



**DEFENSE LANGUAGE INSTITUTE ENGLISH LANGUAGE CENTER**  
LACKLAND AIR FORCE BASE, TX 78236-5259

July 31, 2007  
DLIELC 1025.9  
LEAT

**COMPLIANCE WITH THIS PUBLICATION IS MANDATORY**

DLIELC INSTRUCTION 1025.9, Change 1

SUBJECT: Management of the DLIELC Oral Proficiency  
Interview (OPI) Program

1. PURPOSE

1.1. This change transmittal forwards change 1 to DLIELC 1025.9, May 14, 2007.

1.2. No previous changes have been issued to subject instruction.

2. ACTION

2.1. Remove pages 3 and 4 and insert attached pages 3 and 4.

2.2. File this change transmittal page at the beginning of the instruction in numerical sequence.

3. EFFECTIVE DATE

The above change is effective immediately.

STEPHEN M. JONES, Colonel, USAF  
Commandant



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DLIELC INSTRUCTION 1025.9

SUBJECT: Management of the DLIELC Oral Proficiency Interview  
(OPI) Program

- References:
- (a) DLIELC Instruction 1025.9, Management of the DLIELC Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) Program, April 7, 2006 (hereby superseded).
  - (b) AFJI 16-103, Managing the Defense English Language Program, 31 August 1994.
  - (c) DLIELC Instruction 1025.30, English Language Training for International Military Students, June 24, 2005.

1. PURPOSE

Under the authority of reference (b), this instruction establishes policies, responsibilities and procedures for the management of the Defense Language Institute English Language Center (DLIELC) OPI program. Consistent with responsibilities assigned in reference (c), it provides guidance on the scheduling and conducting of interviews, on the training and certification of raters and on the maintenance of program quality assurance.

2. APPLICABILITY

This instruction applies to all 1701-series DLIELC employees.

3. DEFINITIONS

3.1. After-hours OPIs. OPIs conducted outside normal duty hours (i.e., before/after the normal duty day). Raters earn overtime or compensatory time for accomplishing after-hours OPIs.

3.2. Authorized In-Country (IC)/CONUS Representatives. Security Assistance Officers (SAOs) or US personnel with SAO responsibilities, English Comprehension Level (ECL) Test Control Officers (TCOs) and Alternate Test Control Officers (ATCOs) or US Government personnel (e.g., Reserve Officer Training Corps [ROTC] or Military Entrance Processing Stations [MEPS] guidance

counselors) designated to coordinate and monitor nonresident OPIs.

3.3. Nonresident OPI. An OPI conducted in person or over the telephone for an individual who is not on the DLIELC campus.

3.4. Nonresident OPI Duty Roster. A quarterly schedule which contains primary and secondary OPI rater team assignments for OPI raters responsible for conducting nonresident OPIs.

3.5. OPI. A test of a candidate's interactive listening comprehension and speaking (C/S) ability, conducted under controlled conditions by at least two certified OPI raters.

3.6. OPI Coordinator. The OPI-certified ESL Specialist appointed by the Chief, Test and Measurement Branch (LEAT) to be responsible for scheduling nonresident OPIs, coordinating OPI rater teams for all OPI requirements and overseeing OPI quality assurance activities.

3.7. OPI Monitors. The persons designated by their section/branch chiefs to be responsible for coordinating all the OPI requirements within the General English Instruction Section (LEAGI), the Specialized English Instruction Section (LEASI) and the Instructor Development Branch (LEAI), respectively.

3.8. OPI Rater. A DLIELC staff member trained and certified to conduct OPIs and assign language skill ratings based on the Interagency Language Roundtable Language Skill Level Descriptions for listening and speaking (Encl E1).

3.9. OPI Rater Trainer. A GS-11 or equivalent OPI rater who has been trained and certified to conduct OPI rater training, certify OPI raters, perform quality assurance checks on raters' performance, verify C/S ratings and observe raters for recertification.

3.10. OPI Rating. The assessment, on a scale from 0 to 5 in accordance with (IAW) Encl E1, of an examinee's C/S ability as reflected by his/her linguistic performance during an OPI.

3.11. OPI Rating Verification. A review by an OPI rater trainer or an OPI verifier of a recorded OPI to ensure rating validity and rater reliability.

3.12. OPI Verifier. An OPI rater who has been trained and selected to verify C/S ratings of recorded OPIs.

3.13. Resident OPI. An OPI conducted in person or over the telephone for an individual who is on the DLIELC campus.

3.14. Telephonic OPI. An OPI conducted over a telephone.

#### 4. POLICY

4.1. Workload permitting, all DLIELC 1701 career and career-conditional personnel receive OPI rater certification training. Supervisors ensure certified OPI raters maintain their currency. OPI rater certification is valid for one year. Annual recertification can be determined by raters' performance in either a face-to-face or telephonic interview. Raters may be decertified (when indicated by two OPI rater trainers) if they do not successfully complete refresher training or if they present medical documentation that attests to their physical inability to continue to perform OPI rater duties reliably.

4.2. OPI ratings will be assigned only by certified raters. The same standards that apply for rating face-to-face OPIs apply for telephonic ones. All international military students (IMSS) scheduled for aviation follow-on training (FOT) take telephonic OPIs, regardless of whether they are administered on or off the resident campus. All OPIs are recorded either onto a digital flash card, audiocassette or videotape.

4.3. All OPI ratings which vary by more than a plus point from a previous rating will be verified. Individuals who exactly meet or do not meet the required OPI score on nonresident OPIs will have their scores verified. (Exception: Nonresident interviews for 09L students at Ft. Jackson, SC, will be treated as resident interviews. That is, minimally passing OPI scores will not normally be verified, but nonqualifying scores will be verified.) Nonresident OPI scores that exceed the required score by a plus point in one or both skills will not normally be verified. Qualifying OPI ratings and end-of-course OPI ratings for resident aviation students will also be verified, unless they exceed the requirement by a plus point or more. Ratings may be changed only if either an OPI verifier and an OPI rater trainer or two OPI rater trainers who have independently reviewed and rated the recorded OPI declare the initial rating inaccurate.

4.4. Individuals must attain their required score on the ECL test before they can be scheduled for an OPI. A verified OPI rating is valid for six months. Interviewees who have received nonresident OPI ratings lower than those required for FOT may be reinterviewed only after a waiting period of 90 calendar days, during which time they should be enrolled in an intensive English language program that stresses oral language acquisition. At least 30 calendar days must elapse between resident OPIs. Waivers to the requisite waiting period must be approved by the Chief, LEAT.

## 5. RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1. All DLIELC supervisors of certified OPI personnel will ensure those personnel maintain their currency.

5.2. LEAT will:

5.2.1. Exercise overall management of the OPI Program.

5.2.2. Coordinate all OPI policy changes.

5.2.3. Authorize waivers from OPI policy/procedures.

5.2.4. Maintain a current list of OPI rater information, including certification status and date to which (re)certification is valid.

5.2.5. Coordinate OPI requirements for the Academics Division (LEA) and arrange for the formation of OPI teams to conduct all OPIs, to include after-hours OPIs.

5.2.6. Coordinate the scheduling of nonresident telephonic OPIs with appropriate IC/CONUS representatives.

5.2.7. Ensure that OPI rating verifications are accomplished as required.

5.2.8. Ensure all information on resident and nonresident OPIs, including those conducted by mobile training teams, is entered into the OPI database.

5.2.9. Serve as the office of record for official nonresident telephonic OPIs. As such, LEAT will maintain a log of all nonresident telephonic OPIs, identified by a unique alphanumeric code.

5.2.10. Ensure that quality assurance measures are performed through documentation/recording review, trend data analysis, and statistical analysis and take (or recommend, as appropriate) actions necessary to maintain and improve program quality.

5.2.11 Track and coordinate rater certifications.

5.3. LEAI will:

5.3.1. Plan, schedule and conduct certification, recertification and refresher training, as well as quarterly roundtables, for OPI raters.

5.3.2. Recommend OPI rater certification actions based on performance during training.

5.3.3. Initiate major changes to OPI rater training and certification procedures.

5.3.4. Recommend appropriate training or certification actions; generate (re)certification letters and notify LEAT of actions.

5.4. LEA supervisors will:

5.4.1. Identify OPI requirements to the OPI monitor.

5.4.2. Immediately identify C/S rating increases or decreases of more than a plus point to the OPI coordinator for rating verification.

5.4.3. Document OPI ratings on DLIELC Forms 1025.3(B) and (C), Student and Instructor Student Academic Records, and inform students and the Resident Programs Branch, as necessary, of the ratings only after rating verifications are accomplished.

5.5. Authorized IC/CONUS representatives will:

5.5.1. Identify ECL-qualified personnel who have an OPI requirement and schedule telephonic OPIs in advance through LEAT.

