

Understanding Proficiency

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Proficiency Vs. Performance

Proficiency

- to communicate meaningful information
- in spontaneous interaction
- understandable to native speakers
- does not mean perfection

Performance

- performance in familiar contexts
- practiced and rehearsed
- connected to specific curriculum

Proficiency OR Performance?

- A. Mrs L. is a French teacher who just completed a chapter on food with her French 1 class. She decides to take her students to a local African restaurant as a capstone activity. At the restaurant, students are expected to order their food and provide opinions in the target language (all functions they have rehearsed in class). The students do very well in performing these tasks.

- B. Suddenly, two African men come to the table and start interacting with her students. Their questions are not necessarily related to food. After the initial shock, Mrs L.'s students start uttering a few words ("Yes", "No", "sometimes") and using simple sentences ("I am 13 years old", "Yes, I like French"), they have a hard time understanding the native speakers.

Proficiency Levels

What are the
proficiency levels?

Novice

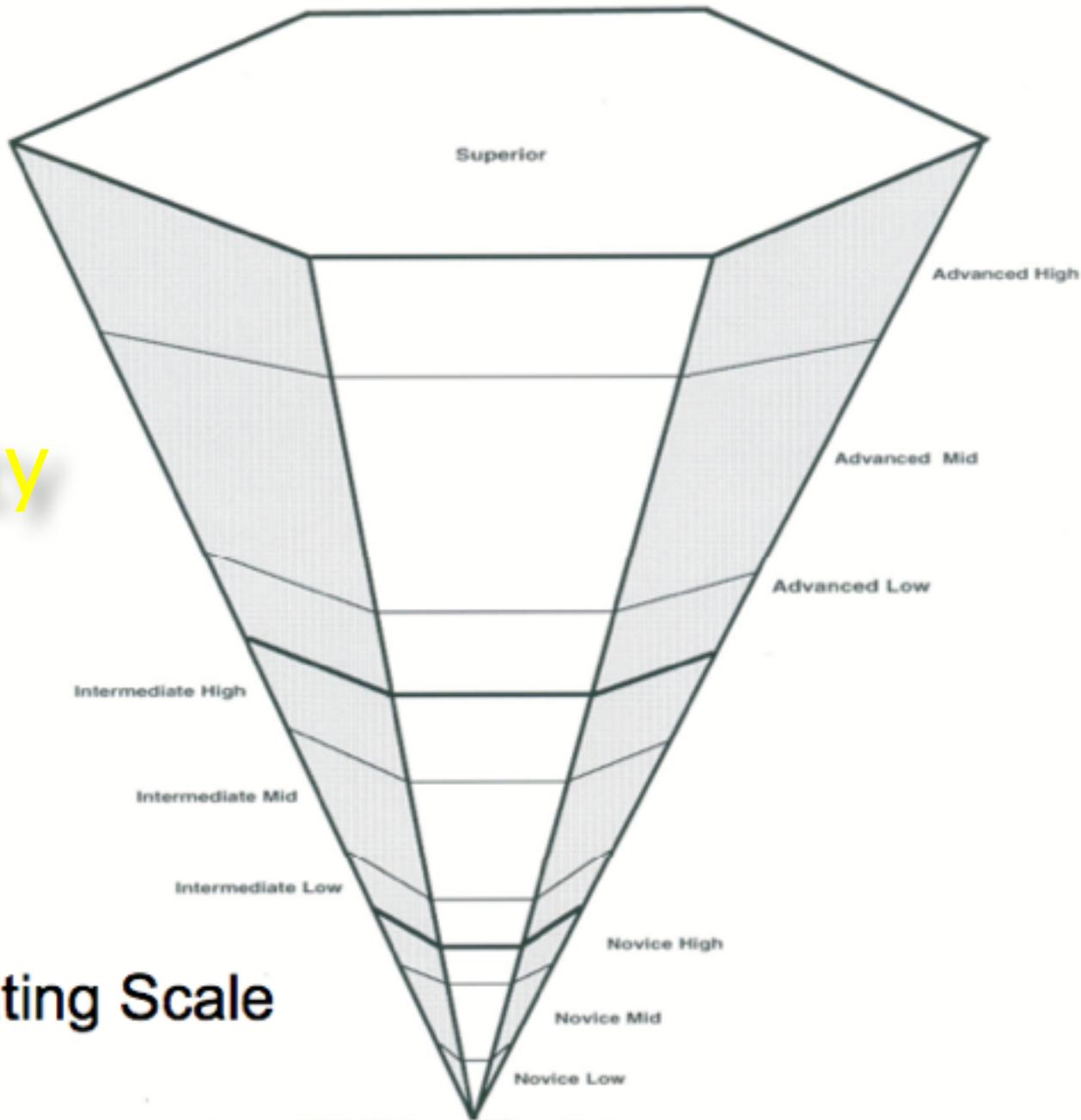
Advanced

Intermediate

Superior

Proficiency Levels

ACTFL Rating Scale



Proficiency Levels

Level 1: Novice-mid

Level 2: Novice-high

Level 3: Intermediate-low

Level 4: Intermediate-Mid

Level 5: Intermediate-High

AP: Advanced-Low

Proficiency Sublevels

LOW

a baseline performance for the level; sustained but skeletal for the level; “Just hanging on”

MID

solid performance for level; quantity/quality for the level; may have some features of the next level

