



**DEFENSE LANGUAGE INSTITUTE ENGLISH LANGUAGE CENTER**  
JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO LACKLAND, TX 78236-5259

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DLIELC 1025.9  
332 TRS/EEF

**COMPLIANCE WITH THIS PUBLICATION IS MANDATORY.**

DLIELC INSTRUCTION 1025.9

SUBJECT: Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) Program Guidelines

- References:
- (a) DLIELC Instruction 1025.9, Oral Proficiency Interview Program Guidelines, March 31, 2014(hereby superseded).
  - (b) AFI 36-4003, Managing the Defense English Language Program, January 14, 2015.
  - (c) AFI 16-105, Joint Security Cooperation Education and Training Regulation, January 3, 2011.
  - (d) DLIELC Instruction 1025.15, English Comprehension Level (ECL) Test Guidelines, August 28, 2015

1. PURPOSE

Under the authority of references (b) and (c), this instruction prescribes policies and procedures governing scheduling, administration, scoring and release of scores for the Defense Language Institute English Language Center (DLIELC) nonresident Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) program.

2. APPLICABILITY

This instruction applies to all Security Cooperation Offices (SCOs) and all services or agencies responsible for the selection of International Military Students (IMS) to attend International Military Education and Training, Foreign Military Sales or other security assistance sponsored training. It also applies to services or agencies using the OPI test for the selection, placement or reclassification of US military personnel or for determination of their English language

competency for specific courses or jobs. Additionally, US Air Force exercise planners may use the test to determine the eligibility of international participants in flying exercises.

### 3. DEFINITIONS

3.1. After-hours OPIs. OPIs conducted either before or after the normal duty hours of OPI raters.

3.2. Authorized In-Country (IC)/Continental United States (CONUS) Representatives. SCOs or US personnel with SCO 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. C/S. The format for reporting OPI Listening Comprehension (C), and Speaking (S) scores based on the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) level descriptions (Encl E1). Example score: C/S of 2+/2.

3.4. English Comprehension Level (ECL) Test. Department of Defense (DoD) test for assessing listening and reading proficiency in English (Ref d). The term ECL also refers to the test score: an ECL score.

3.5. Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) Language Skill Level Descriptions (Encl E1.) The comprehension and speaking scale against which a candidate's OPI linguistic performance is evaluated.

3.6. Nonresident OPI. An OPI conducted for a candidate who is not physically on the DLIELC campus, either over the telephone or in person by a team of two certified raters on temporary duty status.

3.7. Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI). A test of a candidate's interactive listening comprehension and speaking proficiency, conducted under controlled conditions by two certified OPI raters.

3.8. OPI Coordinator. The Language Testing Specialist appointed by the Chief of Testing responsible for the day-to-day management of the DLIELC OPI program.

3.9. OPI Rater. A resident DLIELC GS-1701 staff member who has been trained and certified to conduct OPIs and assign ILR-based language skill ratings (Encl E1).

3.10. OPI Rater Trainer. An OPI rater who has been trained and certified to conduct OPI training certification for raters and verifiers, perform quality assurance performance checks, verify ratings and perform recertification observations for raters.

3.11. OPI Rating. The ILR-based rating used to describe a candidate's linguistic performance during an OPI. At DLIELC, the highest score a candidate can achieve is a 4/4.

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

3.13. OPI Verifier. An OPI rater who has been trained to verify ratings of recorded OPIs and to assist with quality assurance measures.

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

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

#### 4. POLICY

##### 4.1. OPI Scheduling.

4.1.1. Candidates must attain their required ECL score before they can be scheduled for an OPI.

4.1.2. Countries that are exempt from in-country ECL testing, but not exempt from in-country OPI testing may use the American Language Course Placement Test (ALCPT) in lieu of the ECL.

4.1.3. For OPI scheduling purposes, DLIELC honors exceptions to policy for ECL requirements which are granted by a competent Security Cooperation Education and Training Program (SCETP) authority (normally a schoolhouse/MILDEP), the office of primary responsibility (OPR) for military service directives, or the sponsoring MAJCOM for US military exercises.