5.5.2. Certify the identity of the interviewee on the scheduled OPI date, attend the interview, provide pencil and paper for the information gathering task (IGT) during the OPI and maintain test security at all times.

5.5.3. Maintain OPI information for each interview in an OPI log.

5.5.4. Inform the host country or appropriate CONUS personnel of the interviewee's OPI rating.

5.6. OPI raters will:

5.6.1. Accomplish OPIs and OPI training as assigned.

5.6.2. Elicit a ratable speech sample from the candidate and independently rate it, using prescribed techniques, guidelines and procedures.

5.6.3. Complete all required OPI documentation.

6. PROCEDURES

6.1. OPI Certification.

6.1.1. OPI Rater Certification.

6.1.1.1. LEAI will recommend for certification as OPI raters those trainees who successfully complete OPI rater certification training and who are identified as qualified interviewers by OPI rater trainers. Qualification for certification is based on the trainee's performance, including the ability to elicit a ratable speech sample using prescribed elicitation techniques as well as the ability to analyze spoken discourse and assign ratings IAW Encl E1. Upon the conclusion of OPI rater certification training, LEAI will prepare certification letters for those trainees who have met the qualification requirements and will provide all the trainees written notification of whether they were recommended for certification or not. LEAI will notify LEAT of new certifications.

6.1.1.2. OPI rater certification status is valid for one calendar year. In order to maintain certification, a rater must keep in practice. A rater should conduct 36 OPIs per year at a rate of nine per quarter when possible. For raters who conduct fewer than 36 OPIs per year, LEAI will coordinate with appropriate units and evaluate each rater on a case-by-case basis, taking into account such factors as workload, overseas duty, verifications accomplished, OPIs accomplished during training or other factors deemed relevant. LEAI may recommend such raters be assigned additional interviews or scheduled for refresher training (suspending all interviews in the interim). LEAI will inform raters in writing if their certification has been suspended.

6.1.2. OPI Verifier Selection.

6.1.2.1. LEAI will select as OPI verifiers GS-11 or equivalent OPI raters who have demonstrated the ability to accurately verify C/S ratings on recorded OPIs IAW Encl E1. This selection will be based on successful completion of OPI verification training as determined by OPI rater trainers. Upon completion of this training, LEAI will provide written notification to trainees on their selection and inform LEAT.

6.1.2.2. In order to remain current, OPI verifiers must successfully complete refresher training each year.

6.1.3. OPI Rater Trainer Selection. Chief, LEAI will select as OPI rater trainers GS-11 or equivalent OPI raters who have demonstrated the ability to conduct OPI rater training

through their own familiarity with and practice of the system, as verified by feedback from the current cadre of OPI rater trainers. Before candidates are certified as OPI rater trainers, they must demonstrate the ability to teach all parts—theoretical and practical—of OPI rater certification training, to resolve rating questions satisfactorily and to provide meaningful feedback to OPI rater candidates and certified OPI raters.

## 6.2. Scheduling OPIs.

6.2.1. Resident OPIs. LEA supervisors will identify students for OPIs during the training periods listed below:

6.2.1.1. Students in the Advanced English Language Program: during the first two weeks of training; if the initial OPI rating is below the required C/S rating, in the seventh or eighth week and during the last three weeks of training, if necessary. At least 30 calendar days must elapse between interviews. No student will have more than five OPIs in this program (i.e., in the case of programming extensions).

6.2.1.2. Students in the Oral Proficiency Skills for Aviation Course (OPSAV): during the first, eighth and last weeks of the course, or until they achieve the required OPI rating. At least 30 calendar days must elapse between interviews. No student will have more than five OPIs during OPSAV.

6.2.1.3. Students who have an official OPI requirement for FOT:

6.2.1.3.1. If in LEAGI: as soon as they are ECL-qualified. If they do not make the required OPI rating, additional OPIs can be conducted at 30-day intervals or during the last programmed training week in LEAGI.

6.2.1.3.2. If direct-entry Specialized English Training (SET) students: during the first week of training.

NOTE: Once the OPI requirement for FOT has been met at DLIELC, further interviews will not be scheduled. IMSSs who achieve their required rating during a valid nonresident OPI will be interviewed upon entry for statistical purposes only. Their entry OPIs will not be verified routinely. Their verified nonresident OPI rating is valid for six months and will be considered the official rating, even if the entry OPI rating is lower.

6.2.1.4. Students in the Test of English as a Foreign Language Preparation and Academic Writing Course: not

later than (NLT) the eighth week of the course; if the initial OPI rating is below 2/2, then 30 days later.

6.2.1.5. Students in the Basic American Language Instructor Course: during the first six and last six weeks of the course; if the initial OPI is below 2/2, NLT week 19.

6.2.1.6. Students in the Advanced English Language Instructor Course: NLT the eleventh week of the course; if the initial OPI rating is below 2/2, then 30 days later.

6.2.1.7. Students in the Advanced Language Proficiency Skills Course: NLT the seventh week of the course; if the initial OPI rating is below 2/2, then 30 days later.

NOTE: When students are programmed for consecutive LEAI courses, Chief, LEAI may waive the OPI requirement for subsequent courses.

6.2.2. LEA supervisors will also schedule OPIs as necessary to:

6.2.2.1. Determine whether US Army personnel are eligible for an ECL waiver.

6.2.2.2. Verify a student's current ratings.

6.2.2.3. Support an academic board or training requirement.

6.2.2.4. Provide information for special projects or sponsor service training institutions.

6.2.2.5. Determine whether IMSs need additional academic instruction time to attain required OPI ratings.

6.2.3. Scheduling Nonresident Telephonic OPIs.

6.2.3.1. The IC/CONUS representatives will initiate an OPI log entry when they schedule nonresident telephonic OPIs with the OPI Coordinator (normally, with at least seven days' advance notification). The following information will be provided to the OPI Coordinator and entered on the log: the desired date and time of the OPI, the sponsor service, the interviewee's first and last names, the qualifying ECL score (as well as the target-language OPI score for US Army Linguist Program candidates [ALPP]), the worksheet control number or military ID number, the candidate's rank/pay grade, the case number (if available), the Military Articles and Services List FOT number related to the OPI and the interviewee's previous OPI

data (if any). In the event of a cancellation or change in schedule, the IC/CONUS rep will notify LEAT as soon as possible.

6.2.3.2. The OPI coordinator will schedule ALPP interviews to occur within two workdays of receipt of the request. The interviews will be scheduled during the normal DLIELC workday as often as possible. The OPI Coordinator will assign each telephonic OPI a unique alphanumeric code to represent the specific candidate and interview conducted on that date. The code will consist of the country code, the service, the year, the Julian calendar date and the sequence number, i.e., THP0912203. The OPI Coordinator will confirm the scheduled date and time of the OPI, enter all required information on the nonresident OPI calendar and inform the IC/CONUS representative of approval via message, fax, telecon or e-mail.

6.2.3.3. When nonresident OPIs must be conducted outside normal duty hours, the OPI Coordinator will select raters on a voluntary, rotational basis (IAW the labor agreement between the American Federation of Government Employees Local 1367 and 37<sup>th</sup> Training Wing, Article 11) and inform raters' supervisors of this duty. If there are no volunteers, raters will be directed based on the same criteria. Raters will be advised of directed after-hours OPI assignments at least two workdays in advance. LEAT administrative personnel will:

6.2.3.3.1. Complete the AF IMT 428, Request for Overtime, Holiday Premium Pay, and Compensatory Time, to reflect the raters' desire for overtime or compensatory time and submit it for approval.

6.2.3.3.2. Forward a copy of the coordinated AF IMT 428 to the raters' supervisors for timesheet input.

### 6.3. Conducting and Documenting OPIs.

6.3.1. All OPIs conducted by teams at DLIELC.

6.3.1.1. The OPI coordinator will:

6.3.1.1.1. Manage OPI rater teams and testing resources such as audiorecordings and compact flash cards, DLIELC IMTs 1025.9(A), OPI Performance Profiles (Encl E2, paper or electronic versions), OPI Coordinator logs, etc. and their disposition.

6.3.1.1.2. Ensure OPI verifiers and rater trainers accomplish required OPI rating verifications.

6.3.1.1.3. Ensure OPI Coordinator's logs are updated on a daily basis and turned over to the LEAT testing documentation clerk in a timely manner for input into the OPI database.

6.3.1.2. OPI raters will:

6.3.1.2.1. Arrive 10 minutes early at the designated interview location and ensure the audio recorder is in operation before beginning the OPI.

6.3.1.2.2. Using appropriate testing techniques, elicit from the candidates ratable speech samples which demonstrate the extent and limits of their functional linguistic ability.

6.3.1.2.3. Independently rate candidates IAW Encl E1, compare independent ratings and resolve any differences through discussion and/or negotiation.

