communication.

cultural competence	Refers to the appropriateness of a response within a social context.
cultural framework	A term used to describe traditions, value systems, myths, and symbols that are common in a given society.
perspective	Traditional ideas, attitudes, meanings, and values of members of a society. [Shrum & Glisan, 155-56]
practice	The patterns of behavior accepted by a society; they represent knowledge of “what to do when and where” (e.g., how individuals address one another, the social strata, the use of space, gestures, and mealtime etiquette). [Shrum & Glisan, 155]
product	What is created by members of the culture, both tangible and intangible (e.g., a house, an eating utensil, a painting, a piece of literature as well as a system of education, a ritual, an oral tale, or a dance). [Shrum & Glisan, 155]
cultural references	Allusions to shared ideas, beliefs, values, and knowledge of a particular culture/society.
description	The verbal representation of a person, place, thing, event, or process.
discourse	Unit of structured speech or writing.
discrete sentences	Stand-alone sentences that lack further organization, such as into paragraphs.
extended discourse	The extensive treatment of a topic that results in connected paragraphs; a communicative building process in both form and meaning.
extralinguistic	Not included in the language itself, such as a visual or contextual clue that supports understanding.
false cognates	Words between languages that appear to have a common origin and thus the same meaning, but do not. For example the French word <i>anniversaire</i> (birthday) and the English word “anniversary.”
fluency	The flow in spoken or written language as perceived by the listener or reader. Flow is made possible by clarity of expression, the acceptable ordering of ideas, use of vocabulary and syntax appropriate to the context.
formal correspondence	For example: business letter, professional report.
formal settings	For example: academic conferences, the professional workplace.
formal/informal writing	Features of writing (format, punctuation, choice of vocabulary) that reflect different audiences and purposes for communication.

formulaic (expressions)	Constituting or containing a verbal formula or set form of words such as “How are you?/Fine, thank you.” “Thanks very much./You’re welcome.”
functional language ability	A language user’s ability to accomplish real world communicative tasks such as handling a simple social transaction or resolving a situation with a complication.
generic vocabulary	Words and expressions that serve equally well in a variety of categories and contexts. Such vocabulary is readily intelligible to most people but does not normally deepen meaning. See <i>specialized vocabulary</i> .
genre	Any category of art, music, film, literature, etc., based on a set of stylistic criteria.
goal	A broad, general statement about the aims or purposes of what the program, course, or activity intends to accomplish.
grammatical	Correct linguistic form or structure.
heritage language students	Those who have backgrounds in a language other than English or who come from immersion experiences—formal or informal.
hypothetical discourse	Language used to speculate or express conjecture.
idiom	A common figurative expression separate from the literal meaning of the component words.
inflection (voice)	
grammatical	Alteration of the form of a word by the addition of a suffix, English <i>dog</i> > <i>dogs</i> ; changing the form of a base: English <i>spoke</i> < <i>speak</i> that indicates grammatical features such as number, person, mood, or tense.
voice	Alteration in the pitch or tone of the voice.
informal settings	For example: in the home, with friends, with family, casual everyday situations.
Interculturality	The interaction of people from different cultural backgrounds using authentic language appropriately in a way that demonstrates knowledge and understanding of the cultures.
interlocutor	The person with whom one is speaking; a conversation partner.
intonation	The rise and fall in pitch of the voice in speech.

