Glossary

ACCESS for ELLs n. ACCESS for ELLs is a standards-based, criterion referenced English language proficiency test designed to measure English language learners’ social and academic proficiency in English.

alternative assessment n. Assessment that measures student learning in forms other than traditional pencil-and-paper tests.

American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages n. The umbrella organization for proficiency guidelines for all language teaching in the United States. ACTFL provides the Oral Proficiency Interview and Writing Proficiency Testing for English language proficiency, too, although the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages is the national organization for English as a Second Language.

authentic adj. In terms of assessment, an authentic assessment seeks to evaluate students' abilities in "real-world” contexts, including the application and demonstration of skills and knowledge to tasks or projects likely to be encountered in adult life.

benchmark n. Short tests administered throughout the school year that give teachers immediate feedback on how students are meeting academic standards. Regular use of benchmark assessments is seen by many as a tool to measure student growth and design curriculum to meet individual learning needs.

can-do statements n. Describe what language users can typically do with the language at different levels and in different contexts.

cloze tests n. Test or activity in which words are removed from a passage for a learner to fill in as an exercise in reading comprehension. The missing words may or may not be provided in a word bank.

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages n. After many years of research, the Council of Europe’s Common European Framework of Reference for Languages has become a standard reference document used to describe achievements of language learners at successive stages and for assessing outcomes in a way that can be understood internationally.
**concept maps** *n.* Organizational strategies or tools that represent knowledge in visual form (such as a graph or diagram). Concept mapping facilitates student understanding of the relationships between keywords or concepts through visual representations.

**critical thinking** *n.* Critical thinking is based on the acquisition and evaluation of new knowledge. The focus of learning is the pursuit of logical conclusions drawn from facts and evidence. Critical thinking involves logical thinking and reasoning with different levels of complexity such as those of Bloom’s Taxonomy: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, and synthesis.

**culture** *n.* The set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution, organization, or group.

**Early Language Listening and Oral Proficiency Assessment** *n.* These interactive listening and speaking assessments are designed for PreK–2 students learning a foreign language. They include hands-on activities and are conducted entirely in the foreign language.

**English for speakers of other languages** *n.* The study of English by students with a different native language.

**formative assessment** *n.* A process used by teachers and students during instruction that provides explicit feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve students’ achievement of intended instructional outcomes.

**heritage languages** *n.* Languages other than the dominant language in a particular social context, often learned as a child or outside the formal educational system.

**Integrated Performance Assessment** *n.* A cluster assessment in development by ACTFL featuring three tasks, each of which reflects one of the three modes of communication (interpretive, interpersonal and presentational). The three tasks are aligned within a single theme or content area.

**intercultural competencies** *n.* The ability to handle the challenges of communication with people from different cultural backgrounds.
interculturality n. A process in which people from different cultures interact to learn about and question their own and each other’s cultures. In this context, the term implies the appropriate use of a target language.

language proficiency n. The ability to read, write, speak, and understand an acquired language.

learner autonomy n. The ability to take charge of one's learning.

metacognitive n. The process of thinking about thinking. Students assess their current and previous knowledge, identify gaps, and develop a plan to augment current knowledge and a system for assessing learning.


Oral Proficiency Interview n. The ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview is a standardized procedure for the global assessment of functional speaking ability. It is a face-to-face or telephonic interview between a certified ACTFL tester and an examinee that determines how well a person speaks a language by comparing his or her performance of specific communication tasks with the criteria for each of ten proficiency levels described in the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines for Speaking.

performance tasks n. Concrete tasks or activities as opposed to standardized multiple-choice tests.

perspectives n. In relation to culture, refers to meanings, attitudes, values, ideas, etc.

practices n. In relation to culture, refers to celebrations, greetings, social interactions, etc.

products n. In relation to culture, refers to art, foods, laws, music, games, etc.

reflective learning n. An ongoing process in which students examine and reflect on their learning experiences. Students consider how the experience might be different or improved, and try out what seems to be the best option.

reflective teaching n. Thinking about and critically analyzing one’s own teaching in order to improve teaching practice.
**Standard-based Measurement of Proficiency** *n.* A computer-adaptive, web-based assessment tool that measures and reports student proficiency with language according to Benchmark Levels 1 through 5 which are related to ACTFL Performance Guidelines at the novice to intermediate levels.

**standards-based** *n.* Standards can be based on academic achievement and/or behavioral expectations. Standards may be set at the national level, at the state level, and at the school or classroom level. Contemporary reform initiatives are generally standards-based.

**Student Oral Proficiency Assessment** *n.* An oral proficiency instrument designed for students in elementary foreign language programs.

**summative assessment** *n.* Evaluation administered at the conclusion of a unit of instruction to comprehensively assess student learning and the effectiveness of an instructional method or program.

**target language** *n.* The language learners are studying.

**teaching skills in isolation** *expr.* Teaching without context or making connections to relevant information. Examples include word lists, grammar exercises, and oral and written drills.

**TESOL** *n.* Teachers of English to Speakers of other Languages. A professional association with a mission to ensure excellence in English language teaching and learning.

**WIDA** *n.* World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment. WIDA is a consortium of states dedicated to the design and implementation of high standards and equitable opportunities for English language learners.

**word bank** *n.* A list of words mastered or being studied by a student. It can also function as a student's personal dictionary of words used in communication.

**Writing Proficiency Test** *n.* A proctored, standardized test provided by ACTFL that uses specific writing tasks to assess functional writing ability.