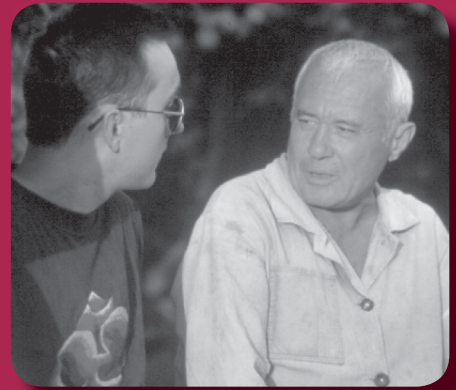


Language Proficiency Interview

Manual for Testers



Peace Corps
Information Collection and Exchange
Publication No. T0130

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Language Proficiency Interview

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Peace Corps
2005

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Publication No. T0130

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Acknowledgments

The *Language Proficiency Interview Manual for Testers* was developed by the Peace Corps to enhance the agency's language testing program. This manual is one component of a training program for language testers (interviewers) that also includes a set of role-play cards, model interview recordings, and a five-day training program. The training program for language interviewers is conducted in a rotating schedule in all countries hosting Peace Corps programs. The language proficiency interview (LPI) training program and material emulates the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and its oral proficiency interview by using its guidelines and establishing a similar training process and interview procedures, structure, and protocols. Since the revision of ACTFL's Proficiency Guidelines was federally funded by a grant from the United States Department of Education, the oral proficiency guidelines are public domain and are used as the cornerstone of many language testing programs.

ACTFL is a strong contributor to and supporter of the Peace Corps testing program. Their trainers are regularly hired as consultants for the training of Peace Corps language proficiency interview testing and other aspects of language training. ACTFL and the Peace Corps are engaging in a contract to share and develop materials for multiple languages to be used in training in and outside of the United States.

The testing and training experience shared in this text is the result of extensive teaching and training in the United States and experience acquired in frequent trainings around the world on behalf of the Peace Corps. The trainings and traveling resulted in a better understanding of the clientele of interviewers, facilitators, trainees, and Volunteers for which these materials are developed. These materials were developed to respond to the needs and diversity of the Peace Corps program.

The Peace Corps acknowledges the extraordinary work of those who established the high quality program described on these pages—particularly testers in the field and the incredible support posts provide to the language training and testing programs.

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Introduction

The History of Peace Corps Language Training

Language training has been an integral part of a Peace Corps trainee's preparation since the creation of the Peace Corps in 1961. The Peace Corps Act mandated that language performance be part of the preparation of Peace Corps Volunteers. By the 1970s, the law provided that "*No persons shall be assigned to duty as Volunteers in any foreign country or area unless at the time of such assignment [they] possess such reasonable proficiency as [their] assignment requires in speaking the language of the country or area to which [they are] assigned*" (Peace Corps Act Pub. L. 87-293, title I, Sec. 24, Sept. 22, 1961, 75 Stat. 624).

Initially, Peace Corps language training was conducted in training camps in the United States. Eventually, this responsibility moved to the different countries where Volunteers serve. Peace Corps trainees and Volunteers learn more than 350 languages all over the world. Some countries teach as many as 20 languages, while others teach one or two. During their stay in-country, most Volunteers will learn more than one language.

The Language Proficiency Interview

In order to test the effectiveness of language acquisition, interviewers are trained to assess trainees' and Volunteers' oral proficiency with an assessment known as the language proficiency interview (LPI). The interview consists of a conversation in which, through a process of level checks and probes, the interviewer establishes the level in which a speaker is able to perform linguistic functions consistently, and the level in which the speaker begins to demonstrate patterns of errors and weaknesses in functional performance. With this information, the interviewer determines the level of functional language ability attained by the person interviewed.