learning outcome	Identifies what the learner will know and be able to do by the end of a course or program; specific, demonstrable characteristics—knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, interests—that allow evaluation of the extent to which course goals have been met.
less commonly taught languages	Some of the most commonly spoken languages in the world, including Chinese, Arabic, Russian, Korean, and Japanese non-Roman script and alphabet and character-based (logographic) languages.
level appropriate	The content, process, skill, or material described requires students to function at the level at which they are studying.
lexical	Of or relating to the words or the vocabulary of a language as distinguished from its grammar and structure.
low-frequency structures	Complex language constructions that are seldom used or required in a given language in its less formal expression but often necessary in the most formal types of high-level communicative tasks, such as persuading and hypothesizing.
narrative	The relating of a story or account of events, experiences, etc., whether true or fictitious, told in a logical and chronological order.
nonalphabetic symbols	Those elements of meaning that appear in both Roman and non-Roman languages that indicate stress, punctuation, syllabification; including ideographs and pictograms. (^ ? \$) * + 8 .
nonverbal communication	Communication through sending and receiving wordless (mostly visual) cues between people—through gestures and touch, body language or posture, physical distance, facial expression, and eye contact.
nuance	A subtle or slight degree of difference, as in meaning, feeling, or tone; a gradation.
objective	A brief, clear statement that describes the desired learning outcome of a course or program (i.e., the specific skills, values, and attitudes students should exhibit that reflect the broader goals).
oral discourse	Spoken communication.
paragraph	A self-contained, cohesive unit of spoken or written discourse that generally consists of multiple sentences linked by internal organization and connectors.
paraphrase	An alternative way of communicating a similar message.

performance	The ability to use language that has been learned and practiced in an instructional setting (i.e., language ability that has been practiced and that is within familiar contexts and content areas).
persuasive discourse	Language that attempts to persuade the reader or listener to adopt an idea, attitude, or action.
proficiency	The ability to use language in real world situations in a spontaneous interaction and non-rehearsed context and in a manner acceptable and appropriate to native speakers of the language; one's functional language ability.
proficiency target	Reasonable expectations of language use for assessment at different levels of study.
proficiency range	The scope of ability to communicate in a foreign language, incorporating a breadth of receptive and productive skills (listening comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing).
recombinations	The ways in which speakers and writers put together linguistic elements they have learned (for example, words, phrases, and sentences) to create an original message.
redundancy	The repetition of linguistic information.
reflective writing	Written material that is planned and organized through the entire writing process. This type of writing is generally necessary to produce texts at high proficiency levels.
register	The level of formality or informality used in a specific context for a specific audience.
familiar	Synonymous with informal; casual, colloquial, natural, relaxed, simple, unceremonious, unconstrained, unofficial.
formal	Language use characterized by spoken or written speech used before an audience; the assumption of a role by the speaker, such as a sermon, political speech, lecture, letter, poetry. Marked by an impersonal, objective, and precise use of language; a formal prose style is typically used in scholarly books and articles, technical reports, research papers, and legal documents. (http://grammar.about.com/od/fh/g/formalstyleterm.htm)
informal	Marked by a casual, familiar, and generally colloquial use of language; often more direct than formal language and may rely more heavily on contractions, abbreviations, short sentences, and ellipses. (http://grammar.about.com/od/il/g/informalstyleterm.htm)

rephrasing	To restate or rewrite in a new, clearer, or different way.
rhetorical structures	Devices of language that create a literary effect, such as personification, understatement, metaphor, or hyperbole.
specialized vocabulary	Words, expressions, technical terms, etc., that are meaningful to members of a specific group or field of study or endeavor.
spontaneous writing	Writing that is produced when preparation and production need to occur at the same time. It does not allow sufficient opportunity for revision, rewriting, or editing.
strings of sentences	A series of isolated or discrete sentences typically referring to a given topic but not grammatically or syntactically connected.
syllabic writing system	A writing system that uses symbols to represent syllables rather than individual sounds (such as letters). The Japanese writing system is syllabic.
syntactic	The principles and rules that govern the construction of phrases, sentences, paragraphs, etc.
tailoring of language	Adjusting language so that it is the appropriate register for a particular individual or audience.
target language	The language being studied, second language (L2).
text modality	The purpose for which a text is written. For example, there is the instructive mode that refers to texts that instruct by communicating factual information (newspaper report), and there is the evaluative mode that refers to texts that make evaluative statements (that is judgments) with both factual and abstract content (newspaper editorial).
time frames	General periods of time — past, present, or future — however these may be indicated in a particular language. For example, “future time” is indicated in French and Spanish by the near future (aller/ir + infinitive); immediate past (venir de/acabar de + infinitive).
time markers	Words that indicate the time frame of an event such as adverbs or adverbial phrases such as “yesterday,” “two years ago.”
writing protocols	A set of language-specific guidelines used by writers. For example, in English, an essay begins with a topic sentence and always has a concluding paragraph.

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