

Comparison between the Standard Curriculum for Korean Language and Other International Standards for Language Proficiency

(CEFR, ACTFL, and WIDA)



Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism
National Institute of Korean Language

About the Standard Curriculum for Korean Language

The Standard Curriculum for Korean Language (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism Notification 2020-54 dated November 27, 2020), developed and published by the National Institute of Korean Language under the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism of the Republic of Korea, is the officially approved Korean language curriculum that accommodates the needs of diverse learners and educators on the front lines of language learning.

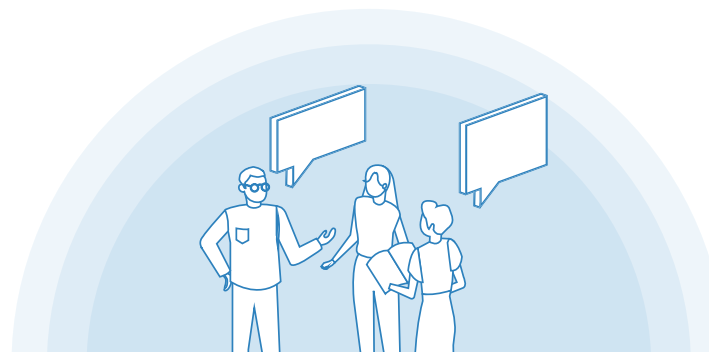
The Curriculum is largely categorized into "subject matters", "functions", "context", "skills and strategies", "text", and "linguistic knowledge" to better gauge each learner's ability to communicate in Korean. Our objectives and achievement standards are established around these components. The achievement standards are divided into six levels (levels 1 through 6 with Level 6 as the highest proficiency level), and each level offers detailed targets for listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Based on plurilingualism* and interculturalism*, the Curriculum is designed to be flexibly applied to diverse language and cultural environments of Korean

language learners. As an increasing number of countries are making Korean available as a second language, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism and the National Institute of Korean Language have provided support to develop detailed programs and learning materials at their request. Such programs and materials are based on the Curriculum, while also reflecting local language and cultural traits and local learning policies.

* Plurilingualism: The belief that communication skills can be enhanced based on the interconnection of individual languages as linguistic knowledge and experiences of diverse layers and depth exert a positive impact on one another

* Interculturalism: A perspective supporting the dynamic interaction between different cultures



Level-Specific Goals of the Standard Curriculum for Korean Language

Level 6

Learners participate in conversations concerning specialized and academic subject matters and read and write texts on social, cultural, and academic issues. Learners engage in communication activities such as persuading, making recommendations, and logically and effectively expressing and exchanging opinions and arguments.

Level 5

Learners participate in conversations concerning all aspects of society and their work or study and read and write texts on social issues and some specialized subject matters. Learners engage in communication activities such as making reports on tasks at work, having discussions, delivering information systematically, and exchanging opinions.

Level 4

Learners participate in conversations concerning familiar social and abstract subject matters and basic tasks at work and read and write texts on social and abstract subject matters in which they are interested. Learners engage in communication activities such as expressing consent and dissent, giving instructions and making reports, and delivering thoughts and intentions.

Level 3

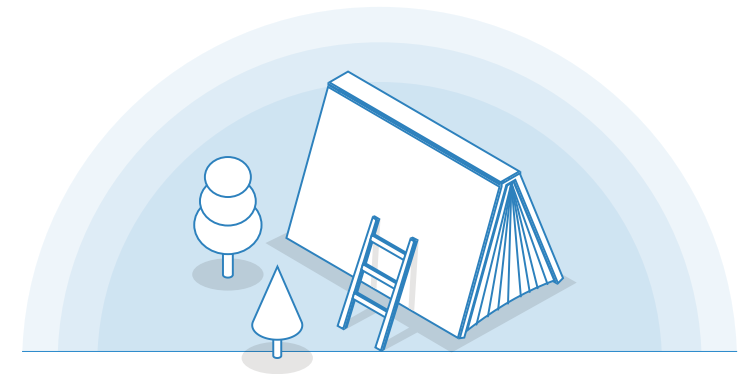
Learners participate in conversations in common social situations and read and write texts on social subject matters related to themselves. Learners engage in communication activities such as making recommendations, giving advice, understanding and responding to brief explanations, and exchanging information.