6.3.1.2.4. Complete the required information on DLIELC IMT 1025.9(A) and provide rating justification.

6.3.1.2.5. Document on the OPI Coordinator's log information regarding OPIs. Under no circumstance is the team to inform the candidate or an IC/CONUS representative of the OPI rating.

6.3.2. Resident OPIs.

6.3.2.1. The OPI coordinator will:

6.3.2.1.1. Prioritize OPI requirements identified by OPI monitors.

6.3.2.1.2. Schedule OPIs to provide for maximum possible exchange of raters and to minimize subjectivity due to raters' familiarity with students.

6.3.2.2. OPI raters will report punctually to the OPI coordinator for interview assignments. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, teams are expected to complete an OPI in approximately one hour.

6.3.2.3. The supervisor of the unit to which the student is assigned will ensure that the DLIELC IMT 1025.9(A) is inserted in the student's record and that the C/S ratings are entered in the appropriate blocks on DLIELC Form 1025.3(B) or (C). All required rating verifications will be accomplished

before ratings are recorded or students are informed of their ratings.

6.3.3. Nonresident OPIs.

6.3.3.1. The IC/CONUS representative will:

6.3.3.1.1. Ensure the interviewee arrives at the scheduled time and place for the telephonic OPI and confirm proper identity through official photo identification.

6.3.3.1.2. Using a normal phone (not a speakerphone), initiate or await the call for the OPI at the scheduled time. Each party will be prepared to wait 20 minutes after the appointed time, if necessary. If for any reason the line is disconnected and the initiating party is unable to reestablish contact within 20 minutes, the telephonic OPI will be canceled and rescheduled. A maximum of two callbacks may be permitted on a given date.

6.3.3.1.3. Remain in the room during the entire interview and allow no one else to enter. The candidate is not allowed to read or write anything during the OPI, except during the IGT, when a pencil and paper should be provided.

6.3.3.1.4. Take precautions to prevent any discussion of the telephonic OPI questions and responses among the interviewees during or after the interviews.

NOTE: Recommend scheduling no more than two interviews on the same date. The authorized representative will ensure that interviewees scheduled to have an OPI are appropriately isolated from each other to preclude the possibility of their discussing the content of the OPI.

6.3.3.1.5. Inform the appropriate IC/CONUS personnel of the OPI results as soon as possible after DLIELC provides notification of the rating.

6.3.3.1.6. Complete the OPI log with OPI completion date and score.

6.3.3.2. The OPI Coordinator will:

6.3.3.2.1. Maintain the nonresident OPI calendar, monitor the scheduled nonresident OPIs and the OPI teams on duty and inform the OPI raters of last-minute changes and cancellations.

6.3.3.2.2. Inform the IC/CONUS representative of the verified rating and provide written confirmation via message or e-mail. DLIELC will do everything possible to ensure this is accomplished within two US workdays.

6.3.3.3. The primary OPI team on the Nonresident OPI Duty Roster will conduct the nonresident OPIs scheduled within normal duty hours for the week they have primary OPI duty, or they will arrange for someone from the secondary team (or an alternate OPI rater) to do so. The OPI raters will:

6.3.3.3.1. Arrive at least 10 minutes prior to the scheduled time and initiate or await the telephonic OPI call.

6.3.3.3.2. Provide the authorized IC/CONUS representative with the telephonic OPI code representing the specific interviewee and interview before the telephonic OPI begins.

6.3.3.3.3. Determine whether or not the voice transmission is of sufficient quality to begin the telephonic OPI, based on their initial verbal exchange with the IC/CONUS representative.

6.3.3.3.4. Ensure the audio recorder is in operation before beginning the OPI. If the interview is interrupted before completion, the raters and authorized representative will so indicate on the telephonic OPI logs. DLIELC IMT 1025.9(A) will also be annotated to that effect.

6.3.4. OPIs conducted by Mobile Training Teams (MTTs).

6.3.4.1. To ensure OPI rater currency and test reliability, LEAT will respond to staffing requirements from LEN. LEAT will recommend OPI teams after gathering feedback from LEAI and OPI rater trainers on raters' current performance.

6.3.4.2. MTTs who conduct nonresident OPIs will comply with the elicitation and rating requirements for all DLIELC OPIs and will complete a log which contains identifying data on the candidate, as well as the interviewers' independent ratings and negotiated rating.

6.3.4.3. The OPI Coordinator will ensure that the information on the MTT OPI logs is input into the OPI database.

6.4. Ensuring OPI Integrity.

6.4.1. In the event the OPI raters cannot agree on the rating, the recording will be reviewed and rated by a rater trainer. Only if the sample is deemed unratable by the rater trainer will the candidate be reinterviewed by another panel of raters.

6.4.2. In the event an OPI verifier does not agree with the original OPI team's C/S rating, the recording will be reviewed and independently rated by an OPI rater trainer. Everything possible will be done to eliminate any bias in this review process. In the event both the OPI verifier and the OPI rater trainer agree the initial rating was inaccurate, the original OPI team will be informed and typically required to review the OPI recording themselves and discuss the rating discrepancy with the OPI rater trainer. If the original team's ratings do not agree with the rater trainer's ratings, the initial ratings will be changed and a new DLIELC IMT 1025.9(A) accomplished, reflecting the OPI verifier and the OPI rater trainer as the rating team. The original DLIELC IMT 1025.9(A) will be filed for statistical purposes. For the computerized OPI database, the OPI verifier and OPI rater trainer replace the initial raters' comments with their own and annotate the change in the remarks section. The initial rating team is still credited with the OPI. The rater trainer will also provide written feedback on the raters' performance.

6.4.3. An OPI rater trainer will observe each certified rater's performance at least once during a calendar year for recertification. Generally, this observation will be during the quarter preceding the rater's recertification date for the purpose of extending the rater's certification. Other observations will be conducted randomly. (Feedback on a recording reviewed for rating verification can satisfy random observation requirements.)

6.4.3.1. Within five workdays after each observation, the OPI rater trainer will provide raters with written feedback, a copy of which will be forwarded to Chiefs, LEAT and LEAI. If the rater's performance is on track during the recertification observation, Chief, LEAI will issue a letter extending the rater's certification status an additional year from the date of expiration or from the date of observation, if the observation is accomplished after the date of expiration.

6.4.3.2. An OPI rater trainer who determines a rater's performance is no longer reliable will:

6.4.3.2.1. If the unreliability is due to a minor issue correctable through discussion, discuss and reobserve.

6.4.3.2.2. If the unreliability is more serious, recommend reevaluation by a second OPI rater trainer to assess the degree of unreliability. If, in the opinion of the two observers, the rater's performance has drifted beyond the degree correctable by discussion, they will recommend retraining. In such cases, the rater's certification is suspended until retraining is accomplished, and the rater will be so notified by Chief, LEAI. If the rater does not successfully complete retraining, LEA will issue a decertification letter.

6.4.4. Chief, LEAI will review documentation and observe as appropriate to ensure the reliability of OPI verifiers and OPI rater trainers.

6.4.5. Instructors having a good-faith doubt as to the accuracy of a currently assigned rating should discuss their concerns and rationale with their supervisor, who may forward their concerns as appropriate.

6.4.6. For the purposes of improving elicitation techniques and maintaining rating reliability, twice a year OPI raters will listen to the recording of an OPI they conducted, complete a written analysis of it and send the analysis to LEAI. In-service training credit will be awarded for these professional development initiatives as an OPI rater.

## 7. SUMMARY OF REVISIONS

This revision reflects extensive rewording, some reassignment of duties and the implementation of electronic review procedures.

## 8. EFFECTIVE DATE

This instruction is effective immediately.

STEPHEN M. JONES, Col, USAF  
Commandant

## 2 Enclosures

1. Interagency Language Roundtable Language Skill Level Descriptions
2. DLIELC IMT 1025.9(A), OPI Performance Profile

E1. ENCLOSURE 1LANGUAGE SKILL LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS**INTERAGENCY LANGUAGE ROUNDTABLE  
LANGUAGE SKILL LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS****SPEAKING****Preface**

The following proficiency level descriptions characterize spoken language use. Each of the six "base levels" (coded 00, 10, 20, 30, 40, and 50) implies control of any previous "base level's" functions and accuracy. The "plus level" designation (coded 06, 16, 26, etc.) will be assigned when proficiency substantially exceeds one base skill level and does not fully meet the criteria for the next "base level." The "plus level" descriptions are therefore supplementary to the "base level" descriptions.

A skill level is assigned to a person through an authorized language examination. Examiners assign a level on a variety of performance criteria exemplified in the descriptive statements. Therefore, the examples given here illustrate, but do not exhaustively describe, either the skills a person may possess or situations in which he/she may function effectively.

