

Provisional Spanish Descriptions—Speaking

- Novice—Low Unable to function in spoken Spanish. Oral production limited to occasional isolated words or expressions which have been borrowed into English or which are cognates of English words. Some examples are: *sombrero, taco, ¡olé!* Essentially no communicative ability.
- Novice—Mid Able to operate only in a very limited capacity within very predictable areas of need. Vocabulary is limited to that necessary to express simple elementary needs and basic courtesy formulae, such as *Buenos días; ¿Qué tal? Muy bien, gracias; ¿Cuánto es?* Syntax is fragmented, verbs are usually used in the infinitive form, and there is little or no subject-verb or noun-adjective agreement. The majority of utterances consist of isolated words or short formulae. Utterances are marked and often flawed by repetition of an interlocutor's words (*Q: ¿Qué comes por la mañana? *A: Comes por la mañana cereal.*) and frequent long pauses; speakers at this level cannot create original sentences or cope with the simplest situation. Pronunciation is frequently unintelligible and is strongly influenced by the first language. Can be understood only with difficulty, even by persons such as teachers who are used to dealing with non-native speakers, or in interactions where the context strongly supports the utterance.
- * Denotes an error characteristic of speakers at this level.
- Novice—High Able to satisfy immediate needs using learned utterances. There is no consistent ability to create original sentences or cope with simple survival situations, although there are some emerging signs of spontaneity and flexibility. Can ask questions or make statements with reasonable accuracy only where this involves short memorized utterances or formulae. There is some increase in utterance length, but frequent long pauses and repetition of the interlocutor's words still occur. Most utterances are telegraphic, and errors often occur when word endings and verbs are omitted or confused (e.g., *Sí. *Casa pequeño. *Cuatros cuartos*). Speech is characterized by enumeration, rather than by sentences. Vocabulary is limited to common areas, such as colors, days of the week, months of the year, names of basic objects, numbers up to 100, and names of immediate family members. There is some concept of the present tense forms of regular verbs, particular *-ar* verbs, and some common irregular verbs (*ser, querer, tener*) although use is limited primarily to first person singular. There is some use of articles, indicating a concept of gender, although mistakes are constant and numerous. Use of *qué* and *cómo*, and questions are often syntactically incorrect and semantically inaccurate. May be able to pronounce sounds correctly in isolation (*rr, r, ll, ción*) but cannot do so in words or groups of words. Errors are frequent and, in spite of repetition, may severely inhibit communication even with persons used to dealing with such learners. Unable to make one's needs known and communicate essential information in a simple survival situation.
- * Denotes an error characteristic of speakers at this level.
- Intermediate—Low Able to satisfy basic survival needs and minimum courtesy requirements. In areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics, can ask and answer simple questions, can respond to and sometimes initiate simple statements, and can maintain simple face-to-face conversation. Can ask and answer questions such as *¿Cuántos años tienes? ¿Cómo se llama usted? ¿Cuántas personas hay en tu familia?* and *¿Qué estudia usted?* Can sustain a short conversation on such familiar topics as characteristics of self and family members (name, age, physical description), location and description of home, school, or work place, and other topics that involve an exchange of simple factual information. Can make one's needs known with great difficulty in a simple survival situation, such as ordering a meal, getting a hotel room, and asking for directions. Vocabulary is inadequate to express anything beyond basic information on familiar subjects and elementary needs. Little precision in information can be conveyed and misunderstandings frequently arise because of limited vocabulary, numerous grammatical errors, and poor pronunciation and intonation. There is some control of the present tense of regular and some common irregular verbs and of gender, number and subject-verb agreement. Misunderstandings frequently arise from limited vocabulary and grammar and erroneous phonology, but, with repetition, can generally be understood by native speakers in regular contact with foreigners attempting to speak Spanish. Little precision in information conveyed owing to tentative state of grammatical development and little or no use of modifiers.
- Intermediate—Mid Able to satisfy most routine travel and survival needs and some limited social demands. Can ask and answer questions on very familiar topics and in areas of immediate need. Can initiate and respond to simple statements, and can maintain simple face-to-face conversation. Can ask and answer questions and carry on a conversation on topics beyond basic survival needs or involving the exchange of basic personal information, i.e., can talk simply about autobiographical details, leisure time activities, daily schedule, and some future plans. In a simple situation, such as ordering a meal, making purchases, and requesting a hotel room, can deal with details, such as requesting a table for two in a quiet corner, asking for an article

of clothing of a particular color, getting a hotel room with a private bath for a given length of time, or inquiring about modes of payment. Can handle simple transactions at the post office, bank, drugstore, etc. Misunderstandings arise because of limited vocabulary, frequent grammatical errors, and poor pronunciation and intonation, although speakers at this level have broader vocabulary and/or greater grammatical and phonological control than speakers at Intermediate—Low. Speech is often characterized by long pauses. Some grammatical accuracy in basic constructions, e.g., subject-verb agreement, noun-adjective and gender agreement for familiar vocabulary, present tense of regular and some irregular verbs such as *tener, poner, ser, estar, ir*. Can express future time by using *ir a* plus infinitive. May have a concept of past time, but can use only isolated past tense forms which have been learned as vocabulary items. Syntax in most simple declarative sentences is generally correct including placement of most common adjectives. Is generally understood by persons used to dealing with foreigners.