Level 2

Learners participate in simple conversations and read and write necessary texts in day-to-day social situations. Learners engage in communication activities such as asking about certain information and giving answers, asking for approval and making requests, and exchanging messages.

Level 1

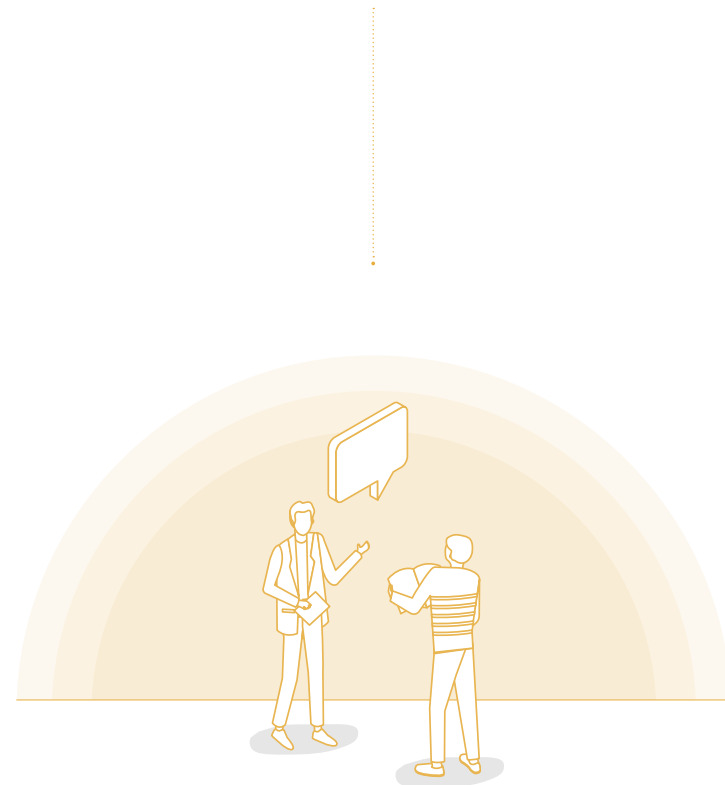
Learners master the skills to participate in short, basic day-to-day conversations and read and write short texts on familiar subject matters. Learners engage in basic communication activities such as introducing themselves, delivering brief messages, and exchanging information.



About Other International Standards for Language Proficiency

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), and the WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework (WIDA) are national and international standards for describing language proficiency.

These standards have recently been much sought after as internationally applicable standards, and an increasing number of countries are referring to them when designing foreign language learning programs or foreign language proficiency levels for local learners.



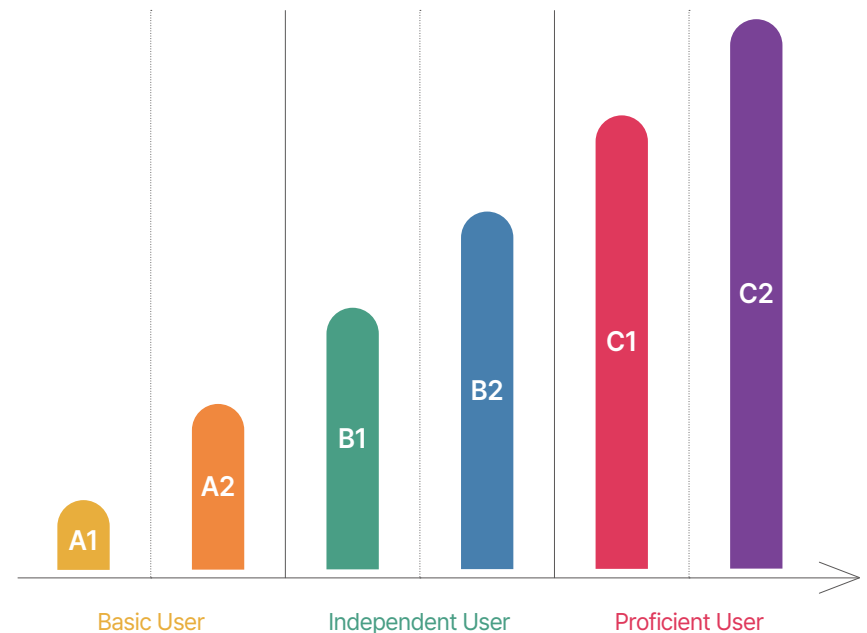
Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