HIGH

sustained performance close to the next major level

Proficiency Levels Defined

Proficiency Level	Global Tasks and Functions	Context/ Content	Accuracy/ Comprehensibility	Text Type
Superior	Discuss topics extensively, supports opinions and hypothesize. Deal with a linguistically unfamiliar situation.	Most formal and informal settings/ <i>Wide range of general interest topics and some special fields of interest and expertise</i>	No pattern of errors in basic structures. Errors virtually never interfere with communication or distract the native speaker from the message	Extended discourse
Advanced	Narrate and describe in major time frames and deal effectively with unanticipated complication.	Most informal and some formal settings/ <i>Topics of personal and general interest</i>	Understood without difficulty by speakers unaccustomed to dealing with non-native speakers	Paragraphs
Intermediate	Create with language, initiate, maintain, and bring to a close simple conversations by asking and responding to simple questions.	Some informal settings and limited number of transactional situations/ <i>Predictable, familiar topics related to daily activities.</i>	Understood, with some repetition, by speakers accustomed to dealing with non-native speakers.	Discrete sentences
Novice	Communicate minimally with formulaic and rote utterances, list and phrases.	Most common informal settings/ <i>Most common aspects of daily life.</i>	May be difficult to understand, even for speaker accustomed to dealing with non-native speakers	Individual words and phrases



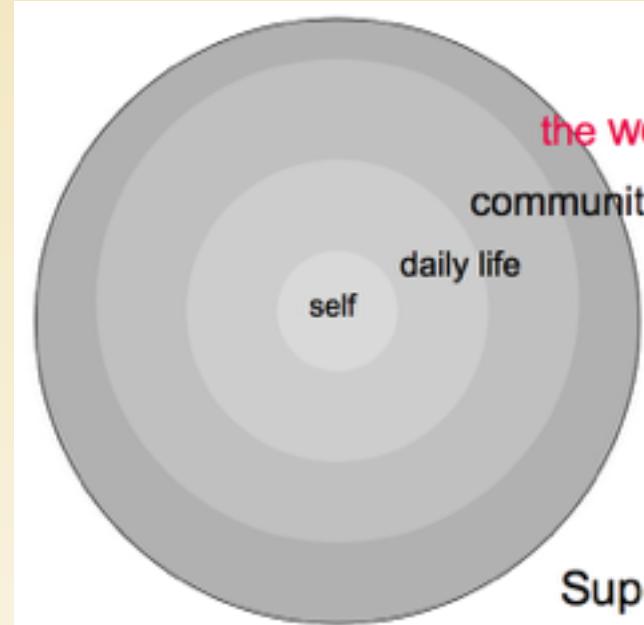
Novice



Intermediate



Advanced



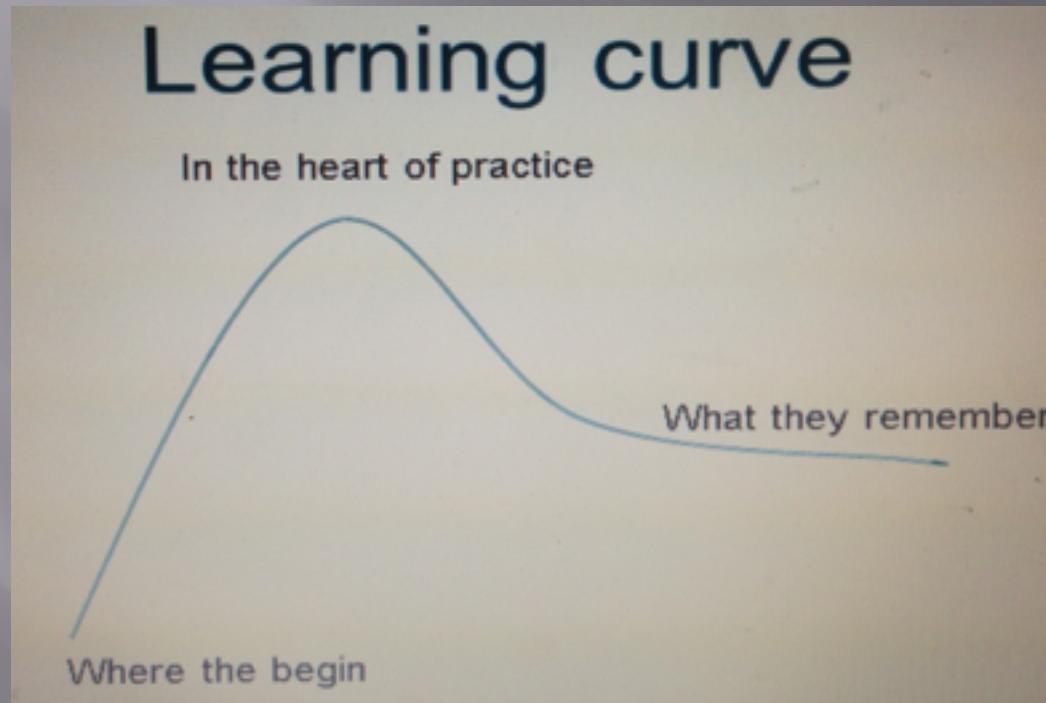
Superior

Proficiency Sublevel Differences

- **Differences between low and mid** is the in quantity and quality with the same function. Mid can do same things but with more variety (vocab./grammar) and less mistakes.
- **Differences between mid and high** is not being able to sustain criteria for the next level. “Whiffs of excellence.”

Peaks and Lows of Proficiency

- Students might spike into the next proficiency level



- They are unable to sustain it and return to the lower proficiency level