Intermediate—High

Able to satisfy most survival needs and limited social demands. Developing flexibility in language production although fluency is still uneven. Can initiate and sustain a general conversation on factual topics beyond basic survival needs. Can give autobiographical information and discuss leisure time activities. To a lesser degree, can talk about some past activities and future plans and non-personal topics, such as activities of organizations and descriptions of events, although ability to describe and give precise information in these areas is limited. Can provide sporadically, although not consistently, simple description and narration of present, past, and future events, although limited vocabulary range and insufficient control of grammar lead to much hesitation and inaccuracy. Extended discourse is largely a series of short, discrete utterances; cannot sustain coherent structures in longer utterances by the use of conjunctions or relative clauses. Has basic knowledge of the differences between *ser* and *estar* (physical description, nationality, profession vs. location, temporary health condition), although errors are frequent. Can control the present tense of most regular and the common irregular verbs, and has some control of basic reflexive verbs. May be able to use some direct and indirect object pronouns and occasionally use some knowledge of the preterite of some regular and common irregular verbs (*fui/fue, vi/vio*), but uses them only sporadically. Comprehensible to native speakers used to dealing with foreigners, but still has to repeat utterances frequently to be understood by the general public.

Advanced

Able to satisfy routine social demands and limited work requirements. Can handle with confidence but not with facility most social and general conversations. Can narrate, describe, and explain in past, present, and future time. Can communicate facts—what, who, when, where, how much—and can explain points of view, in an uncomplicated fashion but cannot conjecture or coherently support an opinion. Can talk in a general way about topics of current public interest (e.g., current events, student rules and regulations), as well as personal interest (work, leisure time activities) and can give autobiographical information. Can make factual comparisons (life in a city vs. life in a rural area, for example). Can handle limited work requirements, needing help in handling any complications or difficulties. Can make a point forcefully and communicate needs and thoughts in a situation with a complication (e.g., finding a bug in the soup in a restaurant, losing traveler's checks). Has a speaking vocabulary sufficient to respond simply with some circumlocutions. Can be understood by native speakers not used to dealing with foreigners, in spite of some pronunciation difficulties. Can usually handle elementary constructions quite accurately such as the present tense of regular and irregular verbs, and preterite and imperfect forms. Can use imperative forms and can occasionally use the subjunctive in indirect commands. Controls comparative and superlative adjectives, relative, interrogative, and simple and double object pronouns, and negatives (*nadie, nada, nunca, etc.*). Syntax, including position of adjectives, is usually correct. Grasps but does not control the basic differences in usage between the preterite and the imperfect (repeated or continuous vs. single action in the past, description vs. narration in the past) so that many mistakes are to be expected. Can link sentences together in limited discourse by using conjunctions and subordinate clauses.

Advanced Plus

Able to satisfy most work requirements and show some ability to communicate on concrete topics relating to particular interests and special fields of competence. Can narrate, describe, and explain in past, present, and future time. Can communicate facts and explain points of view in an uncomplicated fashion consistently. Shows some ability to support opinions, explain in detail, and hypothesize, although only sporadically. Can discuss topics of current interest and personal interest, and can handle routine work requirements and some complications. Can handle situations involving complications that arise in everyday life (see Advanced Level examples) but will have difficulty with unfamiliar situations (e.g., losing a contact lens in a sink drain and going to a neighbor to borrow a wrench). Normally controls general vocabulary with some groping still evident. Speaking performance is often uneven (e.g., strong in either grammar or vocabulary, but not in both). Areas of weakness in grammar can range from simple constructions such as noun-adjective, gender, and subject-verb agreement to more complex structures such as tense usage (imperfect vs. preterite) *ser* and *estar*, and relative clauses. Only sporadic ability to use the present subjunctive.

tive. Can regularly use the simple future, or *ir a* plus infinitive to express the future, as well as the present progressive and past progressive tenses. Controls possessive and demonstrative adjectives, and idiomatic expressions such as *acabar de* plus infinitive, *hace* plus preterite (ago), and *hacía* plus imperfect. Uses correct word order of all pronouns (including double object pronouns) and adverbs, such as *ya, todavía, aún*. Often shows remarkable fluency and ease of speech, but under tension or pressure language may break down.

Superior

Able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social, and professional topics. Can discuss particular interests and special fields of competence with reasonable ease. Can support opinions, hypothesize, and conjecture. May not be able to tailor language to fit various audiences or discuss highly abstract topics in depth. Vocabulary is broad enough that speaker rarely has to grope for a word; good use of circumlocution. Pronunciation may still be obviously foreign. Control of grammar is good. Good control of preterite and imperfect (about 70% of the time); uses the present subjunctive appropriately most of the time and the imperfect subjunctive correctly about half the time. Can use all compound tenses, and can make simple contrary-to-fact statements. *Ser* and *estar* are almost completely controlled, as are reflexives and passive usages. Errors never interfere with understanding and rarely disturb the native speaker.

Provisional Spanish Descriptions—Listening

Novice—Low

No practical understanding of spoken Spanish. Understanding is limited to cognates, borrowed words, high frequency social conventions, and occasional isolated words, such as *universidad, restaurante, gracias, taco, señor*. Essentially no ability to comprehend even short utterances.