The CEFR, developed by the Council of Europe in 2001, is a leading set of language standards used as a reference by countries around the world. It was designed to ensure systematic language education in European countries based on plurilingualism and interculturalism.

The CEFR consists of six levels. A1 and A2 learners practice expressions frequently used in day-to-day situations. B1 learners achieve the proficiency required for familiar social situations, while B2 learners master communication skills needed to deal with abstract subject matters. C1 learners effectively and flexibly communicate in social life, professional life, college education, and vocational education. After completing the C2 level, learners are capable of easily understanding both spoken and written language, fluently and accurately delivering messages in a non-rehearsed manner, and reading and expressing delicate nuances when handling complex issues.

In 2018, the Pre-A1 level was added. Pre-A1 learners are able to communicate through simple vocabulary using a dictionary.

[CEFR Levels]

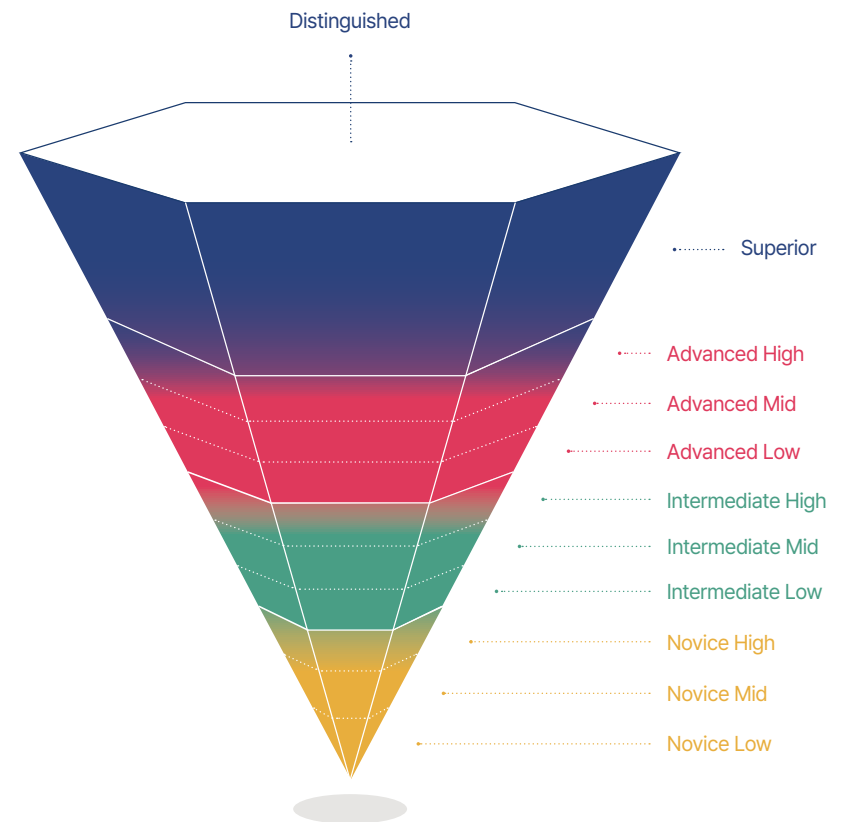


ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines

The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines were developed to offer an integrated set of language assessments that can be utilized at schools and workplaces around the world (ACTFL, 2012). The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines are available for diverse languages in addition to English, and the ACTFL proficiency test for the Korean language has also been developed.