Statements describing accuracy refer to typical stages in the development of competence in the most commonly taught languages in formal training programs. In other languages, emerging competence parallels these characterizations, but often with different details.

Unless otherwise specified, the term "native speaker" refers to native speakers of a standard dialect.

"Well-educated," in the context of these proficiency descriptions, does not necessarily imply formal higher education. However, in cultures where formal higher education is common, the language-use abilities of persons who have had such education is considered the standard. That is, such a person meets contemporary expectations for the formal, careful style of the language, as well as a range of less formal varieties of the language.

**Speaking 0 (No Proficiency)**

Unable to function in the spoken language. Oral production is limited to occasional isolated words. Has essentially no communicative ability. (Has been coded S-0 in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 00]

**Speaking 0+ (Memorized Proficiency)**

Able to satisfy immediate needs using rehearsed utterances. Shows little real autonomy of expression, flexibility, or spontaneity. Can ask questions or make statements with reasonable accuracy only with memorized utterances or formulae. Attempts at creating speech are usually unsuccessful.

Examples: The individual's vocabulary is usually limited to areas of immediate survival needs. Most utterances are telegraphic; that is, functors (linking words, markers, and the like) are omitted, confused, or distorted. An individual can usually differentiate most significant sounds when produced in isolation, but, when combined in words or groups of words, errors may be frequent. Even with repetition, communication is severely limited even with people used to dealing with foreigners. Stress, intonation, tone, etc. are usually quite faulty. (Has been coded S-0+ in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 06]

**Speaking 1 (Elementary Proficiency)**

Able to satisfy minimum courtesy requirements and maintain very simple face-to-face conversations on familiar topics. A native speaker must often use slowed speech, repetition, paraphrase, or a combination of these to be understood by this individual. Similarly, the native speaker must strain and employ real-world knowledge to understand even simple statements/questions from this individual. This speaker has a functional, but limited proficiency. Misunderstandings are frequent, but the individual is able to ask for help and to verify comprehension of native speech in face-to-face interaction. The individual is unable to produce continuous discourse except with rehearsed material.

Examples: Structural accuracy is likely to be random or severely limited. Time concepts are vague. Vocabulary is inaccurate, and its range is very narrow. The individual often speaks with great difficulty. By repeating, such speakers can make themselves understood to native speakers

E1. ENCLOSURE 1 (CONT.)LANGUAGE SKILL LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS

who are in regular contact with foreigners but there is little precision in the information conveyed. Needs, experience, or training may vary greatly from individual to individual; for example, speakers at this level may have encountered quite different vocabulary areas. However, the individual can typically satisfy predictable, simple, personal and accommodation needs; can generally meet courtesy, introduction, and identification requirements: exchange greetings; elicit and provide, for example, predictable and skeletal biographical information. He/she might give information about business hours, explain routine procedures in a limited way, and state in a simple manner what actions will be taken. He/she is able to formulate some questions even in languages with complicated question constructions. Almost every utterance may be characterized by structural errors and errors in basic grammatical relations. Vocabulary is extremely limited and characteristically does not include modifiers. Pronunciation, stress, and intonation are generally poor, often heavily influenced by another language. Use of structure and vocabulary is highly imprecise. (Has been coded S-1 in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 10]

**Speaking 1 + (Elementary Proficiency, Plus)**

Can initiate and maintain predictable face-to-face conversations and satisfy limited social demands. He/she may, however, have little understanding of the social conventions of conversation. The interlocutor is generally required to strain and employ real-world knowledge to understand even some simple speech. The speaker at this level may hesitate and may have to change subjects due to lack of language resources. Range and control of the language are limited. Speech largely consists of a series of short, discrete utterances.

Examples: The individual is able to satisfy most travel and accommodation needs and a limited range of social demands beyond exchange of skeletal biographic information. Speaking ability may extend beyond immediate survival needs. Accuracy in basic grammatical relations is evident, although not consistent. May exhibit the more common forms of verb tenses, for example, but may make frequent errors in formation and selection. While some structures are established, errors occur in more complex patterns. The individual typically cannot sustain coherent structures in longer utterances or unfamiliar

situations. Ability to describe and give precise information is limited. Person, space, and time references are often used incorrectly. Pronunciation is understandable to natives used to dealing with foreigners. Can combine most significant sounds with reasonable comprehensibility, but has difficulty in producing certain sounds in certain positions or in certain combinations. Speech will usually be labored. Frequently has to repeat utterances to be understood by the general public. (Has been coded S-1+ in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 16]

**Speaking 2 (Limited Working Proficiency)**

Able to satisfy routine social demands and limited work requirements. Can handle routine work-related interactions that are limited in scope. In more complex and sophisticated work-related tasks, language usage generally disturbs the native speaker. Can handle with confidence, but not with facility, most normal, high-frequency social conversational situations including extensive, but casual conversations about current events, as well as work, family, and autobiographical information. The individual can get the gist of most everyday conversations but has some difficulty understanding native speakers in situations that require specialized or sophisticated knowledge. The individual's utterances are minimally cohesive. Linguistic structure is usually not very elaborate and not thoroughly controlled; errors are frequent. Vocabulary use is appropriate for high-frequency utterances, but unusual or imprecise elsewhere.

Examples: While these interactions will vary widely from individual to individual, the individual can typically ask and answer predictable questions in the workplace and give straightforward instructions to subordinates. Additionally, the individual can participate in personal and accommodation-type interactions with elaboration and facility; that is, can give and understand complicated, detailed, and extensive directions and make non-routine changes in travel and accommodation arrangements. Simple structures and basic grammatical relations are typically controlled; however, there are areas of weakness. In the commonly taught languages, these may be simple markings such as plurals, articles, linking words, and negatives or more complex structures such as tense/aspect usage, case morphology, passive constructions, word order, and embedding. (Has been coded S-2 in

E1. ENCLOSURE 1 (CONT.)LANGUAGE SKILL LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS

some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 20]

**Speaking 2+ (Limited Working Proficiency, Plus)**

Able to satisfy most work requirements with language usage that is often, but not always, acceptable and effective. The individual shows considerable ability to communicate effectively on topics relating to particular interests and special fields of competence. Often shows a high degree of fluency and ease of speech, yet when under tension or pressure, the ability to use the language effectively may deteriorate. Comprehension of normal native speech is typically nearly complete. The individual may miss cultural and local references and may require a native speaker to adjust to his/her limitations in some ways. Native speakers often perceive the individual's speech to contain awkward or inaccurate phrasing of ideas, mistaken time, space, and person references, or to be in some way inappropriate, if not strictly incorrect.

Examples: Typically the individual can participate in most social, formal, and informal interactions; but limitations either in range of contexts, types of tasks, or level of accuracy hinder effectiveness. The individual may be ill at ease with the use of the language either in social interaction or in speaking at length in professional contexts. He/she is generally strong in either structural precision or vocabulary, but not in both. Weakness or unevenness in one of the foregoing, or in pronunciation, occasionally results in miscommunication. Normally controls, but cannot always easily produce general vocabulary. Discourse is often incohesive. (Has been coded S-2+ in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 26]

**Speaking 3 (General Professional Proficiency)**

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. Nevertheless, the individual's limitations generally restrict the professional contexts of language use to matters of shared knowledge and/or international convention. Discourse is cohesive. The individual uses the language acceptably, but with

some noticeable imperfections; yet, errors virtually never interfere with understanding and rarely disturb the native speaker. The individual can effectively combine structure and vocabulary to convey his/her meaning accurately. The individual speaks readily and fills pauses suitably. In face-to-face conversation with natives speaking the standard dialect at a normal rate of speech, comprehension is quite complete. Although cultural references, proverbs, and the implications of nuances and idiom may not be fully understood, the individual can easily repair the conversation. Pronunciation may be obviously foreign. Individual sounds are accurate; but stress, intonation, and pitch control may be faulty.

Examples: Can typically discuss particular interests and special fields of competence with reasonable ease. Can use the language as part of normal professional duties such as answering objections, clarifying points, justifying decisions, understanding the essence of challenges, stating and defending policy, conducting meetings, delivering briefings, or other extended and elaborate informative monologues. Can reliably elicit information and informed opinion from native speakers. Structural inaccuracy is rarely the major cause of misunderstanding. Use of structural devices is flexible and elaborate. Without searching for words or phrases, the individual uses the language clearly and relatively naturally to elaborate concepts freely and make ideas easily understandable to native speakers. Errors occur in low-frequency and highly complex structures. (Has been coded S-3 in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 30]

**Speaking 3+ (General Professional Proficiency, Plus)**

Is often able to use the language to satisfy professional needs in a wide range of sophisticated and demanding tasks.