Novice—Mid

Sufficient comprehension to understand some memorized words within predictable areas of need. Vocabulary for comprehension is limited to simple elementary needs, basic courtesy formulae and very simple memorized material relating to everyday objects and situations, such as *¿Qué tal? ¿Cómo te llamas? or ¿Cómo se llama usted?* Utterances understood rarely exceed more than two or three words at a time, and ability to understand is characterized by long pauses for assimilation and by repeated requests on the listener's part for repetition, and/or a slower rate of speech. Confuses words that sound similar, such as *cosa/casa, hambre/hambre, pero/perro*.

Novice-High

Sufficient comprehension to understand a number of memorized utterances in areas of immediate need. Comprehends slightly longer utterances in situations where the context aids understanding, such as at the table, in a restaurant/store, in a train/bus. Phrases recognized have for the most part been memorized: *¿A qué hora sale el tren? ¿En qué le puedo servir? La mantequilla, por favor*. Comprehends vocabulary common to daily needs. Comprehends simple questions/statements about family members, age, address, weather, time, daily activities and interests: *¿Cuántos hermanos tiene usted? ¿Qué tiempo hace hoy?* Misunderstandings arise from failure to perceive critical sounds or endings. Understands even tailored speech with difficulty but gets some main ideas. Often requires repetition and/or a slowed rate of speed for comprehension, even when listening to persons such as teachers who are used to speaking with non-natives.

Intermediate—Low

Sufficient comprehension to understand utterances about basic survival needs, minimum courtesy and travel requirements. In areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics, can understand non-memorized material, such as simple questions and answers, statements, and face-to-face conversations in Spanish. Comprehension areas include basic needs: meals, lodging, transportation, time, simple instructions (e.g., route directions, such as *Siga derecho por tres kilómetros. Doble a la izquierda.*) and routine commands (e.g., from customs officials, police, such as *Pase por la aduana. Abra las maletas, por favor.*). Understands main ideas. Misunderstandings frequently arise from lack of vocabulary or from faulty processing of syntactic information often caused by strong interference from the native language or by the imperfect or partial acquisition of the target grammar.

Intermediate—Mid

Sufficient comprehension to understand simple conversations about some survival needs and some limited social conventions. Vocabulary permits understanding on topics beyond basic survival needs (e.g., personal history and leisure time activities), such as *¿Dónde nació usted? ¿Cuál es su pasatiempo favorito? ¿Qué piensa usted hacer este fin de semana?* Evidence of understanding basic constructions, e.g., subject-verb and noun-adjective agreement; some inflection is understood. Candidate's understanding of grammatical structure allows recognition of future and past references either by verb forms or by adverbs, adjectives, or prepositions of time (*pronto, mañana, ayer, el año pasado, antes, después*).

Intermediate—High

Sufficient comprehension to understand short conversations about most survival needs and limited social

conventions. Increasingly able to understand topics beyond immediate survival needs, such as biographical information in which both past and present/IMPLIED future tenses are used (*Yo vivía en el campo cuando era joven.*). Able to comprehend most sentences that feature familiar vocabulary and situations (home, office, school and daily activities; simple purchases; directions). Shows spontaneity in understanding, but speed and consistency of understanding uneven. Limited vocabulary range necessitates repetition for understanding. Understands commoner tense forms, including most question forms, but miscommunication still occurs with more complex patterns (*¿Qué te va a regalar tu novia?*). Can get the gist of conversations, but cannot sustain comprehension in longer utterances or in unfamiliar situations. Understanding of descriptions and detailed information is limited. Aware of basic cohesive features, e.g., pronouns, verb inflections, but many are unreliably understood, especially if other material intervenes (*La camisa que tiene el profesor no me parece muy bonita.*). Still has to ask for utterances to be repeated.

Advanced

Sufficient comprehension to understand conversations about routine social conventions and limited school or work requirements. Able to understand face-to-face speech in standard Spanish spoken at a normal rate, with some repetition and rewording, by a native speaker not used to dealing with foreigners. Able to get the gist of some radio broadcasts. Understands everyday topics, common personal and family news, well-known current events, and routine matters involving school or work; descriptions and narration about current, past and future events; the essential points of a discussion or speech at an elementary level on topics in special fields of interest. For example: *¿Quién ganó las últimas elecciones locales? El Secretario de Estado viajará a Chile mañana para asistir a una reunión con el presidente de ese país; La clase media sufrirá el impacto de la inflación.*

Advanced Plus

Sufficient comprehension to understand most routine social conventions, conversations on school or work requirements, and discussions on concrete topics related to particular interests and special fields of competence. Often shows remarkable ability and ease of understanding, but comprehension may break down under tension or pressure (including unfavorable listening conditions). May display weakness or deficiency due to inadequate vocabulary base or less-than-secure knowledge of grammar and syntax. May be deficient or uneven in completely comprehending conversations or discussions by educated native speakers due to a less-than-adequate knowledge of more complex syntactic structures (tense usage in simple and complex statements, passive voice constructions, relative clauses, word order, subject-object relationships). Still has some difficulty following radio broadcasts. Can sometimes detect emotional overtones. Increasing ability to understand between the lines (i.e., to make inferences).