The five major ACTFL levels are Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, Superior, and Distinguished in ascending order. Learners at Novice are able to communicate about day-to-day subject matters that affect them and highly predictable subject matters in short messages. Learners at Intermediate are taught to talk about familiar real-life subject matters. Learners at Advanced can speak in all tenses and handle complex social, national, and international subject matters. Superior-level learners can present opinions, provide arguments to support such opinions, develop hypotheses, discuss specific and abstract matters, and use the target language well in linguistically unfamiliar situations. The levels of Advanced, Intermediate, and Novice are each divided into sublevels of High, Mid, and Low. As a result, the number of distinct levels reaches 11 in total, from Novice Low (speakers have no real functional ability) to Distinguished (speakers can use the target language skillfully with accuracy and efficiency).

[ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines]



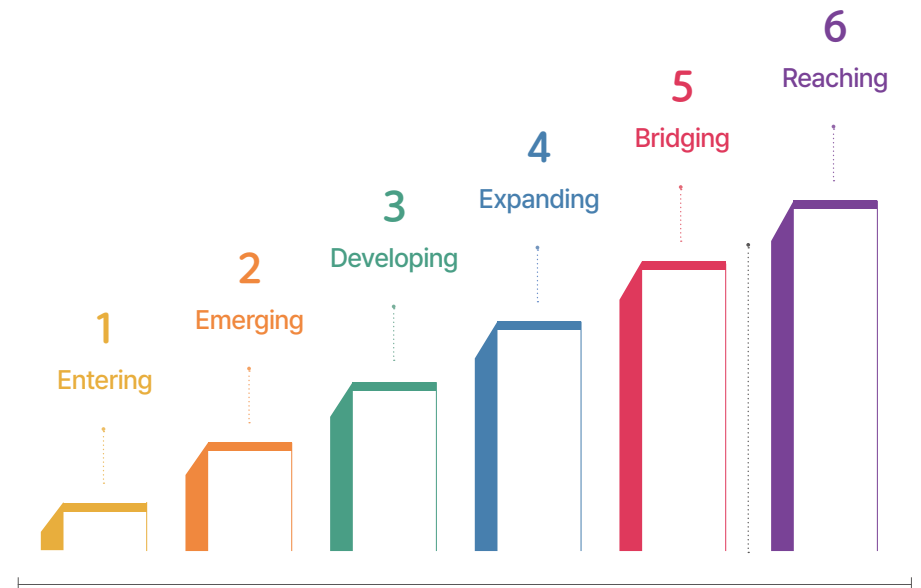
WIDA ELD Standards Framework

The WIDA ELD Standards Framework (WIDA Consortium, 2020) is a means of assessing the English language ability of K-12 (kindergarten through Grade 12) students. The WIDA ELD Standards Framework was designed based on the WIDA ELD Standards Statements required for K-12 learners in the US to be fluent users of English in both social and academic contexts.

The WIDA ELD Standards Framework encompasses subject matters, functions, etc., and the WIDA proficiency level descriptors include discourse (organization, cohesion, and density of language), sentence (grammatical complexity of language), and word and phrase (precision of language). There are six WIDA proficiency levels, with each level named to clearly deliver its traits. Level 1 is Entering, in which learners are able to process single statements and simple structured sentences. Learners at Level 2, or Emerging, are able to engage in conversations and use expressions with conventional grammatical structures. Learners at Level 3, or Developing, can use somewhat complex sentences. Learners at Level 4, or Expanding, use complex sentences with evidence of characteristics of particular genres and diverse grammatical structures. Level 5, or Bridging, learners can use complex grammatical structures and sentences that reflect characteristics and knowledge across different genres. Lastly, Level 6, or Reaching, learners are able to skillfully process grammatical structures and complex sentences that highlight the ability to communicate information and knowledge from a variety of genres.

The WIDA proficiency levels are stated by grade group (kindergarten, first grade, second and third grades, fourth and fifth grades, sixth through eighth grades, and ninth through twelfth grades) to reflect the cognitive differences of K-12 learners.

[Proficiency Levels of the WIDA ELD Standards Framework]



Comparison of the Standard Curriculum for Korean Language and Other International Standards for Language Proficiency

The CEFR, ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines, and WIDA ELD Standards Framework are global language development standards that are being widely utilized in their respective countries and beyond. The Curriculum is also designed to be applied internationally, and the Korean language courses for King Sejong Institute and middle and high schools in India were developed based on the Curriculum. The Curriculum is a six-level system that is divided into the levels of Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced, each of which consists of two sublevels. The CEFR and WIDA ELD Standards Framework are also six-level systems. The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines are divided into 11 levels, with five major levels and their sublevels.