Examples: Despite obvious strengths, may exhibit some hesitancy, uncertainty, effort, or errors which limit the range of language-use tasks that can be reliably performed. Typically there is particular strength in fluency and one or more, but not all, of the following: breadth of lexicon, including low- and medium-frequency items, especially socio-linguistic/cultural references and nuances of close synonyms; structural precision, with sophisticated features that are readily, accurately, and appropriately controlled (such as complex modification and embedding in Indo-

E1. ENCLOSURE 1 (CONT.)LANGUAGE SKILL LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS

European languages); discourse competence in a wide range of contexts and tasks, often matching a native speaker's strategic and organizational abilities and expectations. Occasional patterned errors occur in low frequency and highly-complex structures. (Has been coded S-3+ in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 36]

**Speaking 4 (Advanced Professional Proficiency)**

Able to use the language fluently and accurately on all levels normally pertinent to professional needs. The individual's language usage and ability to function are fully successful. Organizes discourse well, using appropriate rhetorical speech devices, native cultural references, and understanding. Language ability only rarely hinders him/her in performing any task requiring language; yet, the individual would seldom be perceived as a native. Speaks effortlessly and smoothly and is able to use the language with a high degree of effectiveness, reliability, and precision for all representational purposes within the range of personal and professional experience and scope of responsibilities. Can serve as an informal interpreter in a range of unpredictable circumstances. Can perform extensive, sophisticated language tasks, encompassing most matters of interest to well-educated native speakers, including tasks which do not bear directly on a professional specialty.

Examples: Can discuss in detail concepts which are fundamentally different from those of the target culture and make those concepts clear and accessible to the native speaker. Similarly the individual can understand the details and ramifications of concepts that are culturally or conceptually different from his/her own. Can set the tone of interpersonal official, semi-official, and non-professional verbal exchanges with a representative range of native speakers (in a range of varied audiences, purposes, tasks, and settings). Can play an effective role among native speakers in such contexts as conferences, lectures, and debates on matters of disagreement. Can advocate a position at length, both formally and in chance encounters, using sophisticated verbal strategies. Understands and

reliably produces shifts of both subject matter and tone. Can understand native speakers of the standard and other major dialects in essentially any face-to-face interaction. (Has been coded S-4 in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 40]

**Speaking 4+ (Advanced Professional Proficiency, Plus)**

Speaking proficiency is regularly superior in all respects, usually equivalent to that of a well-educated, highly articulate native speaker. Language ability does not impede the performance of any language-use task. However, the individual would not necessarily be perceived as culturally native.

Examples: The individual organizes discourse well, employing functional rhetorical speech devices, native cultural references and understanding. Effectively applies a native speaker's social and circumstantial knowledge. However, cannot sustain that performance under all circumstances. While the individual has a wide range and control of structure, an occasional non-native slip may occur. The individual has a sophisticated control of vocabulary and phrasing that is rarely imprecise, yet there are occasional weaknesses in idioms, colloquialisms, pronunciation, cultural reference or there may be an occasional failure to interact in a totally native manner. (Has been coded S-4+ in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 46]

**Speaking 5 (Functionally Native Proficiency)**

Speaking proficiency is functionally equivalent to that of a highly articulate well-educated native speaker and reflects the cultural standards of the country where the language is natively spoken. The individual uses the language with complete flexibility and intuition, so that speech on all levels is fully accepted by well-educated native speakers in all of its features, including breadth of vocabulary and idiom, colloquialisms, and pertinent cultural references. Pronunciation is typically consistent with that of well-educated native speakers of a non-stigmatized dialect. (Has been coded S-5 in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 50]

E1. ENCLOSURE 1 (CONT.)LANGUAGE SKILL LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS**INTERAGENCY LANGUAGE ROUNDTABLE  
LANGUAGE SKILL LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS****LISTENING****Preface**

The following proficiency level descriptions characterize comprehension of the spoken language. Each of the six "base levels" (coded 00, 10, 20, 30, 40, and 50) implies control of any previous "base level's" functions and accuracy. The "plus level" designation (coded 06, 16, 26, etc.) will be assigned when proficiency substantially exceeds one base skill level and does not fully meet the criteria for the next "base level." The "plus level" descriptions are therefore supplementary to the "base level" descriptions.

A skill level is assigned to a person through an authorized language examination. Examiners assign a level on a variety of performance criteria exemplified in the descriptive statements. Therefore, the examples given here illustrate, but do not exhaustively describe, either the skills a person may possess or situations in which he/she may function effectively.

Statements describing accuracy refer to typical stages in the development of competence in the most commonly taught languages in formal training programs. In other languages, emerging competence parallels these characterizations, but often with different details.

Unless otherwise specified, the term "native listener" refers to native speakers and listeners of a standard dialect.

"Well-educated" in the context of these proficiency descriptions, does not necessarily imply formal higher education. However, in cultures where formal higher education is common, the language-use abilities of persons who have had such education is considered the standard. That is, such a person meets contemporary expectations for the formal, careful style of the language, as well as a range of less formal varieties of the language.

**Listening 0 (No Proficiency)**

No practical understanding of the spoken language. Understanding is limited to occasional isolated words with essentially no ability to comprehend communication. (Has been coded L-0

in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 00]

**Listening 0+ (Memorized Proficiency)**

Sufficient comprehension to understand a number of memorized utterances in areas of immediate needs. Slight increase in utterance length understood but requires frequent long pauses between understood phrases and repeated requests on the listener's part for repetition. Understands with reasonable accuracy only when this involves short memorized utterances or formulae. Utterances understood are relatively short in length. Misunderstandings arise due to ignoring or inaccurately hearing sounds or word endings (both inflectional and noninflectional) distorting the original meaning. Can understand only with difficulty even such people as teachers who are used to speaking with non-native speakers. Can understand best those statements where context strongly supports the utterance's meaning. Gets some main ideas. (Has been coded L-0+ in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 06]

**Listening 1 (Elementary Proficiency)**

Sufficient comprehension to understand utterances about basic survival needs and minimum courtesy and travel requirements. In areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics, can understand simple questions and answers, simple statements and very simple face-to-face conversations in a standard dialect. These must often be delivered more clearly than normal at a rate slower than normal, with frequent repetitions or paraphrase (that is, by a native used to dealing with foreigners). Once learned, these sentences can be varied for similar level vocabulary and grammar and still be understood. In the majority of utterances, misunderstandings arise due to overlooked or misunderstood syntax and other grammatical clues. Comprehension vocabulary inadequate to understand anything but the most elementary needs. Strong interference from the candidate's native language occurs. Little precision in the

E1. ENCLOSURE 1 (CONT.)LANGUAGE SKILL LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS

information understood owing to the tentative state of passive grammar and lack of vocabulary. Comprehension areas include basic needs such as: meals, lodging, transportation, time and simple directions (including both route instructions and orders from customs officials, policemen, etc.) Understands main ideas. (Has been coded L-1 in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 10]

**Listening 1 + (Elementary Proficiency, Plus)**

Sufficient comprehension to understand short conversations about all survival needs and limited social demands. Developing flexibility evident in understanding into a range of circumstances beyond immediate survival needs. Shows spontaneity in understanding by speed, although consistency of understanding uneven. Limited vocabulary range necessitates repetition for understanding. Understands more common time forms and most question forms, some word order patterns, but miscommunication still occurs with more complex patterns. Cannot sustain understanding of coherent structures in longer utterances or in unfamiliar situations. Understanding of descriptions and the giving of precise information is limited. Aware of basic cohesive features, e.g., pronouns, verb inflections, but many are unreliably understood, especially if less immediate in reference. Understanding is largely limited to a series of short, discrete utterances. Still has to ask for utterances to be repeated. Some ability to understand facts. (Has been coded L-1+ in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 16]

**Listening 2 (Limited Working Proficiency)**

Sufficient comprehension to understand conversations on routine social demands and limited job requirements. Able to understand face-to-face speech in a standard dialect, delivered at a normal rate with some repetition and rewording, by a native speaker not used to dealing with foreigners, about everyday topics, common personal and family news, well-known current events, and routine office matters through descriptions and narration about current, past and future events; can follow essential points of discussion or speech at an elementary level on topics in his/her special professional field. Only understands occasional words and phrases of statements made in unfavorable

conditions, for example through loudspeakers outdoors. Understands factual content. Native language causes less interference in listening comprehension. Able to understand facts, i.e., the lines but not between or beyond the lines. (Has been coded L-2 in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 20]

**Listening 2 + (Limited Working Proficiency, Plus)**

Sufficient comprehension to understand most routine social demands and most conversations on work requirements as well as some discussions on concrete topics related to particular interests and special fields of competence. Often shows remarkable ability and ease of understanding, but under tension or pressure may break down. Candidate may display weakness or deficiency due to inadequate vocabulary base or less than secure knowledge of grammar and syntax. Normally understands general vocabulary with some hesitant understanding of everyday vocabulary still evident. Can sometimes detect emotional overtones. Some ability to understand implications. (Has been coded L-2+ in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 26]