Superior

Sufficient comprehension to understand the essentials of all speech in standard dialects, including technical discussions within a special field. Has sufficient understanding of face-to-face speech, delivered with normal clarity and speed in standard dialects on general topics and areas of special interest; understands hypothesizing and supported opinions. Has broad enough vocabulary that rarely has to ask for paraphrasing or explanation. Can follow accurately the essentials of conversations between educated native speakers, reasonably clear telephone calls, radio broadcasts, standard news items, oral reports, some oral technical reports, and public addresses on non-technical subjects. May not understand native speakers if they speak very quickly or use some slang or unfamiliar dialect. Can often detect emotional overtones. Can understand “between the lines” (i.e., make inferences).

Provisional Spanish Descriptions—Reading

Novice—Low

No functional ability in reading Spanish.

Novice—Mid

Sufficient understanding of written Spanish to interpret highly contextualized words or cognates within predictable areas. Vocabulary for comprehension limited to simple elementary needs, such as names, addresses, dates, signs indicating names of streets and avenues; building names (*hotel, farmacia, edificio*); short informative signs (*Prohibido Fumar, Entrada and Salida, Se Habla Inglés*) and signs with graphic explanations (*Damas and Caballeros* with drawings, *Una Vía* with arrow). Material understood rarely exceeds a single phrase and comprehension requires successive rereading and checking.

Novice—High

Sufficient comprehension of written language to interpret set expressions in areas of immediate need. Can recognize all letters of printed and written Spanish, including ñ, rr, ll, and is familiar with Spanish punctuation and diacritical marks (¿?, ¡!, ´, ¨). Where vocabulary has been mastered, can read for instructional and directional purposes standardized messages, phrases or expressions, such as some items on menus (*pollo, bistec, ensalada, té*), schedules, timetables, maps, signs indicating hours of operation (*Abierto de 9 a 12, Cerrado de 12 a 2*), social codes (*Mantenga Limpia Su Ciudad*), and street signs (*Alto, Ferrocarril,*

Hombres Trabajando). Vocabulary and grammar limited to the most common nouns, adjectives, question words, and a few verb forms. Material is read for essential information. Detail is overlooked or misunderstood.

Intermediate—Low

Sufficient comprehension to understand in printed form the simplest connected material, either authentic or specially prepared, dealing with basic survival or social needs. Able to understand both mastered material and recombinations of the mastered elements kept to the same level. Understands main ideas in material when structure and syntax parallel the native language. Can read brief messages in simple language, either typewritten or in very clear handwriting, such as telephone messages and personal notes about topics familiar to the reader. Recognizes written greetings and other social amenities common to notes and personal letters, such as greetings extended to the family, queries about the well-being of the addressee and family or friends, and expressions used in closings. Can interpret short, simple narratives containing the highest-frequency vocabulary and learned grammatical patterns. These include common verbs in the present tense, *hay/no hay*, many descriptive adjectives, common adverbs of time and manner, and memorized expressions referring to time, weather, etc. Misunderstandings arise often, when syntax diverges from that of the native language, when grammatical cues are overlooked or misinterpreted (e.g., tense and agreement markers or object pronouns), or when the style of handwriting is unfamiliar to the reader.

Intermediate—Mid

Sufficient comprehension to understand in printed form simple discourse for informative or social purposes. In response to perceived needs, can read public announcements to determine who, what, when, where, why, and how much information about such subjects as sporting events, concerts, parades, and celebrations. Can also identify products, prices, and some conditions of sale in popular, illustrated advertising for everyday items, such as food, clothing, work or school supplies, and travel. Can comprehend a note or letter in which a writer used to dealing with non-native readers describes self and family, ages, occupations, residence, personality traits, and common preferences when high frequency vocabulary or cognates are used. Understands general content of headlines in newspapers or article titles in popular magazines, such as *Semana*, *Hola*, and *Cambio 16*, if the content is familiar or of high interest. Understands facts and follows events in simple narration, authentic or specially prepared or edited when discourse consists of basic NP + VP + NP constructions. Can interpret negation, interrogation in various forms. Is fairly consistent in interpreting present time with present-tense verbs, future with *ir a* + infinitive, and past with basic regular and the eight to 10 most common irregular preterite-tense verbs, but still relies greatly on adverbs (*ayer*, *antes*, *después*) to verify relations of events in time. Has some difficulty with the cohesive factors in discourse, such as matching pronouns with referents and connecting ideas brought together by relative pronouns. Uses guessing strategies to interpret vocabulary consisting of regular cognate patterns, and highly contextualized items. May have to read several times before understanding.

Intermediate—High

Sufficient comprehension to understand a simple paragraph for personal communication, information or recreational purposes. Can read with understanding invitations, social notes, personal letters and some simple business letters on familiar topics. Can identify the main ideas in two to three short paragraphs of simple, non-technical narrative. Can identify main ideas from short items of general interest on familiar topics in popular magazines, such as *Semana*, *Hola*, *Activa*, in current familiar news items from major newspapers, and in other informational sources such as travel and publicity brochures. Can read for pleasure some uncomplicated authentic or edited prose and poetry and specially edited texts; material on Hispanic culture and civilization designed for the reader's linguistic level. Guesses at meaning when the context is clear, but relies heavily on a bilingual dictionary. Begins to use future and past (particularly preterite) verb endings to interpret time relations, and can recognize some cohesive factors such as object pronouns and simple clause connectors (*cuando*, *porque*). Understands statements and questions about likes and dislikes, although may be confused about tense or subject-object. Begins to relate sentences in the discourse to advance meaning, but cannot sustain understanding of longer discourse on unfamiliar topics. Misinterpretation still occurs with more complex patterns (longer sentences with subordinate constructions; reflexives and object pronouns; and most idiomatic expressions).