The highest levels of all four standards systems are open-ended with evolving objectives to indicate that language development continues throughout life. The Curriculum, WIDA ELD Standards Framework, CEFR, and ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines describe Level 6, Reaching, C2, and Distinguished, respectively, as an open-ended, evolving level.

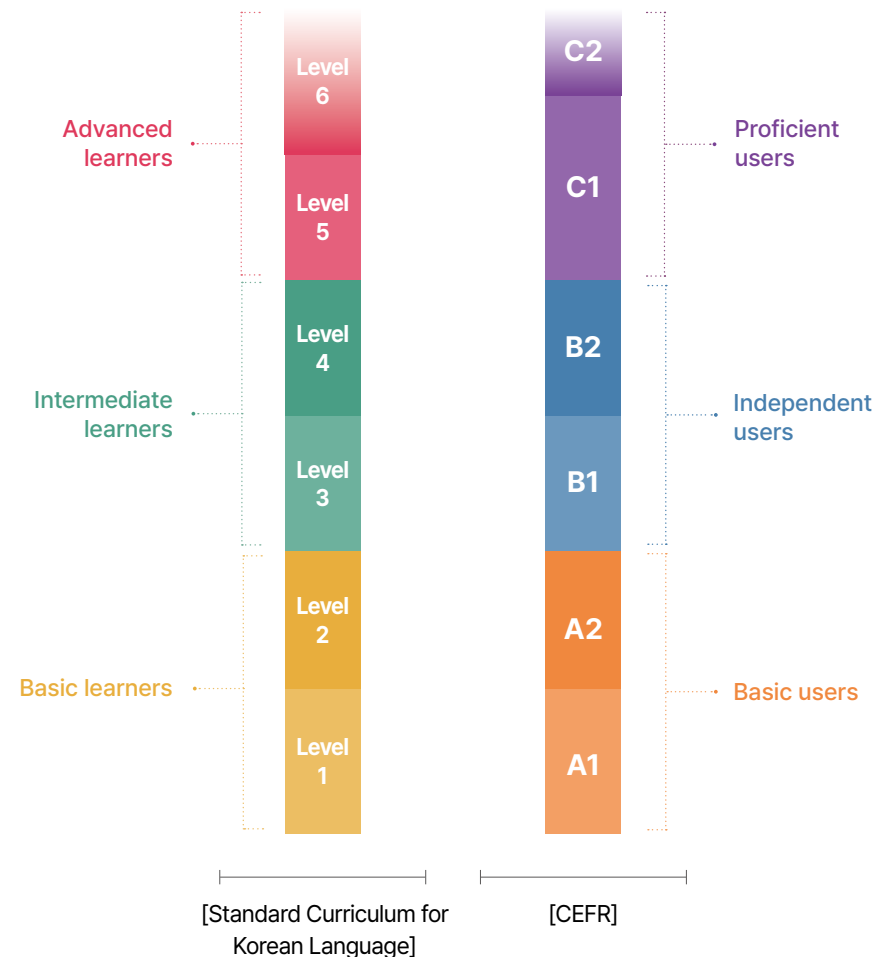
[Comparison of the standards for language proficiency]



Comparison between the Standard Curriculum for Korean Language and the CEFR

The basic and intermediate levels of the CEFR are equivalent to the same levels of the Curriculum. However, C1 and C2 of the CEFR are higher than Levels 5 and 6 of the Curriculum, respectively.

Level 6 of the Curriculum is characterized by the ability to participate in conversations in specialized and academic areas and the writing of texts on academic subject matters and subject matters that communicate sociocultural traits, which is what differentiates it from Level 5. According to the CEFR, C1 learners are able to effectively and flexibly use language for social life, professional life, college education, and vocational education, and C2 is higher than C1. As such, C1 can be viewed as equivalent to Level 5. As Level 6 of the Curriculum is designed to be open-ended, it can be viewed as equivalent to C2 and part of C1.

