

Language Difficulty Categories from the Foreign Service Institute



The U.S. Foreign Service Institute has categorized languages into 4 categories based on how long, on average, it takes their students to reach “professional working proficiency” in these languages. Keep these charts on hand to help you remember which languages are harder than others (at least for English-speaking U.S. diplomats!).

Mango Languages offers courses in many of the languages listed below, which are hyperlinked if you’re viewing this document on a computer!

Source: <https://www.state.gov/foreign-language-training/>

Category I		
24-30 weeks (600-750 class hours)		
Danish	Dutch	French
Italian	Norwegian	Portuguese
Romanian	Spanish	Swedish

Category II		
36 weeks (900 class hours)		
German	Haitian Creole	Indonesian
Malay	Swahili	



Category III

44 weeks (1100 class hours)

Albanian	Amharic	Armenian	Azerbaijani
Bengali	Bulgarian	Burmese	Czech
Dari	Estonian	Farsi	Finnish
Georgian	Greek	Hebrew	Hindi
Hungarian	Icelandic	Kazakh	Khmer
Kurdish	Kyrgyz	Lao	Latvian
Lithuanian	Macedonian	Mongolian	Nepali
Polish	Russian	Serbo-Croatian	Sinhala
Slovak	Slovenian	Somali	Tagalog
Tajiki	Tamil	Telugu	Thai
Tibetan	Turkish	Turkmen	Ukrainian
Urdu	Uzbek	Vietnamese	

Category IV

88 weeks (2200 class hours)

Arabic	Chinese - Cantonese	Chinese - Mandarin
Japanese	Korean	