**Listening 3 (General Professional Proficiency)**

Able to understand the essentials of all speech in a standard dialect including technical discussions within a special field. Has effective understanding of face-to-face speech, delivered with normal clarity and speed in a standard dialect 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, news stories similar to wire service reports, oral reports, some oral technical reports and public addresses on non-technical subjects; can understand without difficulty all forms of standard speech concerning a special professional field. Does not understand native speakers if they speak very quickly or use some slang or dialect. Can often detect emotional overtones. Can understand implications. (Has been coded L-3 in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 30]

E1. ENCLOSURE 1 (CONT.)LANGUAGE SKILL LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS**Listening 3+ (General Professional Proficiency, Plus)**

Comprehends most of the content and intent of a variety of forms and styles of speech pertinent to professional needs as well as general topics and social conversation. Ability to comprehend many sociolinguistic and cultural references. However, may miss some subtleties and nuances. Increased ability to comprehend unusually complex structures in lengthy utterances and to comprehend many distinctions in language tailored for different audiences. Increased ability to understand native speakers talking quickly, using nonstandard dialect or slang; however, comprehension not complete. Can discern some relationships among sophisticated listening materials in the context of broad experience. Can follow some unpredictable turns of thought readily in, for example, informal and formal speeches covering editorial, conjectural and literary material in subject matter areas directed to the general listener. (Has been coded L-3+ in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 36]

**Listening 4 (Advanced Professional Proficiency)**

Able to understand all forms and styles of speech pertinent to professional needs. Able to understand fully all speech with extensive and precise vocabulary, subtleties and nuances in all standard dialects on any subject relevant to professional needs within the range of his/her experience, including social conversations; all intelligible broadcasts and telephone calls; and many kinds of technical discussions and discourse. Understands language specifically tailored (including persuasion, representation, counseling, and negotiating) to different audiences. Able to understand the essentials of speech in some non-standard dialects. Has difficulty in understanding extreme dialect and

slang, also in understanding speech in unfavorable conditions, for example through bad loudspeakers outdoors. Can discern relationships among sophisticated listening materials in the context of broad experience. Can follow unpredictable turns of thought readily in, for example, informal and formal speeches covering editorial, conjectural, and literary material in any subject matter directed to the general listener. (Has been coded L-4 in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 40]

**Listening 4+ (Advanced Professional Proficiency, Plus)**

Increased ability to understand extremely difficult and abstract speech as well as ability to understand all forms and styles of speech pertinent to professional needs, including social conversations. Increased ability to comprehend native speakers using extreme nonstandard dialects and slang, as well as to understand speech in unfavorable conditions. Strong sensitivity to sociolinguistic and cultural references. Accuracy is close to that of the well-educated native listener but still not equivalent. (Has been coded L-4+ in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 46]

**Listening 5 (Functionally Native Proficiency)**

Comprehension equivalent to that of the well-educated native listener. Able to understand fully all forms and styles of speech intelligible to the well-educated native listener, including a number of regional and illiterate dialects, highly colloquial speech and conversations and discourse distorted by marked interference from other noise. Able to understand how natives think as they create discourse. Able to understand extremely difficult and abstract speech. (Has been coded L-5 in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 50]

E1. ENCLOSURE 1 (CONT.)LANGUAGE SKILL LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS**INTERAGENCY LANGUAGE ROUNDTABLE  
LANGUAGE SKILL LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS****READING****Preface**

The following proficiency level descriptions characterize comprehension of the written language. Each of the six "base levels" (coded 00, 10, 20, 30, 40, and 50) implies control of any previous "base level's" functions and accuracy. The "plus level" designation (coded 06, 16, 26, etc.) will be assigned when proficiency substantially exceeds one base skill level and does not fully meet the criteria for the next "base level." The "plus level" descriptions are therefore supplementary to the "base level" descriptions.

A skill level is assigned to a person through an authorized language examination. Examiners assign a level on a variety of performance criteria exemplified in the descriptive statements. Therefore, the examples given here illustrate, but do not exhaustively describe, either the skills a person may possess or situations in which he/she may function effectively.

Statements describing accuracy refer to typical stages in the development of competence in the most commonly taught languages in formal training programs. In other languages, emerging competence parallels these characterizations, but often with different details.

Unless otherwise specified, the term "native reader" refers to native readers of a standard dialect.

"Well-educated," in the context of these proficiency descriptions, does not necessarily imply formal higher education. However, in cultures where formal higher education is common, the language-use abilities of persons who have had such education is considered the standard. That is, such a person meets contemporary expectations for the formal, careful style of the language, as well as a range of less formal varieties of the language.

In the following descriptions a standard set of text-types is associated with each level. The text-type is generally characterized in each descriptive statement.

The word "read," in the context of these proficiency descriptions, means that the person at a given skill level can thoroughly understand the communicative intent in the text-types described.

In the usual case the reader could be expected to make a full representation, thorough summary, or translation of the text into English.

Other useful operations can be performed on written texts that do not require the ability to "read," as defined above. Examples of such tasks which people of a given skill level may reasonably be expected to perform are provided, when appropriate, in the descriptions.

**Reading 0 (No Proficiency)**

No practical ability to read the language. Consistently misunderstands or cannot comprehend at all. (Has been coded R-0 in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 00]

**Reading 0+ (Memorized Proficiency)**

Can recognize all the letters in the printed version of an alphabetic system and high-frequency elements of a syllabary or a character system. Able to read some or all of the following: numbers, isolated words and phrases, personal and place names, street signs, office and shop designations; the above often interpreted inaccurately. Unable to read connected prose. (Has been coded R-0+ in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 06]

**Reading 1 (Elementary Proficiency)**

Sufficient comprehension to read very simple connected written material in a form equivalent to usual printing or typescript. Can read either representations of familiar formulaic verbal exchanges or simple language containing only the highest frequency structural patterns and vocabulary, including shared international vocabulary items and cognates (when appropriate). Able to read and understand known language elements that have been recombined in new ways to achieve different meanings at a similar level of simplicity. Texts may include simple narratives of routine behavior; highly predictable descriptions of people, places or things; and explanations of geography and government such as those simplified for tourists.

E1. ENCLOSURE 1 (CONT.)LANGUAGE SKILL LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS

Some misunderstandings possible on simple texts. Can get some main ideas and locate prominent items of professional significance in more complex texts. Can identify general subject matter in some authentic texts. (Has been coded R-1 in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 10]

**Reading 1 + (Elementary Proficiency, Plus)**

Sufficient comprehension to understand simple discourse in printed form for informative social purposes. Can read material such as announcements of public events, simple prose containing biographical information or narration of events, and straightforward newspaper headlines. Can guess at unfamiliar vocabulary if highly contextualized, but with difficulty in unfamiliar contexts. Can get some main ideas and locate routine information of professional significance in more complex texts. Can follow essential points of discussion at an elementary level on topics in his/her special professional field.

In commonly taught languages, the individual may not control the structure well. For example, basic grammatical relations are often misinterpreted, and temporal reference may rely primarily on lexical items as time indicators. Has some difficulty with the cohesive factors in discourse, such as matching pronouns with referents. May have to read materials several times for understanding. (Has been coded R-1+ in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 16]

**Reading 2 (Limited Working Proficiency)**

Sufficient comprehension to read simple, authentic written material in a form equivalent to usual printing or typescript on subjects within a familiar context. Able to read with some misunderstandings straightforward, familiar, factual material, but in general insufficiently experienced with the language to draw inferences directly from the linguistic aspects of the text. Can locate and understand the main ideas and details in material written for the general reader. However, persons who have professional knowledge of a subject may be able to summarize or perform sorting and locating tasks with written texts that are well beyond their general proficiency level. The individual can read uncomplicated, but authentic prose on familiar subjects that are normally presented in a predictable sequence which aids the reader in understanding. Texts

may include descriptions and narrations in contexts such as news items describing frequently occurring events, simple biographical information, social notices, formulaic business letters, and simple technical material written for the general reader. Generally the prose that can be read by the individual is predominantly in straightforward/high-frequency sentence patterns. The individual does not have a broad active vocabulary (that is, which he/she recognizes immediately on sight), but is able to use contextual and real-world cues to understand the text. Characteristically, however, the individual is quite slow in performing such a process. He/she is typically able to answer factual questions about authentic texts of the types described above. (Has been coded R-2 in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 20]