With the language proficiency interview, the Peace Corps joins a group of educational, governmental, and private institutions who rely on a language proficiency assessment to evaluate and inform its members regarding their linguistic functional ability. By training interviewers all over the world, the Peace Corps provides a reliable assessment for all trainees and Volunteers that can be compared to other assessment tools in the United States. This program enables the organization to collect and interpret information about the level of linguistic preparedness of trainees and Volunteers, and the quality of the language program that trained them.

Potential language testers receive interviewer training in English, Spanish, or French. Then, the principles of testing and interviewing are applied to the local languages. Through the certification process, Peace Corps language proficiency interview testers are certified to test in all the languages taught by Peace Corps' programs. As a result, the Peace Corps provides testing for some of the rarest language varieties in the world.

ACTFL and the Proficiency Guidelines

Initially, the Foreign Service Institute provided language testing services for the Peace Corps using their own rating scale. From 1969 to 1996, the Educational Testing Service was responsible for the supervision of testing. The Peace Corps decided to bring the testing program in-house in 1996.

The first scale used to measure trainees' linguistic ability was the United States Foreign Service Scale, later known as the Interagency Language Roundtable scale (ILR). This scale, used since the 1960s by several government agencies, has stronger and more detailed descriptors at the higher levels because it was created (and is still used) to determine the functional ability of candidates to work in international-related jobs where a high proficiency level is required. This scale defines levels with numbers ranging from 0-5 to describe learners from 0 (those with no functional ability), to 5 (those who can function like highly educated professional native speakers). In this scale, 3, 3+ and up describe a range of speakers who can work like educated speakers in a given language. From the outset, this scale presented limitations to describe language acquisition for language teachers, since it did not provide a broad enough variety of descriptors to define differences in ability among beginner learners.

In the 1980s, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and the Educational Testing Service (ETS) worked on modified guidelines from the perspective of the language learner. In 1982, a set of provisional guidelines was published after a process of study and analysis, and were revised in 1986, and again in 1999. The new guidelines

ACTFL Proficiency Scale	ILR Scale
Superior	5 Native or Bilingual Proficiency
	4+
	4 Distinguished proficiency
	3+ 3 Professional Working Proficiency
Advanced High	2+
Advanced Mid Advanced Low	2 Limited Working Proficiency
Intermediate High	1+
Intermediate Mid Intermediate Low	1 Survival Proficiency
Novice High	0+
Novice Mid Novice Low	0 No Practical Proficiency

provided a wider range of descriptors and distinctions among learners, which proved useful for teachers and learners. These descriptors range from Novice to Superior, with sublevels of Low, Mid, and High, providing nine sublevels where the ILR scale provided six, and one level where the ILR provided five.

The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (the Guidelines) resulted in a better instrument for Peace Corps language programs since they describe how learners learn a language.

By 1996, when the testing program came in-house, the Guidelines were the criteria used to describe Volunteers' linguistic ability. Once the testing program was in-house, the common practice has been to hire an ACTFL trainer as a contractor to train a group of interviewers in each country who, in turn, check trainees and Volunteers on their development as language speakers of the local languages needed to perform as Volunteers.

The Guideline's generic descriptors (see Appendix A) are a valuable asset for the Peace Corps since the agency tests more than 250 languages at different levels (see Appendix F). They are general enough to apply to a variety of languages yet demonstrate enough flexibility to be sensitive to the diversity of linguistic characteristics proposed by so many languages.

While the Guidelines are an important cornerstone of the testing program, the LPI training is an indispensable part of the preparation of interviewers to provide the testing service for the Peace Corps. With this manual, the practice tapes with interview samples, and the five-day training, the training program prepares interviewers around the world to provide a valuable service for the Peace Corps.

The Importance of the Language Proficiency Interview and the Role of the Interviewer

The LPI provides a language to describe linguistic competencies and therefore describes what speakers can do with what they learn, and how effectively they can communicate with local speakers. The feedback that interviewers give trainees about their progress as learners guides their linguistic development in three important stages: throughout their pre-service training; before their LPI interview at the end of pre-service training; and in their independent learning through their tour in-country. The results of the interview also provide a framework to set goals for future learning. In this regard, the ACTFL Guidelines serve as a roadmap to attain higher levels of communicative and functional performance.