Advanced

Sufficient comprehension to read simple authentic printed material or edited textual material within a familiar context. Can read uncomplicated, authentic prose on familiar subjects (sports, travel, movies, theater, food, music, current events), news items in newspapers and popular magazines, biographical information in personal letters on family topics. Reads within the limits of identifiable vocabulary some unedited texts, such as prose fiction, from carefully chosen authors, usually contemporary. Such selections might appear in Sunday newspaper supplements, other daily papers, or special anthologies on modern culture. Sources include most major newspapers from Hispanic cities, popular magazines, and news magazines published for the general public (*Visión*, *Tiempo*). Misunderstandings may stem from lack of comprehension of the cultural or situational context, or from misinterpretation of grammatical clues that have been only partial-

ly assimilated to this point. Has some understanding of past time relations involving preterite vs. imperfect, but typically can recognize only limited present subjunctive meanings. Can follow essential points of written discussion at level of main ideas and some supporting ones with topics in a field of interest or where background exists, although will tend not to be able to draw inferences.

Advanced Plus

Sufficient comprehension to understand most factual information in non-technical prose as well as some discussions on concrete topics related to special interests. Able to read for information and description, to follow sequence of events, and to react to information read. Can separate main ideas from lesser ones and use that division to advance understanding. In major newspapers and magazines, can read international items and social and cultural news. Understanding of specialized items depends upon individual interests and background, at this level can read material in own areas of interest. Within literary fields of interest, can read non-esoteric prose, including critical articles and books. Can read signs, posters, advertisements, and public announcements. Can follow simple printed directions for cooking and other projects within areas of expertise. Guesses logically at new words by using linguistic and non-linguistic contexts and prior knowledge. Is able to comprehend most high-frequency idiomatic expressions, but will still have difficulty with figurative meanings. Can correctly interpret most indicators of time relations, including indicative verb endings, adverbial expressions (*antes de que, después de que, luego*) and expressions with *hacer*. Has a good understanding of meanings expressed by the present subjunctive, and is able to interpret imperfect subjunctive part of the time (e.g., with impersonal expressions such as *era necesario que*, or expressions of volition or emotion such as *quisiera que* or *sentía que*). May react personally to the material but does not yet detect subjective attitudes, values, or judgments reflected in the style of writing.

Superior

Able to read standard newspaper items addressed to the general reader, routine correspondence, reports and technical material in a field of interest at a normal rate of speed (at least 220 WPM). Can gain new knowledge from material in a variety of publications on a wide range of unfamiliar topics related to fields of interest. Can interpret hypotheses, supported opinions, and documented facts, as well as figurative devices, stylistic differences, and humor. Can read most literary genres in the original: novels, essays, poetry, short stories, and most literature written for the general public. Reading ability is not subject dependent. Broad general vocabulary, knowledge of most structures, and development of strategies for logical guessing allow for successful interpretation of unfamiliar words, idioms, or structures. Verb tenses and moods have been largely mastered, including irregular uses of past subjunctive and conditional. Able to achieve overall comprehension of material, even though there may be some gaps in detail. Is generally able to comprehend facts, although misinterpretation may still occur. Can draw inferences, but may be unable to appreciate nuances or stylistics.

Provisional Spanish Descriptions—Writing

Novice—Low

No functional ability in writing Spanish.

Novice—Mid

No practical communicative writing skills. Able to copy isolated words and short phrases. Able to transcribe previously studied words or phrases. Able to write name, address, dates and other numbers, as well as common expressions such as those used in greetings and leave-takings.

Novice—High

Able to write simple fixed expressions and limited memorized material. Can supply information when requested on forms such as hotel registers and travel documents. Can write names, write out numbers from 1-20, dates (days of the week, months of the year), own nationality as well as other common adjectives of nationality, addresses, and other simple biographical information. Can write limited learned vocabulary for common objects, short phrases, and simple lists. Can write such expressions as *Buenos días; Yo me llamo* plus name; *¿Cómo está usted?* and other fixed social formulae. Can name some common objects; knows some common adjectives and adverbs; can use the present tense of some common verbs, and can write interrogative sentences with words such as *dónde, cómo, por qué, cuando*. Can write all the letters and unique punctuation and diacritical marks in Spanish. Able to write simple, memorized material, with frequent misspellings. Some sound/letter combinations transfer negatively, such as **qua-* or **quo-* for *cua-* or *cuo-*, and consonants are often doubled or miswritten especially in cognate words such as **classe, *nación*. Accent marks are frequently missed, especially when one word of a pair has an accent mark and the other one does not, e.g., *lección/lecciones, joven/jóvenes*. Sometimes uses infinitives for conjugated verbs. Has a concept of gender, and can produce definite and indefinite articles, though often inappropriately. Often forgets to make adjectives agree with nouns. Generally cannot create own sentences in the language, but uses memorized material or transformations of familiar patterns.

