

Level B2

Level B2 is where descriptors represent quite a break with the content so far. At the lower end of the level there is a focus on effective argument. Running right through it, there are two new focuses. The first is being able to more than hold your own in social discourse and the second new focus is a new degree of language awareness. At the higher end of the level this focus on argument, effective social discourses and language awareness continues. However, the focus on argument and social discourse can also be interpreted as a new focus on discourse skills. This new degree of discourse competence shows itself in conversational management (co-operating strategies). It is also apparent in relation to coherence/cohesion and finally at the higher end of this level there is a concentration of items of negotiating.

Global

Students can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in their field of specialisation. They can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.

Self-Assessment for learners

Listening

I can understand extended speech and lectures and follow even complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar. I can understand most TV news and current affairs programmes. I can understand the majority of films in standard dialect.

Reading

I can read articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems in which the writers adopt particular attitudes or viewpoints. I can understand contemporary literary prose.

Spoken Interaction

I can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible. I can take an active part in discussion in familiar contexts, accounting for and sustaining my views.

Spoken Production

I can express myself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. I can use language flexibly and effectively for social and professional purposes. I can formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate my contribution skilfully to those of other speakers.

Writing

I can write clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects related to my interests. I can write an essay or report, passing on information or giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view. I can write letters highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences.

Illustrative Proficiency Scales

Listening Proficiency

Students can understand the main ideas of propositionally and linguistically complex speech on both concrete and abstract topics delivered in a standard dialect, including technical discussions in their field of specialisation. They can follow extended speech and complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar, and the direction of the talk is sign-posted by explicit markers. They can understand standard spoken language, live or broadcast, on both familiar and unfamiliar topics normally encountered in personal, social, academic or vocational life. Only extreme background noise, inadequate discourse structure and/or idiomatic usage influences the ability to understand. They can, with some effort, catch much of what is said around them, but may find it difficult to participate effectively in discussion with several native speakers who do not modify their language. They can follow the essentials of lectures, talks and reports and other forms of academic/professional presentation. They can understand announcements and messages on topics spoken in standard dialect at normal speed. They understand most radio documentaries and most other recorded or broadcast audio material delivered in standard dialect and can identify the speaker's mood, tone etc and can use a variety of strategies to achieve comprehension, including listening for main points.

Reading Proficiency

Students can read with a large degree of independence, adapting style and speed to different texts and purposes, and using appropriate reference sources selectively. They have a broad active reading vocabulary, but may experience some difficulty with low frequency idioms. They can scan quickly through long and complex texts, locating relevant details and quickly identify the content and relevance of news items, articles and reports on a wide range of professional topics, deciding whether closer study is worthwhile. Students can understand articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems in which the writers adopt particular stances or viewpoints. They can understand specialised articles outside their field, provided they can use a dictionary occasionally. They can understand lengthy, complex instructions in their field, including details on conditions and warnings. They can use a variety of strategies to achieve comprehension by using contextual clues.

Writing Proficiency

Students can write clear, detailed texts on a variety of subjects related to their field of interest, synthesising and evaluating information and arguments from a number of sources. They can write clear, detailed descriptions on a variety of subjects and experiences, marking the relationship between ideas in clear connected text, and following established conventions of the genre concerned. They can write an essay or report which develops an argument, giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view and explaining the advantages and disadvantages of various options. Students can synthesise information and arguments from a number of sources and evaluate different ideas or solutions to a problem.

They can express views effectively and relate to those of others. They can write correspondence conveying degrees of emotion and highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences and commenting on the correspondent's views. They can understand a clearly structured lecture on a familiar subject, and can take notes on points which strike

them as important, even though they tend to concentrate on the words themselves and therefore miss some information. They can summarise a wide range of factual and imaginative texts, commenting on and discussing contrasting points of view and the main themes. They can summarise the plot and sequence of events in a film or play and produce clearly intelligible continuous writing which follows standard layout and paragraphing conventions. Spelling and punctuation are reasonably accurate but may show signs of mother tongue influence.

Speaking Proficiency

Students have a sufficient range of language to be able to give clear descriptions, express viewpoints on most general topics, without much conspicuous searching for words and using some complex sentence forms to do so. They can produce stretches of language with a fairly even tempo; although they can be hesitant as they search for patterns and expressions. There are few noticeably long pauses.

They can use a limited number of cohesive devices to link their utterances into clear, coherent discourse, though there may be some 'jumpiness' in a long contribution. They can give clear, systematically developed descriptions and presentations, on a wide range of subjects with appropriate highlighting of significant points, and relevant supporting detail. They can construct a chain of reasoned argument and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue. They can depart spontaneously from a prepared text and follow up interesting points raised by members of the audience, often showing fluency and ease of expression.

They can use the language fluently, accurately and effectively on a wide range of topics, marking clear the relationships between ideas. They can engage in extended conversation in a clearly participatory fashion, convey degrees of emotion and highlight the personal significance of events and experiences. In formal discussions they can express their ideas and opinions with precision, present and respond to complex lines of argument convincingly and counter argue fluently, spontaneously and appropriately. They can pass on detailed information reliably and give a clear detailed description. They can synthesise and report information and arguments from a number of sources and take initiatives in an interview, expand and develop ideas. They can initiate, maintain and end discourse appropriately with effective turn taking and use stock phrases to gain time and keep the turn whilst formulating what to say. They can give feedback and follow up statements and so help a discussion along, confirming comprehension and inviting others. They can correct errors and use circumlocution and paraphrase to cover gaps in knowledge.

Students show a relatively high degree of grammatical control and don't make mistakes which lead to misunderstanding. Their lexical accuracy is generally high, though some confusion and incorrect word choice does occur without hindering communication. Students have acquired a clear, natural, pronunciation and intonation.

Learner Outcomes

Students at this level will be able to use the following:

Functions:

Critiquing and reviewing
Describing experiences
Describing hopes and plans
Describing feelings and emotions
Developing an argument
Encouraging and inviting another speaker to continue
Expressing abstract ideas
Expressing agreement and disagreement
Expressing opinions
Expressing reaction
Interacting informally, reacting, expressing interest, sympathy, surprise etc.
Opinion, justification and speculating
Taking the initiative in interaction
Synthesizing, evaluating, glossing info

Grammar

Adjectives and adverbs
Future continuous
Future perfect and Future perfect continuous
Mixed conditionals
Modals – can't have, needn't have
Modals of deduction and speculation
Narrative tenses
Passives
Past perfect and Past perfect continuous
Phrasal verbs, extended
Relative clauses
Reported speech
Will and going to, for prediction
Wish
Would expressing habits, in the past

Discourse Markers

Connecting words expressing cause and effect, contrast etc.
Discourse markers to structure formal speech
Linkers: although, in spite of, despite
Linkers: sequential – past time – subsequently

Vocabulary

Collocation
Colloquial language

Topics

Arts Books and literature
Education
Film
Media
News, lifestyles and current affairs

Learner Training

Alternative memory / associative techniques
Word building
Synonyms / antonyms
Keeping a record of collocation
Use of dictionary to distinguish separability of multi-word verbs
Inferring meaning of unknown words via context

Study Skills

Expand strategies to record vocabulary: mind maps, spider-grams and summaries
Revise vocabulary regularly
Use social networking groups to exchange revision notes and discuss language points
Use video and voice recorder for fluency and pronunciation practice.