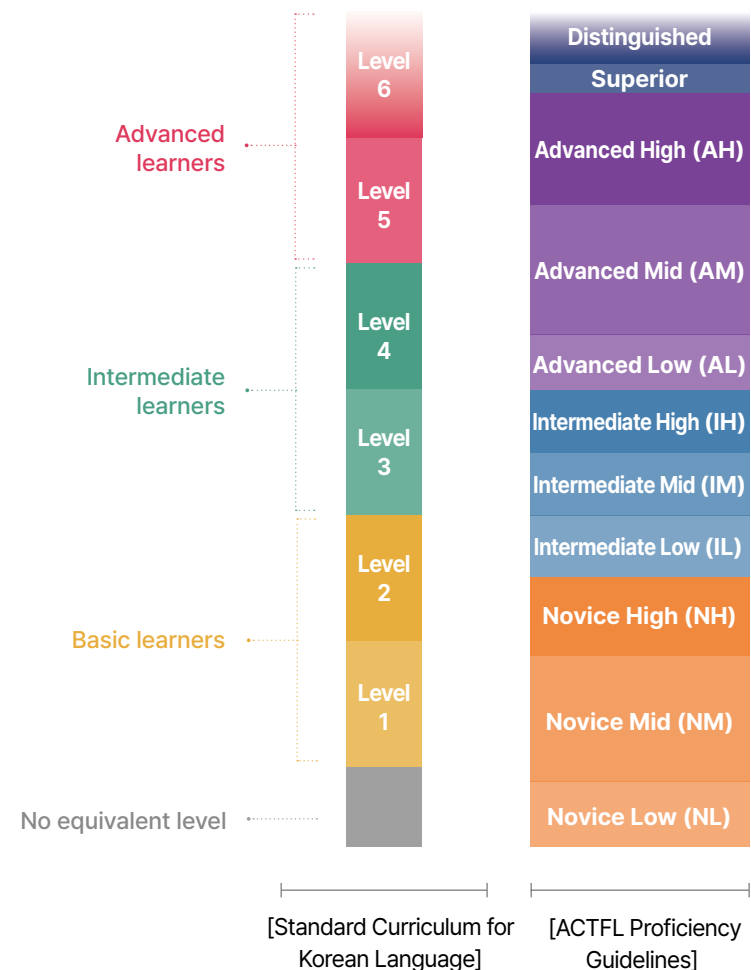


Comparison between the Standard Curriculum for Korean Language and the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines

The objectives of the basic and intermediate levels of the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines are equivalent to those of the Curriculum. However, the two show differences in their objectives for the higher levels.

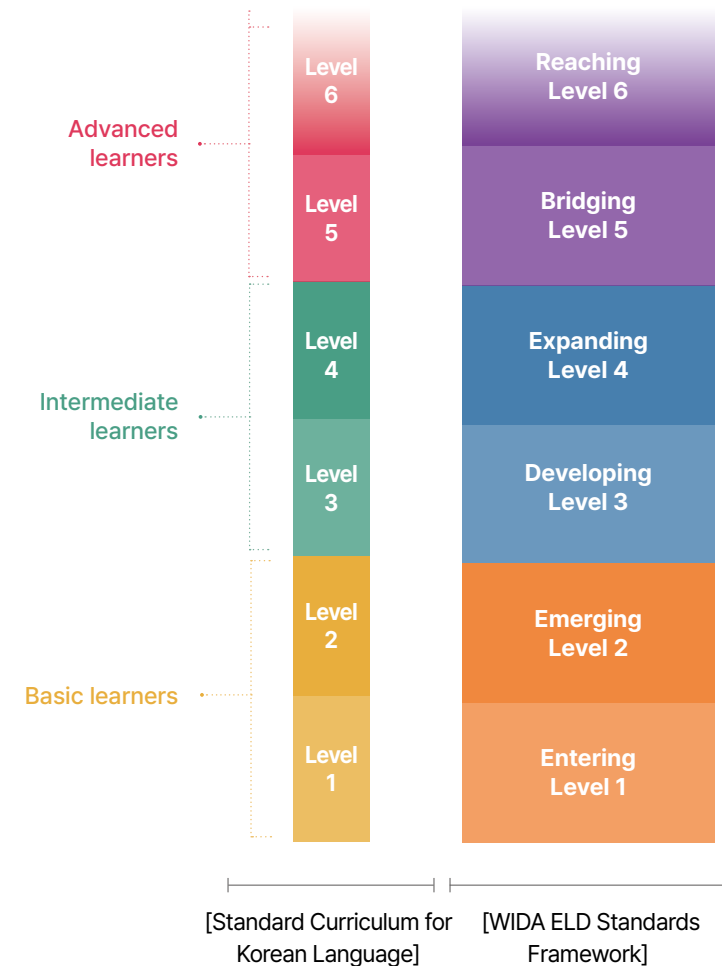
Learners at Novice Low of the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines have no real communication skills, and thus Novice Low is considered lower than Level 1 of the Curriculum. Therefore, the Curriculum's Level 1 is equivalent to the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines' Novice Mid. Level 2 of the Curriculum is equivalent to Novice High and Intermediate Low of the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines, and Level 3 is equivalent to Intermediate Mid and Intermediate High.