4.1.4. OCONUS candidates who have taken a telephonic OPI must wait 90 days before being re-interviewed unless a waiver is granted by DLIELC/Testing. During this time, the candidate should be enrolled in an English language training program that stresses oral language acquisition. Waivers will normally not be granted before a 30-day wait-period has elapsed.

#### 4.2. OPI Administration.

4.2.1. All nonresident OPI interviews must be proctored by a US military officer or noncommissioned officer (NCO) in the rank of E-5 or above, or a US Government Civil Service employee in the grade of GS-05 or above, or the equivalent.

4.2.2. OPI interviews are conducted and verified by DLIELC OPI-certified personnel only. Ratings are assigned by applying the same ILR-based standards (Encl E1) to resident, nonresident, face-to-face and telephonic interviews alike.

4.2.3. All nonresident and resident interviews for IMSs scheduled for aviation follow-on training (FOT), excluding loadmasters, are conducted telephonically.

4.2.4. All OPIs will normally be digitally recorded.

#### 4.3. OPI Ratings.

4.3.1. A qualifying OPI rating is valid for six months.

4.3.2. Raters' notes on DLIELC Form 1025.9(A), OPI Performance Profile, may be released only to supervisors/managers of DLIELC resident programs.

### 5. RESPONSIBILITIES

#### 5.1. Testing will:

5.1.1. Exercise overall responsibility of the OPI program, coordinate all OPI policy changes and serve as the office of record for all official OPIs.

5.1.2. Authorize on a case by case basis any waivers for DLIELC OPI requirements regarding testing security, such as testing procedures and/or frequency.

5.1.3. Perform quality assurance measures 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. The OPI Coordinator will:

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

5.2.2. Maintain a calendar of nonresident telephonic OPIs.

5.2.3. Form OPI teams to conduct all OPIs, including after-hours OPIs.

5.2.4. Promptly refer OPIs for verification as needed and ensure that they are accomplished as required.

5.2.5. Ensure all required OPI information, including those conducted away from the resident campus, is entered into the OPI database.

5.3. OPI Raters will:

5.3.1. Use prescribed guidelines to elicit and independently rate a ratable speech sample from the candidate, negotiating final score as necessary.

5.3.2. Document interview profile in either the OPI database or on DLIELC Form 1025.9(A) (Encl E2).

5.4. OPI verifiers and rater trainers will review recorded interviews as required and inform the OPI Coordinator of verification results.

5.5. Authorized IC/CONUS representatives will:

5.5.1. Identify ECL-qualified personnel who have an OPI requirement and schedule OPIs through the DLIELC OPI office, using the OPI request form (Encl E3).

5.5.2. Immediately notify the DLIELC OPI Coordinator of any cancellations or changes in scheduled OPI appointments.

5.5.3. Remain in the room with candidate for the duration of the interview, observing the required test protocol included in the appointment confirmation message, and maintain test security at all times.

## 6. PROCEDURES

### 6.1. Scheduling Nonresident OPIs.

#### 6.1.1. The IC/CONUS requesting official will:

6.1.1.1. Confirm that the candidate's proposed training has an OPI requirement and that the candidate has already met the ECL requirement. ECL-exempt countries may provide a qualifying ALCPT score in lieu of an ECL score.

6.1.1.2. Make every effort to request OPIs at least one week in advance of the target interview date and schedule no more than two OPIs from the same organization on the same day.

6.1.1.3. Completely fill out an online OPI request form at [http://dlielc.edu/Testing/opi\\_ReqFm.html](http://dlielc.edu/Testing/opi_ReqFm.html) (Encl E3) and send it as an email attachment to [OPI@us.af.mil](mailto:OPI@us.af.mil).

#### 6.1.2. The OPI Coordinator will:

6.1.2.1. Monitor the scheduled nonresident OPIs and the OPI teams on duty and inform the OPI raters of any changes or cancellations.

