



FACT SHEET

U.S. Air Force Fact Sheet

LANGUAGE, REGION AND CULTURE DEFINITIONS & FORCE DEVELOPMENT LEVELS

Air Force guidance documents have established the following basic definitions regarding culture:

- **Culture:** The creation, maintenance and transformation across generations of semi-shared patterns of meaning, sense making, affiliation, action and organization by groups.
 - Culture-general: Common aspects and domains of the culture concept that offer broadly applicable concepts/principles and serve as a framework for culture-specific learning.
 - Culture-specific: Specific aspects of particular cultures, which permit more effective interaction with individuals of other cultural backgrounds.

USAF combines learning in these aspects of culture to develop students to the necessary level:

- **C1:** Have a limited understanding of core culture-general and specific concepts. Can identify basic cultural categories. Require substantial assistance with perspective-taking and projecting second/third order effects of own/others' behavior. Have superficial awareness of cultural differences in verbal/nonverbal communication. Have some awareness of basic concepts of cross-cultural relations and negotiation.
- **C2:** Have a solid understanding of core cultural concepts, are able to elaborate on the domains of culture (culture-general and -specific) and anticipate their implications on the mission. With minimal guidance, can take the perspective of others and project the second/third order effects of own/others' behavior. Can describe how culture is manifested and how cultural differences can lead to misunderstandings and conflict. With minimal guidance, can apply basic skills of cross-cultural relations and negotiation at levels of application (tactical, operational or strategic) appropriate to their rank.
- **C3:** Able to articulate a thorough understanding of the core concepts and domains of culture (culture-general and -specific) and anticipate their implications on mission effectiveness. Can take the perspective of others and project second/third order effects of own/others' behavior. Can describe and formulate complex questions about how culture is manifested. Able to communicate effectively (inter-personally, intra-organizationally and inter-organizationally) across cultures. Able to apply skills in planning, managing cross-cultural conflicts and establishing, maintaining and utilizing relationships with culturally diverse counterparts at levels of application appropriate to their rank.

The Air Force's LRC governance has established the following basic definitions regarding region:

- **Region:** A geographic area defined by one or more of the following: institutions, inter-relations among people, or interactions between people and the physical environment.
 - Formal Regions: Defined by institutions and identified by administrative boundaries such as countries, international organizations and sub-state political units.
 - Process Regions: Defined by long-term patterned human interactions around culture, ideology, language, economics and other issues.
 - Physical Regions: Defined by topography/interactions between humans and the environment.

USAF combines learning in these aspects of region to develop students to the necessary level:

- **R1:** Able to identify and list the basic characteristics of regions and the three different types of regions. Able to explain in general terms how physical and cultural environments come together to shape Areas of Operation (AO) and impact mission success.
- **R2:** Able to apply general concepts required for R1 to specific regions. Can identify and locate the administrative units, major culture areas and main physical/environmental characteristics within a



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LANGUAGE, REGION AND CULTURE FORCE DEVELOPMENT LEVELS (continued)

specific region. Make decisions that consider the specific regional characteristics of an AO.

- **R3:** Has extensive knowledge of the physical and cultural environments of a region, flows of information and interaction within the region and between the region and neighboring areas. Able to take requisite knowledge from the R1 and R2 levels and apply it to the Military Decision Making Process and other tools for operational/strategic planning and mission execution. Can supply material and guidance for education and training at the R1 and 2 levels, and advise senior leaders.

The US Government has established proficiency levels of foreign **language** Speaking, Reading and Listening.¹ USAF has simplified these for force management, and develops students to the necessary level:

- **L1:** Elementary Proficiency. *Speaking.* Able to satisfy minimum courtesy requirements and maintain very simple face-to-face conversations on familiar topics. Misunderstandings are frequent, but able to ask for help in face-to-face interaction. Unable to produce continuous discourse except with rehearsed material. *Reading.* Can read very simple written material. Able to read and understand known language elements that have been recombined in new ways with different meanings at a similar level of simplicity. Can get some main ideas. *Listening.* Able to understand utterances about basic survival needs and minimum courtesy requirements. Can understand simple questions and answers, simple statements and face-to-face conversations in a standard dialect. Vocabulary inadequate to understand anything but the most elementary speech. Little precision.
L2: Limited Working Proficiency. *Speaking.* Able to satisfy routine social demands and limited work requirements. In more complex tasks, language usage generally disturbs a native speaker. Can get the gist of most everyday conversations but has some difficulty understanding speech on specialized topics. *Reading.* Can read authentic written material on familiar subjects. Able to read familiar, factual material with some misunderstandings. Can locate and understand main ideas. Cannot draw inferences. Lacks a broad active vocabulary. *Listening.* Can understand face-to-face speech about everyday topics in a standard dialect, delivered at a normal rate with some repetition and rewording. Can follow essential points of discussion at an elementary level on topics in his/her professional field. Limited understanding of statements made in unfavorable conditions.
- **L3:** General Professional Proficiency. *Speaking.* Able to participate effectively in most conversations. Professional contexts of language use are restricted to matters of shared knowledge. Errors virtually never interfere with understanding and rarely disturb native speakers. Cultural references may not be fully understood. Pronunciation may be obviously foreign. *Reading.* Able to read at normal speed, with almost complete comprehension on unfamiliar subjects. Ability is not dependent on subject matter knowledge. Misreading is rare. Almost always able to interpret material correctly. Rarely has to pause. May experience some difficulty with complex structures. *Listening.* Able to understand the essentials of most speech in a standard dialect. Understands hypothesizing and supported opinions. Rarely has to ask for paraphrasing or explanation. May not understand rapid speech, different dialects or slang. Can often detect emotional overtones.

For more information, see culture.af.mil, e-mail afclc.outreach@us.af.mil or call 334-953-7729.

¹ Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR): <http://www.govilr.org>.