*Denotes an error characteristic of speakers at this level.

Intermediate—Low Has sufficient control of the writing system to meet limited practical needs. Can write short messages, such as simple questions or notes, postcards, phone messages, and the like. Can take simple notes on material dealing with very familiar topics within the scope of limited language experience. Material produced consists of recombinations of learned vocabulary and structures into simple sentences. Can express present and future by using the present tense and adverbs of time such as *mañana, esta noche, la semana próxima, el año próximo*. For example: *Tengo un examen mañana; Yo voy a Caracas la semana próxima*. Generally cannot express past time by past tenses, but may incorrectly use the present tense and an adverb of time such as *ayer, la noche pasada, esta mañana* to convey past meaning. Uses sporadically forms such as possessive adjectives, demonstrative and interrogative adjectives, and partitive articles, but not always correctly. Vocabulary is limited to common objects and cognates, and is inadequate to express anything but elementary needs. Can express numbers from 1-100 with some misspellings. Often inserts native-language vocabulary for unknown words, and is generally not capable of circumlocution to get meaning across. Writing tends to be a loose collection of sentences or sentence fragments on very familiar topics (likes and dislikes, general routine, everyday events or situations). Makes continual errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation, but writing can be read and understood by a native reader used to dealing with foreigners. Able to produce appropriately some fundamental sociolinguistic distinctions in formal and familiar style, such as appropriate subject pronouns, titles of address and basic social formulae.

Intermediate—Mid Sufficient control of writing system to meet some survival needs and some limited social demands. Able to compose short paragraphs or take notes on familiar topics grounded in personal experience. Can discuss likes and dislikes, daily routine, everyday events, and the like. Can use correctly the present tense of most regular verbs and some irregular verbs. Can use *ir a* plus infinitive to express future time. Can express past time using content words and time expressions, with sporadically accurate verbs. Generally good control of basic constructions and inflections, such as subject-verb agreement, and straightforward syntactic constructions in present or future time, but may make errors where related forms are separated in a sentence, e.g., **Mi mamá no es muy alto*. May make frequent errors when venturing beyond current level of linguistic competence (such as when expressing opinions or emotions, where non-memorized conditionals, subjunctives, and other advanced concepts of grammar may come into play.) When resorting to a dictionary, often is unable to identify appropriate vocabulary, or uses dictionary entry in uninflected form.

*Denotes an error characteristic of speakers at this level.

Intermediate—High Sufficient control of writing system to meet most survival needs and limited social demands. Can take notes in some detail on familiar topics (autobiographical information, preferences, daily routine, simple descriptions and narration of everyday events and situations) and respond to personal questions using elementary vocabulary and common structures. Can write simple letters, brief synopses and paraphrases, summaries of biographical data and work experience, and short compositions on familiar topics. Can create sentences and short paragraphs relating to most survival needs (food, lodging, transportation, immediate surroundings and situations) and limited social demands. Can express fairly accurately present and future time. Produces some past verb forms, but not always accurately or with correct usage. Shows good control of elementary vocabulary and some control of basic syntactic patterns, but major errors still occur when expressing more complex thoughts. Dictionary usage may still yield incorrect vocabulary to express simple ideas. Generally does not use basic cohesive elements of discourse to advantage (relative constructions, pronouns, connectors, and the like). Writing, though faulty, is comprehensible to native speakers used to reading Spanish written by non-natives. Is able to express a few thoughts for which vocabulary is unknown via circumlocution, but may insert native-language syntactic patterns when expressing ideas beyond current level of linguistic competence.

Advanced Able to write routine social correspondence and simple discourse of at least several paragraphs on familiar topics. Can write simple social correspondence, take notes and write cohesive summaries, resumés, and short narratives and descriptions on factual topics in the past, present, and future time. Able to write about everyday topics using both description and narration. Has sufficient vocabulary to write simple statements with some circumlocution. Can write about a limited number of current events of daily situations and can express personal preferences and observations in some detail using basic structures. Is able to recycle new but meaningful phrases whether lexical or structural, i.e., lifts phrases appropriately, writing appears more sophisticated. When writing own thoughts, is more likely to paraphrase according to native language at times. Still makes errors in spelling and accent marks, but controls the most common formats and punctuation conventions. Good control of noun, adjective, and verb morphology, and of the most frequently used syntactic structures. Elementary constructions are usually handled quite accurately, and

writing is understandable to a native speaker not used to reading Spanish written by non-natives. Uses a limited number of cohesive devices such as direct-object pronouns, and can delete redundant words with good accuracy. Has difficulty with indirect object constructions, however, typically treating the *a*-phrase as obligatory and the indirect-object pronoun as optional (**Siempre doy regalos a mi novio.*) Uses verbs like *gustar*, *importar*, *faltar*, and *quedar* in certain fixed formulae, but without confidence or flexibility, and frequently follows English patterns: **Yo falto veinte dolares.* Able to join sentences in limited discourse, but has difficulty and makes frequent errors in producing complex sentences. Paragraphs are reasonably unified and coherent.

*Denotes an error characteristic of speakers at this level.