6.1.2.2. Coordinate the scheduling of requested OPIs with IC/CONUS representatives, emailing them a confirmation of the interview date and time along with the protocol to be followed on the day of the test. Whenever possible, interviews are scheduled during the normal DLIELC workday. Interviews are scheduled on a first come, first served basis.

6.1.2.3. Enter all required information in the OPI Schedule database.

### 6.2. Testing Procedures.

#### 6.2.1. The IC/CONUS test proctor will:

6.2.1.1. Ensure that the candidate arrives at the scheduled time and place for the telephonic OPI and confirm identity through official photo identification.

6.2.1.2. Ensure that the candidate turns off all cell phones and electronic devices and that the devices remain turned off for the duration of the interview.

6.2.1.3. Provide a room free of noise and distractions, with a chair, table/desk.

6.2.1.4. Initiate the OPI by calling DLIELC at the number designated in the confirmation email, using a normal phone line (not a speakerphone or cell phone).

6.2.1.5. Be prepared for delays of up to 20 minutes past the scheduled OPI appointment time.

6.2.1.6. Attempt to reestablish contact if the line is disconnected for any reason. If the IC/CONUS representative is unable to reestablish contact within twenty minutes, the telephonic OPI will be canceled and rescheduled.

6.2.1.7. Remain in the testing room (off to the side) during the interview to preclude test compromise and not allow anyone else to enter the room.

6.2.1.8. Not allow the candidate to read or write anything except for one portion of the interview, when the raters prompt the candidate to use paper and a pencil.

6.2.1.9. Not discuss OPI questions or responses with the candidate during or after the test, and appropriately isolate scheduled interviewees to preclude their discussing any aspect of the OPI.

6.2.2. The OPI raters will:

6.2.2.1. Contact the OPI Coordinator if the call from IC/CONUS proctor is not received within 5 minutes and wait 15 more minutes for an incoming call before contacting the OPI Coordinator again. For after-hours interviews that occur when the coordinator is not present, raters will wait 20 minutes for a phone call before cancelling the interview.

6.2.2.2. Confirm the identity of the candidate with the authorized IC/CONUS proctor by first and last name and, if applicable, by WCN or military identification number before the telephonic OPI begins.

6.2.2.3. Verify with the IC/CONUS representative that the sound quality is sufficient to begin the telephonic OPI, and request that the IC/CONUS representative call back if there is a bad connection. No more than two call-backs are allowed per scheduled OPI.

6.2.2.4. Ensure the audio recorder is turned on and operating properly before beginning the OPI.

6.2.2.5. Independently rate candidates IAW ILR descriptors (Encl E1), compare independent ratings and negotiate an official rating.

6.2.2.6. After negotiating a score, complete the required rating justification information on DLIELC Form 1025.9(A) on either paper or electronic version (Encl E2).

6.2.3. The OPI Coordinator will attempt to contact IC/CONUS representative if the call to DLIELC is not received within five minutes of the appointment time, and cancel the OPI session if the call is more than 20 minutes late.

### 6.3. Release of Scores.

6.3.1. Whenever possible, the OPI Coordinator will email IC/CONUS representatives the official OPI score within two US business days of the interview.

6.3.2. The IC/CONUS Representative will inform the host country or appropriate CONUS personnel of the candidate's OPI rating.

6.3.3. IC representatives will add the OPI rating and date of interview on the invitational travel order (ITO) and Security Assistance Network (SAN) Web.

6.4. In the event the OPI raters cannot agree on the rating, the recording will be reviewed and rated by a rater trainer. If the sample is deemed un-ratable by the rater trainer, the candidate will be re-interviewed by another team of raters. The rater trainer will be the final arbiter of the score.

7. SUMMARY OF REVISIONS

This revision updates current organizational structure and office symbols.

8. EFFECTIVE DATE

This instruction is effective immediately.