Advanced Mid of the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines can be said to be equivalent to Levels 4 and 5 of the Curriculum, while Advanced High of the former is equivalent to Levels 5 and 6 of the latter. Superior and Distinguished are described to be higher than Level 6 of the Curriculum.

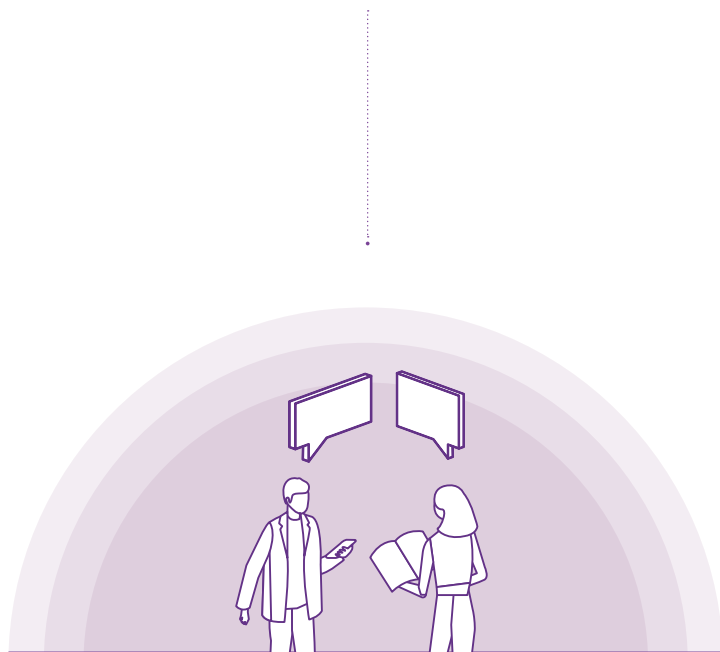


Comparison between the Standard Curriculum for Korean Language and the WIDA ELD Standards Framework

The six-level system of the WIDA ELD Standards Framework is similar to that of the Curriculum. Level 1 (Entering) learners are able to process single statements and simple structured sentences. Learners at Level 2 (Emerging) are able to engage in conversations and use expressions with compound grammatical structures. Learners at Level 3 (Developing) can use somewhat complex sentences in familiar formal contexts. Level 4 (Expanding) helps learners use sentences of diverse structures with evidence of characteristics of particular genres. Level 5 (Bridging) and Level 6 (Reaching) learners can skillfully deal with social and abstract subject matters, specialized areas (characteristics of different genres), and academic expressions.



Comparison between the Standard Curriculum for Korean Language and Other International Standards for Language Proficiency



The following is an at-a-glance comparison between the levels of the Curriculum and those of CEFR, ACTFL, and WIDA based on the components that make up the Curriculum (subject matters, functions, context, skills and strategies, text, and linguistic knowledge).

