

Task Force on Language fluency requirements in ASL and English for entry and exit for interpreting programs

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Recommendations	
Language 1* (L1)	Language 2 (L2)
ASLTA/ACTFL Level: Advanced Mid to High (adapted for all languages) Or (For all languages): CFER Level C1	ASLTA/ACTFL Level: Superior Or CFER Level C2
ASLTA/ACTFL Level: Advanced Low to Mid Or CFER Level B2	ASLTA/ACTFL Level: Superior Or CFER Level C1

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Descriptions					
ASLTA	CEFR	ACTFL			
Goals 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5, all standards	Engage in conversations, provide information, express feelings, emotions, opinions Understand practices and perspectives of Deaf Culture Use ASL with other disciplines Understand nature of language Use ASL at home, around the world	C 2	Can understand all signed texts Can express fluently, able to handle nuances in complex situations Can summarize information and reconstruct arguments and accounts in a coherent manner	Superior	Communicate with accuracy and fluency in order to participate fully and effectively in conversations on a variety of topics in formal and informal settings from both concrete and abstract perspectives. Can discuss, explain, narrate with ease and accuracy

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Descriptions				
ASLTA	CEFR	ACTFL		
Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, & 5. Deficient in one goal or 1-3 standards	See ASLTA Standards C 1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed texts on complex subjects showing controlled use of organizational patterns and cohesive devices.	Advanced	Can engage in conversation with a clearly participatory manner in order to communicate information a variety of topics, national and international Use description and narration and portray past, present and future. Deal with social situations and control of basic structures and genres to be understood by native speakers

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Descriptions				
ASLTA	CEFR	ACTFL		
Lacking 1-3 goals; lacking standards in every goal	B 2	Can understand main themes of complex discourse on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical topics in specialized field Can interact with degree of fluency and spontaneity in interaction with native/proficient signers Can produce clear, detailed discourse on range of subjects and explain viewpoints	Intermediate	Can use language fluently about familiar topics in daily life Can express personal meaning, ask simple questions, handle situations Can produce utterance level, diverse thoughts in present time

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Task Force Charge

- CIT members passed a motion (12/08/2020) for CIT to establish a Taskforce to determine specific and descriptive entry and exit fluency requirements in both American Sign Language and English. This Task Force was to be composed of experts in language teaching, acquisition, and fluency along with members of ASLTA, CCIE, ACTFL, who could advise CIT of the fluency requirements to enter and exit an interpreter education program (IEP). This Task Force was to conduct its study within a time frame of six months and report its findings to the boards of CIT, ASLTA and CCIE.
- Task Force Members: Cynthia Roy, Chair, Betsy Winston, CoChair, Jessica Bentley-Sussman, Keith Gamache, Joseph Hill, Sharon Grigsby-Hill, and Rico Peterson

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Overview of Task Force Work Plan

- **Overview of Task Force Work Plan:**
- The work plan consisted of
- reviewing existing fluency charts, descriptions, and levels,
- discussing these findings via email and zoom,
- recommending specific and descriptive standards,
- reporting the findings to the CIT Board and its fellow organizations

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Review of Existing Fluency Descriptions and Levels

- **ASLTA Standards:** In partnership with the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) ASLTA publishes national standards for learning ASL as a modern/world language for kindergarten through college/post-secondary (K-16)
- (<https://www.actfl.org/resources/actfl-proficiency-guidelines-2017>)
- (https://asla.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/National_ASL_Standards.pdf)
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- **Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)** is an international guideline of performance descriptions and levels for what individuals can interact using that language in various settings and modalities.
- (<https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/home>)

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Discussion of fundamental understandings

- It is essential that we recognize the fundamental difference between communicating and interpreting. Functional fluency for interpreters is knowing how to do things with language, such as narrate, explain, persuade, argue and more. Few existing programs offer this curricular scope or sequence.
- The primary focus of interpreting education consists of learning how these functional aspects are used to construct similar meanings in a second language.
- Students entering any university level programs are also rarely proficient in professional language use in their first/native language.
- It seems the bulk of complaints from Deaf people about "bad" interpreting is a result of limited ASL fluency of interpreters.
- Students who learn ASL in four semesters (and are typically at ASLPI level 2) have not sufficiently mastered ASL and, sometimes English, to study interpretation.
- While we agree that students in interpreting courses (and indeed throughout their careers) must continue to hone interactive language skills in both languages, foundational (basic and intermediate) language learning cannot, and should not be a primary focus of interpreting education.
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CAUTION

- Our recommendations are focused on the **future**, not the present. The recommendations below are a first step towards that goal.
- We recognize that implementing these recommendations will require **substantive changes** in our current programs, and we recognize that these changes will not take place overnight.


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Recognize and honor diversity

- We also recognize that Interpreting programs consistently ignore and devalue knowledge of dialects and varieties of ASL and American Mainstream English. We urge CIT, ASLTA, CCIE to **more explicitly recognize and honor the diversity in US Deaf and hearing communities**, and to assist programs in teaching and assessing these varieties. Ignorance of such valuable language resources is no longer acceptable and threaten valid assessments.

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What's Next



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