JEFFREY T. COOPER, Colonel, USAF  
Commandant

3 Enclosures

1. Interagency Language Roundtable Language Skill Level Descriptions (Speaking and Listening)
2. DLIELC Form 1025.9(A), OPI Performance Profile
3. Online OPI Request Form

## E1. ENCLOSURE 1

## LANGUAGE SKILL LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS: SPEAKING AND LISTENING

## 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 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

## E1. ENCLOSURE 1 (CONT.)

## LANGUAGE SKILL LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS: SPEAKING AND LISTENING

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 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

## E1. ENCLOSURE 1 (CONT.)

## LANGUAGE SKILL LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS: SPEAKING AND LISTENING

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-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,

## E1. ENCLOSURE 1 (CONT.)

## LANGUAGE SKILL LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS: SPEAKING AND LISTENING

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: SPEAKING AND LISTENING

## 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 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)

## E1. ENCLOSURE 1 (CONT.)

## LANGUAGE SKILL LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS: SPEAKING AND LISTENING

**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**

**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: SPEAKING AND LISTENING

**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]

E2. ENCLOSURE 2

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DELIVERY	SOCIOLINGUISTIC COMPETENCE	GLOBAL TASKS AND FUNCTIONS

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E2. ENCLOSURE 2 (CONT.)

DLIELC Form 1025.9(A) - OPI PERFORMANCE PROFILE

	<b>Interactive Comprehension</b>	<b>Structural Control Texts Produced</b>	<b>Lexical Control</b>	<b>Delivery</b>	<b>Sociolinguistic Competence</b>	<b>Global Tasks and Functions</b>
<b>0+</b>	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. <b>Individual words and phrases.</b>	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.
<b>1</b>	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. <b>Discrete sentences.</b>	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 simple daily needs.
<b>2</b>	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. <b>Full paragraphs.</b>	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 facility. 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 limitations.	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.
<b>3</b>	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. <b>Extended discourse.</b>	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.
<b>4</b>	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. <b>Speeches, lectures, debates, conference discussions.</b>	Precise for representational purposes within personal and professional experiences. Can elaborate concepts freely; to 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.
<b>5</b>	(No gaps in comprehension, including all details and nuances.)	Functionally equivalent to a highly articulate, well-educated native speaker. <b>All texts controlled by a highly articulate, well-educated native speaker.</b>	Breadth of vocabulary and idiom equivalent to that of a highly articulate, well-educated native speaker.	Functionally equivalent to a highly articulate, well-educated 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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## E3. ENCLOSURE 3

## SAMPLE ONLINE OPI REQUEST

**OPI Request**  
**(All Fields Mandatory)**

**International Military Student Information**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ MASL: \_\_\_\_\_  
           Last       First

Rank: \_\_\_\_\_ Country: \_\_\_\_\_ MASL Requirements: ECL \_\_\_\_\_ OPI \_\_\_\_\_

Mil. ID: \_\_\_\_\_ **OR** WCN: \_\_\_\_\_ Current/Latest ECL: Score \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsor Service: Army  Air Force  Navy  Previous OPI: Score \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**US Student Information**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ Current/Latest ECL: Score \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
           Last       First

Rank: \_\_\_\_\_ Previous OPI: Score \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsor Service: Army  Air Force  Navy  ROTC Contracting  Commission   
 (09L ONLY) Target (NATIVE) language OPI score: \_\_\_\_\_ Language Requirements: ECL \_\_\_\_\_ OPI \_\_\_\_\_

**Point of Contact/Test Administrator Information**

POC Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Test Proctor name: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

*\*Country Code required if outside the US*

**Location of Test**

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State (US): \_\_\_\_\_ Country: \_\_\_\_\_

**Requested Date/Time of OPI Interview**

Interviews normally scheduled M-TH: 0730, 0900, 1030, 1300; Fr: 0730, 0900, 1030 San Antonio (US Central) time

**Local time**

**San Antonio time**

\_\_\_\_\_                      \_\_\_\_\_                      \_\_\_\_\_                      \_\_\_\_\_                      \_\_\_\_\_  
 Day of week    Date                      Time                      Day of week                      Date                      Time

**Extenuating Circumstances/Notes:**