**Reading 2 + (Limited Working Proficiency, Plus)**

Sufficient comprehension to understand most factual material in non-technical prose as well as some discussions on concrete topics related to special professional interests. Is markedly more proficient at reading materials on a familiar topic. Is able to separate the main ideas and details from lesser ones and uses that distinction to advance understanding. The individual is able to use linguistic context and real-world knowledge to make sensible guesses about unfamiliar material. Has a broad active reading vocabulary. The individual is able to get the gist of main and subsidiary ideas in texts which could only be read thoroughly by persons with much higher proficiencies. Weaknesses include slowness, uncertainty, inability to discern nuance and/or intentionally disguised meaning. (Has been coded R-2+ in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 26]

**Reading 3 (General Professional Proficiency)**

Able to read within a normal range of speed and with almost complete comprehension a variety of authentic prose material on unfamiliar subjects. Reading ability is not dependent on subject matter knowledge, although it is not expected that the individual can comprehend thoroughly subject matter which is highly dependent on cultural knowledge or which is outside his/her general experience and not accompanied by explanation. Text-types include news stories similar to wire service reports or international news items in major periodicals, routine correspondence, general

E1. ENCLOSURE 1 (CONT.)LANGUAGE SKILL LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS

reports, and technical material in his/her professional field; all of these may include hypothesis, argumentation, and supported opinions. Misreading rare. Almost always able to interpret material correctly, relate ideas, and "read between the lines," (that is, understand the writers' implicit intents in texts of the above types). Can get the gist of more sophisticated texts, but may be unable to detect or understand subtlety and nuance. Rarely has to pause over or reread general vocabulary. However, may experience some difficulty with unusually complex structure and low frequency idioms. (Has been coded R-3 in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 30]

**Reading 3+ (General Professional Proficiency, Plus)**

Can comprehend a variety of styles and forms pertinent to professional needs. Rarely misinterprets such texts or rarely experiences difficulty relating ideas or making inferences. Able to comprehend many sociolinguistic and cultural references. However, may miss some nuances and subtleties. Able to comprehend a considerable range of intentionally complex structures, low frequency idioms, and uncommon connotative intentions; however, accuracy is not complete. The individual is typically able to read with facility, understand, and appreciate contemporary expository, technical, or literary texts which do not rely heavily on slang and unusual idioms. (Has been coded R-3+ in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 36]

**Reading 4 (Advanced Professional Proficiency)**

Able to read fluently and accurately all styles and forms of the language pertinent to professional needs. The individual's experience with the written language is extensive enough that he/she is able to relate inferences in the text to real-world knowledge and understand almost all sociolinguistic and cultural references. Able to "read beyond the lines" (that is, to understand the full ramifications of texts as they are situated in the wider cultural, political, or social environment). Able to read and understand the intent of writers' use of nuance and subtlety. The individual can discern relationships among sophisticated written materials in the context of broad experience. Can

follow unpredictable turns of thought readily in, for example, editorial, conjectural, and literary texts in any subject matter area directed to the general reader. Can read essentially all materials in his/her special field, including official and professional documents and correspondence. Recognizes all professionally relevant vocabulary known to the educated non-professional native, although may have some difficulty with slang. Can read reasonably legible handwriting without difficulty. Accuracy is often nearly that of a well-educated native reader. (Has been coded R-4 in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 40]

**Reading 4+ (Advanced Professional Proficiency, Plus)**

Nearly native ability to read and understand extremely difficult or abstract prose, a very wide variety of vocabulary, idioms, colloquialisms, and slang. Strong sensitivity to and understanding of sociolinguistic and cultural references. Little difficulty in reading less than fully legible handwriting. Broad ability to "read beyond the lines" (that is, to understand the full ramifications of texts as they are situated in the wider cultural, political, or social environment) is nearly that of a well-read or well-educated native reader. Accuracy is close to that of the well-educated native reader, but not equivalent. (Has been coded R-4+ in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 46]

**Reading 5 (Functionally Native Proficiency)**

Reading proficiency is functionally equivalent to that of the well-educated native reader. Can read extremely difficult and abstract prose; for example, general legal and technical as well as highly colloquial writings. Able to read literary texts, typically including contemporary avant-garde prose, poetry, and theatrical writing. Can read classical/archaic forms of literature with the same degree of facility as the well-educated, but non-specialist native. Reads and understands a wide variety of vocabulary and idioms, colloquialisms, slang, and pertinent cultural references. With varying degrees of difficulty, can read all kinds of handwritten documents. Accuracy of comprehension is equivalent to that of a well-educated native reader. (Has been coded R-5 in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 50]

E1. ENCLOSURE 1 (CONT.)LANGUAGE SKILL LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS**INTERAGENCY LANGUAGE ROUNDTABLE  
LANGUAGE SKILL LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS****WRITING****Preface**

The following proficiency level descriptions characterize written language use. Each of the six "base levels" (coded 00, 10, 20, 30, 40, and 50) implies control of any previous "base level's" functions and accuracy. The "plus level" designation (coded 06, 16, 26, etc.) will be assigned when proficiency substantially exceeds one base skill level and does not fully meet the criteria for the next "base level." The "plus level" descriptions are therefore supplementary to the "base level" descriptions.

A skill level is assigned to a person through an authorized language examination. Examiners assign a level on a variety of performance criteria exemplified in the descriptive statements. Therefore, the examples given here illustrate, but do not exhaustively describe, either the skills a person may possess or situations in which he/she may function effectively.

Statements describing accuracy refer to typical stages in the development of competence in the most commonly taught languages in formal training programs. In other languages, emerging competence parallels these characterizations, but often with different details.

Unless otherwise specified, the term "native writer" refers to native writers of a standard dialect.

"Well-educated," in the context of these proficiency descriptions, does not necessarily imply formal higher education. However, in cultures where formal higher education is common, the language-use abilities of persons who have had such education is considered the standard. That is, such a person meets contemporary expectations for the formal, careful style of the language, as well as a range of less formal varieties of the language.

**Writing 0 (No Proficiency)**

No functional writing ability. (Has been coded W-0 in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 00]

**Writing 0+ (Memorized Proficiency)**

Writes using memorized material and set expressions. Can produce symbols in an alphabetic or syllabic writing system or 50 of the most common characters. Can write numbers and dates, own name, nationality, address, etc., such as on a hotel registration form. Otherwise, ability to write is limited to simple lists of common items such as a few short sentences. Spelling and even representation of symbols (letters, syllables, characters) may be incorrect. (Has been coded W-0+ in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 06]

**Writing 1 (Elementary Proficiency)**

Has sufficient control of the writing system to meet limited practical needs. Can create by writing statements and questions on topics very familiar to him/her within the scope of his/her very limited language experience. Writing vocabulary is inadequate to express anything but elementary needs; writes in simple sentences making continual errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation but writing can be read and understood by a native reader used to dealing with foreigners attempting to write his/her language. Writing tends to be a loose collection of sentences (or fragments) on a given topic and provides little evidence of conscious organization. While topics which are "very familiar" and elementary needs vary considerably from individual to individual, any person at this level should be able to write simple phone messages, excuses, notes to service people and simple notes to friends. (800-1000 characters controlled.) (Has been coded W-1 in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 10]

**Writing 1+ (Elementary Proficiency, Plus)**

Sufficient control of writing system to meet most survival needs and limited social demands. Can create sentences and short paragraphs related to most survival needs (food, lodging, transportation, immediate surroundings and situations) and limited social demands. Can

E1. ENCLOSURE 1 (CONT.)LANGUAGE SKILL LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS

express fairly accurate present and future time. Can produce some past verb forms but not always accurately or with correct usage. Can relate personal history, discuss topics such as daily life, preferences and very familiar material. 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 or forms, although the individual can use a dictionary to advantage to express simple ideas. Generally cannot use basic cohesive elements of discourse to advantage (such as relative constructions, object pronouns, connectors, etc.). Can take notes in some detail on familiar topics, and respond to personal questions using elementary vocabulary and common structures. Can write simple letters, summaries of biographical data and work experience with fair accuracy. Writing, though faulty, is comprehensible to native speakers used to dealing with foreigners. (Has been coded W-1+ in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 16]

**Writing 2 (Limited Working Proficiency)**

Able to write routine social correspondence and prepare documentary materials required for most limited work requirements. Has writing vocabulary sufficient to express himself/herself simply with some circumlocutions. Can write simply about a very limited number of current events or daily situations. Still makes common errors in spelling and punctuation but shows some control of the most common formats and punctuation conventions. Good control of morphology of language (in inflected languages) and of the most frequently used syntactic structures. Elementary constructions are usually handled quite accurately and writing is understandable to a native reader not used to reading the writing of foreigners. Uses a limited number of cohesive devices. (Has been coded W-2 in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 20]

**Writing 2+ (Limited Working Proficiency, Plus)**

Shows ability to write with some precision and in some detail about most common topics. Can write about concrete topics relating to particular interests and special fields of competence. Often shows surprising fluency and ease of expression but under time constraints and pressure language may be inaccurate and/or incomprehensible.