Advanced Plus

Shows ability to write about most common topics with some precision and in some detail. Can write fairly detailed resumés and summaries and take accurate notes. Can write most social and informal business correspondence. Can describe and narrate personal experiences and explain simply points of view in prose discourse using simple and compound verb tenses. Can write about concrete topics relating to particular interests and special fields of competence. Normally controls general vocabulary with some circumlocution. Often shows remarkable fluency and ease of expression, but under time constraints (e.g., no opportunity to rewrite), and pressure (e.g., testing), language may be inaccurate and/or incomprehensible. Generally strong in either grammar or vocabulary, but rarely in both. Weaknesses and unevenness in one of the foregoing or in spelling result in occasional miscommunication. Areas of weakness range sporadically from simple constructions, such as articles, prepositions, negatives and agreement, to more complex structures, such as tense usage (especially preterite and imperfect), passive or impersonal constructions, word order, relative clauses, and basic subjunctive constructions. Preterite vs. imperfect errors are especially likely with *haber* and *ser*, and when an arguably “ongoing” or “habitual” activity is circumscribed in time: *Estuvimos bailando toda la noche; Fui a la playa todos los días durante el mes que estuvimos allí.* Some misuse of vocabulary still evident, especially when using dictionary for words with multiple meanings or where related words carry various functions, but does use a dictionary to advantage where a fairly direct bilingual translation and no intralingual ambiguity exist. Shows ability to use circumlocution. Writing is understandable to native speakers not used to reading material written by non-natives, though the style is still obviously foreign.

Superior

Able to use written Spanish effectively in most formal and informal exchanges on practical, social, and professional topics. Can write most types of correspondence, such as memos, social and business letters (with appropriate formulaic introductions and closings), short research papers, and statements of position. Can express hypotheses and conjectures, and present arguments or points of view accurately and effectively. Can write about areas of special interest and handle topics in special fields. Has good control of a full range of structures so that time, description and narration can be used to expand upon ideas. Errors in basic structures are sporadic and not indicative of communicative control. In addition to simple tenses, can use compound tenses to show time relationships among events to express ideas clearly and coherently, but errors are sometimes made when using complex structures, such as indefinite, relative, or demonstrative pronouns when a range of tenses is necessary within a relatively short discourse. These errors are occasional and rarely disturb the native speaker. Has a wide enough vocabulary to convey the message accurately, though style may be foreign. Uses dictionary with a high degree of accuracy to supplement specialized vocabulary or to improve content or style. Although sensitive to differences in formal and informal style, still may not tailor writing precisely or accurately to a variety of audiences (except for personal vs. business correspondence) or styles.

Provisional Spanish Descriptions—Culture

Novice

Limited interaction. Behaves with considerateness. Is resourceful in nonverbal communication, but does not reliably interpret gestures or culturally specific nonverbal behavior, such as physical contacts with greetings, proximity of speaker. Is limited in language (see listening/speaking guidelines), but may be able to manage short phrases of courtesy (*gracias, con mucho gusto, de nada*) and basic titles of respect (*señor, señora, señorita*). Lacks generally the knowledge of culture patterns requisite for survival situations.

Intermediate

Survival competence. Can deal with familiar survival situations and interact with a culture bearer accustomed to foreigners. Is able to use conventional phrases when being introduced, such as *mucho gusto, el gusto es mío* as well as proper greetings at different times of day or night: *Buenas tardes* (more extensive period of time, until sunset); *Buenas noches* (both greeting and leave-taking); *Hola* (limited to informal occasions among friends). Can provide background information, such as personal address (street followed by number: *Calle Norte #30*), and telephone number (grouping in pairs: 32-49-63). Is able to express wants in simple

situations: *Quiero un cuarto con baño; Quiero una coca-cola, por favor; Quiero un sello (or una estampilla) para México.* Is able to ask directions: *¿Dónde queda (or está) el banco? (hotel, correo, parque, estación de policía, etc.).* Understands the need to go to different specialty shops to buy foods: *carne* in the *carnicería*, *pan* at the *panadería*, *pescado* at the *pescadería*, *dulces* at the *dulcería*, *frutas* at the *frutería*, etc. Is aware of the use of the metric system and knows simple phrases, such as *Quiero cien gramas de queso.* Is aware of different meal schedules as well as the content of each meal. Breakfast: light, consisting of bread, milk and coffee in most cases; Lunch: heavy; Dinner: generally very late. Knows that public transportation has different structure or organization according to country, such as buses with a *conductor* (driver) and a *colector* (ticket collector). Comprehends responses: *El banco está a dos cuadras; El correo queda a la izquierda del Hotel Nacional; Cuesta tres pesos; El hotel está lleno; No tenemos habitaciones (cuartos) disponibles,* etc. Is generally aware that tips are expected in restaurants, hotels, theaters, and other service situations. Yet may make errors as the result of misunderstanding or misapplying assumptions about the culture, such as not tipping a gas station attendant or arriving too early for dinner.