Generally strong in either grammar or vocabulary, but not in both. Weaknesses or unevenness in one of the foregoing or in spelling result in occasional miscommunication. Areas of weakness range from simple constructions such as plurals, articles, prepositions and negatives to more complex structures such as tense usage, passive constructions, word order and relative clauses. Normally controls general vocabulary with some misuse of everyday vocabulary evident. Shows a limited ability to use circumlocutions. Uses dictionary to advantage to supply unknown words. Can take fairly accurate notes on material presented orally and handle with fair accuracy most social correspondence. Writing is understandable to native speakers not used to dealing with foreigners' attempts to write the language, though style is still obviously foreign. (Has been coded W-2+ in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 26]

**Writing 3 (General Professional Proficiency)**

Able to use the language effectively in most formal and informal written exchanges on practical social and professional topics. Can write reports, summaries, short library research papers on current events on particular areas of interest or on special fields with reasonable ease. Control of structure, spelling and general vocabulary is adequate to convey his/her message accurately but style may be obviously foreign. Errors virtually never interfere with comprehension and rarely disturb the native reader. Punctuation generally controlled. Employs a full range of structures. Control of grammar good with only sporadic errors in basic structures, occasional errors in the most complex frequent structures and somewhat more frequent errors in low-frequency complex structures. Consistent control of compound and complex sentences. Relationship of ideas is consistently clear. (Has been coded W-3 in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 30]

**Writing 3+ (General Professional Proficiency, Plus)**

Able to write the language in a few prose styles pertinent to professional/educational needs. Not always able to tailor language to suit audience. Weaknesses may lie in poor control of low-frequency complex structures, vocabulary, or the ability to express subtleties and nuances. May be able to write on some topics pertinent to

E1. ENCLOSURE 1 (CONT.)LANGUAGE SKILL LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS

professional/educational needs. Organization may suffer due to lack of variety in organizational patterns or in variety of cohesive devices. (Has been coded W-3+ in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 36]

**Writing 4 (Advanced Professional Proficiency)**

Able to write the language precisely and accurately in a variety of prose styles pertinent to professional/educational needs. Errors of grammar are rare including those in low-frequency complex structures. Consistently able to tailor language to suit audience and able to express subtleties and nuances. Expository prose is clearly, consistently and explicitly organized. The writer employs a variety of organizational patterns, uses a wide variety of cohesive devices such as ellipsis and parallelisms, and subordinates in a variety of ways. Able to write on all topics normally pertinent to professional/educational needs and on social issues of a general nature. Writing adequate to express all his/her experiences. (Has been coded W-4 in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 40]

**Writing 4+ (Advanced Professional Proficiency, Plus)**

Able to write the language precisely and accurately in a wide variety of prose styles pertinent to professional/educational needs. May have some ability to edit but not in the full range of styles. Has some flexibility within a style and shows some evidence of a use of stylistic devices. (Has been coded W-4+ in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 46]

**Writing 5 (Functionally Native Proficiency)**

Has writing proficiency equal to that of a well-educated native. Without non-native errors of structure, spelling, style or vocabulary can write and edit both formal and informal correspondence, official reports and documents, and professional/educational articles including writing for special purposes which might include legal, technical, educational, literary and colloquial writing. In addition to being clear, explicit and informative, the writing and the ideas are also imaginative. The writer employs a very wide range of stylistic devices. (Has been coded W-5 in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 50]

July 1985

These descriptions were approved by the Interagency Language Roundtable, consisting of the following agencies:

Department of Defense  
 Department of State  
 Central Intelligence Agency  
 National Security Agency  
 Department of the Interior  
 National Institutes of Health  
 National Science Foundation  
 Department of Agriculture  
 Drug Enforcement Administration

Federal Bureau of Investigation  
 ACTION/Peace Corps  
 Agency for International Development  
 Office of Personnel Management  
 Immigration and Naturalization Service  
 Department of Education  
 US Customs Service  
 US Information Agency  
 Library of Congress

E2. ENCLOSURE 2

OPI PERFORMANCE PROFILE

OPI PERFORMANCE PROFILE				MATERIALS			DATE		
SCN/TEL OPI CODE	RANK/NAME	CY	GRAD DATE	SET CODE	TEACHER/ROOM NO.	ENTRY	MID	EXT	VERIFICATION
INTERACTIVE COMPREHENSION		STRUCTURAL CONTROL/TEXTS PRODUCED			LEXICAL CONTROL				
DELIVERY		SOCIOLINGUISTIC COMPETENCE			GLOBAL TASKS AND FUNCTIONS				

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E2. ENCLOSURE 2 (CONT.)

OPI PERFORMANCE PROFILE

OPI RATING FACTOR GRID						
	Interactive Comprehension	Structural Control Texts Produced	Lexical Control	Delivery	Sociolinguistic Competence	Global Tasks and Functions
0+	The individual understands a number of short, memorized utterances in areas of immediate needs; frequent, long pauses, and repeated requests for repetition.	No control. Can only use memorized structures; individual words and phrases.	Memorized words and phrases related to immediate survival needs.	Even in memorized speech, stress, intonation, tone usually quite faulty.	Severely limited. Any knowledge of culture appropriateness has a nonlinguistic source.	Can make statements and ask questions using memorized material.
1	A native speaker must often use slowed speech, repetition, paraphrase or a combination of these to be understood by this individual. Misunderstandings are frequent, but the individual is able to ask for help and to verify comprehension of native speech in face-to-face interaction.	Structural accuracy is random or severely limited. Almost every utterance has errors in basic structures. Time concepts are vague. Can formulate some questions.	Very limited. Covers courtesy expressions, introductions, identification, personal and accommodation needs, daily routine.	Often speaks with great difficulty. Pronunciation, stress, intonation generally poor.	Uses greetings and courtesy expressions. Can interact with native speakers used to dealing with non-natives.	Can create sentences; begin, maintain and close short conversations by asking and answering simple questions; satisfy simple daily needs.
2	The individual can get the gist of most everyday conversations, but has some difficulty understanding native speakers in situations that require a specialized or sophisticated knowledge (May require a native speaker to adjust to his/her limitations in some way.)	Discourse is minimally cohesive. Grammatical structures are usually not very elaborate and not thoroughly controlled; errors are frequent. Simple structure and basic grammatical relations are typically controlled.	Sufficient to discuss high frequency concrete topics such as work, family, personal background and interests; travel, current events; imprecise for less common topics.	Speaks with confidence but not fluently. Can usually be understood by those not used to dealing with non-natives.	Satisfies routine social demands and limited work requirements. Can interact with native speakers not used to dealing with non-natives; native speakers may have to adjust to imitations.	Can describe people, places and things; narrate current, past and future activities in full paragraphs; state facts; give instructions or directions; ask and answer questions in the work place; deal with non-routine daily situations.
3	In face-to-face conversation with natives speaking the standard dialect at a normal rate of speech, comprehension is quite complete. Although cultural references, proverbs and the implications of nuances and idiom may not be fully understood, the individual can easily repair the conversation.	Effectively combines structure and vocabulary to convey meaning. Discourse is cohesive. Use of structural devices is flexible and elaborate. Errors occur in low frequency and highly complex structures; but structural inaccuracy rarely causes misunderstanding.	Broad enough for effective formal and informal conversations on practical, social and professional topics. Can convey abstract concepts.	Speaks readily and fills pauses suitably. Pronunciation may be obviously foreign. Flaws in stress, intonation, pitch rarely disturb the native speaker.	Uses cultural references. When errors are made, can easily repair the conversation.	Can converse extensively in formal and informal situations; discuss abstract topics; support opinions; hypothesize; deal with unfamiliar topics and situations; clarify points.
4	Can understand native speakers of the standard and other major dialects in essentially any face-to-face interaction. Can understand the details and ramifications of concepts that are culturally or conceptually different from his/her own. Understands shifts of both subject matter and tone.	Organizes discourse well, using appropriate rhetorical devices and high level discourse structures.	Precise for representational purposes within personal and professional experiences. Can elaborate concepts freely; choose appropriate words to convey nuances of meaning.	Speaks effortlessly and smoothly, but would seldom be perceived as a native speaker.	Uses and understands details and ramifications of target cultural references. Can set and shift the tone of exchanges with a variety of native speakers.	Can tailor language to fit the audience; counsel; persuade; represent an official point of view; negotiate; advocate a position at length; interpret informally.
5	(No gaps in comprehension, including all details and nuances.)	Functionally equivalent to a highly articulate, well-educated native speaker.	Breadth of vocabulary and idiom equivalent to that of a highly articulate, well-educated native speaker.	Functionally equivalent to a highly articulate, well-educated native speaker of a standard dialect.	Speech reflects the cultural standards of country where language is natively spoken.	Functionally equivalent to a highly articulate, well-educated native speaker.

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