Advanced

Limited social competence. Handles routine situations successfully with a culture bearer accustomed to foreigners. Though home culture predominates, shows comprehension of common rules of etiquette, such as use of *tú* and *usted* and titles of respect, the importance of dressing according to the occasion in a more formal society, taboos and never asking private questions about age, salary and family affairs. Also shows comprehension of guest etiquette, such as complimenting hosts on food and wine, keeping both hands on the table when dining, holding the knife in the right hand, understanding that the kitchen is "off-limits" unless invited, not leaving immediately after dinner, and offering food or cigarettes to others before taking them oneself. Knows uses of *con permiso* vs. *perdón* as well as uses of *gusta* and *buen provecho* as common phrases of courtesy. Can make polite requests using commands or first person of *querer* with polite intonation and/or followed by *por favor* for requests. *Deme un formulario, por favor. Quiero un pasaje de ida y vuelta.* Knows conventional phrases for accepting invitations (*Encantado(a), acepto con mucho gusto, es un placer para mí cenar con su familia*) or refusing them (*gracias, or muchas gracias, se lo agradezco mucho, pero tengo otro compromiso or tengo que estudiar/trabajar,* etc.). Is aware of the use of gifts as an expression of friendship, personal esteem or gratitude. Knows how to accept gifts graciously. Knows how to apologize, using phrases such as: *lo siento mucho, no fue mi intención molestarle, perdóneme, or usted perdone, lamento lo sucedido,* etc. Is aware of Hispanics' reluctance to apologize. Can make introductions in formal and informal situations. Knows how to answer the telephone: *diga, bueno, aló, sí. Juan no está; ¿quiere dejarle algún recado? ¿Quién lo llama, por favor?* Knows how to place a call and ask for a third party: *Habla Jack Smith, ¿está Pedro?* or *Buenas tardes, ¿puedo hablar con Pedro Fernández?* or leave a message: *Hágame el favor de decirle que Jack Smith lo llamó.* Is able to do routine banking: *Deseo abrir una cuenta corriente (or de ahorros); Quiero depositar \$1,300; Necesito comprar 20 cheques de viajero de \$100 (cada uno); Necesito cambiar este cheque personal; Quiero sacar \$60 de mi cuenta de ahorros; Quiero enviar un giro bancario al Perú.* Knows how to handle routine business at the post office: *Deme 10 sellos aéreos, por favor; Deseo enviar un giro postal de \$50 a México; ¿Cuánto es el franqueo de una tarjeta postal a Bolivia?* Is able to make purchases in a small or large store: *¿Dónde queda el departamento de ropa interior (de caballeros, de niños, etc.)? Deseo una camisa deportiva de rayón, talla 34 or talla mediana; ¿Cuál es el precio? ¿Cuánto cuesta? ¿Qué precio tiene? ¿Está rebajado hoy?* Can identify products, prices (in local currency), and conditions of promotional sales. Understands that bargaining is limited to small markets and street vendors and knows how to bargain: *Es muy caro...le ofrezco 40 pesos; No puedo pagarle más de 300 pesetas.* Still makes errors in the use of *tú* and *usted*. Is not competent to take part in a formal meeting or in a group where several persons are speaking informally at the same time.

Superior

Working social and professional competence. Can participate in almost all social situations and those within one vocation. Handles unfamiliar situations with ease and sensitivity, including some involving common taboos, or some that are otherwise emotionally charged. Comprehends most nonverbal responses. Laughs at some culture-related humor, such as imitation of substandard speech, plays on words, etc. In productive skills, neither culture predominates; nevertheless, makes appropriate use of cultural references and expressions, such as colloquial phrases (*¡Dios te libre!*), idiomatic phrases (*en puntillas*), or sayings (*alegre como unas Pascuas; loco como una cabra*). Generally distinguishes between formal and informal register (i.e., correct use of formal *usted* vs. informal *tú*) and proper use of titles of respect. Discusses abstract ideas relating the foreign and native cultures and is aware cognitively of areas of difference, i.e., the importance of family ties (extended family), the attitude toward animals, the influence of the military in political affairs, the influence of the church vs. the long tradition of anticlericalism among men, especially in Latin America. Can discuss current events as well as fields of personal interest and support opinions. Is generally limited, however, in handling abstractions. Would know that Hispanic persons might criticize their own country, but would not accept such criticism from foreigners.

Near-Native
Competence

Full social and professional competence. Has internalized the concept that culture is relative and is always on the lookout to do the appropriate thing; no longer assumes that own culture is "the way it is." Fits behavior to audience, and Hispanic culture dominates almost entirely when using the language. Can counsel, persuade, negotiate, represent a point of view, describe and compare features of the native and target cultures. In such comparisons, can discuss geography, history, institutions, customs and behavior patterns, current events and national policies. Perceives almost all un verbalized responses (gestures, emotional reactions) and recognizes almost all allusions, including historical (*Es un Trujillo más en el Caribe.*) and literary commonplaces pertaining to a particular country (*Nos encontramos con otro Tirano Banderas.*). Laughs at most culture-related humor, such as imitation of regional or ethnic speech patterns and allusions to political or comic strip figures. Uses low frequency idiomatic expressions (*apañados estamos*), sayings (*más pobre que una rata de sacristía*) or proverbs (*La gota de agua horada la piedra.*). Controls formal and informal register. Has lived in the culture for a long time or has studied it extensively. Is inferior to the culture bearer only in background information related to the culture such as childhood experiences, detailed regional geography and past events of significance.

Native Competence

Native competence. Examinee is indistinguishable from a person brought up and educated in the culture.