At the end of pre-service training, the interviewer provides feedback to the Peace Corps that indicates whether or not trainees are linguistically prepared to be Volunteers. The result of the interview, combined with other assessments provided to the country director, will determine a trainee's suitability to remain in-country and to be sworn in as a Volunteer.

Additionally, LPI scores are submitted to Peace Corps/Washington and recorded in order to report to the Peace Corps and Congress on the compliance of the Peace Corps Act, and Volunteers' progress in language proficiency. By close of service, the LPI provides important data for future Peace Corps/Washington reference. This final recording of the Volunteer's functional ability provides information regarding the Volunteer's incorporation to the community and linguistic progress and development during service. In many cases, this report is very useful to Volunteers who continue in their studies, since the record enables the Peace Corps to provide a reference regarding their linguistic development, for instance, for graduate school admission, job searches, etc.

The LPI is one indicator among others to signal Volunteers' level of preparedness to perform their tasks. Language control is closely connected to cross-cultural insight, and effective skills in these two areas will greatly enhance positive community relations and Volunteers' ability to fulfill the mission of the Peace Corps. The ratings provided by interviewers assist and inform posts about the level of preparedness of the trainee and Volunteer to face the challenges of living in the local non-English speaking community.

The Peace Corps Mission

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy established the Peace Corps to promote world peace and friendship.

Goal 1. Helping the people of interested countries in meeting their needs for trained men and women.

Goal 2. Helping promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served.

Goal 3. Helping promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of all Americans.

Linguistic ability has an important role in all three of these goals, given that none of them can be fully accomplished if Volunteers do not have sufficient ability to communicate and participate in community life.

The testing program is important to the Peace Corps in a number of ways.

- It is used for diagnostic and placement purposes by the language coordinator.
- It determines whether trainees' language competence is high enough to allow them to do an effective job in the host country or whether additional training will be required.
- It helps language coordinators determine whether their programs are effective in increasing the language competence of their trainees.
- It measures how much language improvement Volunteers make in the field.
- It provides important information to the persons tested about their progress in the language and about the things they can do to increase their language competency.

The most immediate uses of the LPI:

- To assess outcomes at the end of a the pre-service training
- To help teachers and administrators assess their programs and curriculum
- To measure progress following a significant linguistic experience such as during close of service

Each year, posts report results of the LPI to provide valuable information on the progress and quality of each post's language program. At the end of the year, each post sends the reports of all the LPIs done during the year (after pre-service training and close of service). These reports are carefully examined in order to provide feedback to the regions and the countries regarding their language programs. The Center for Field Assistance and Applied Research (the Center) provides feedback and recommendations regarding the development of the language program at post as well as regionally. It also provides an element of comparison between countries in terms of requirements, quality of the language program, and Volunteer development and progress.

If the language testing program is to provide support to the language program and to the Peace Corps mission, it is crucially important for all language interviewers to become experienced interviewers, highly versed in the testing techniques and protocols of the LPI. This will contribute to the reliability of the assessment instrument and interviewer. When all interviewers carry out the interviewing process *in the same way and according to the same standards* as every other interviewer, the rating will be more accurate and verifiable, since different interviewers will be able to arrive to the same rating as they listen to the sample of the best performance ability of the speakers. Unless there is high reliability in these interviews—regardless of where they are given or by whom—the testing program cannot function effectively. For this reason, it is important for the prospective interviewer to spend time and effort learning about and practicing the interview techniques and, once certified to test, to continue to refine techniques and to keep testing accuracy and reliability at a high level.

The Peace Corps Language Testers Training Program

Description of Peace Corps LPI Testers

Peace Corps LPI certified testers (referred to as interviewers throughout this manual) are specialized language professionals who have completed a rigorous training process and have met established criteria for certification by the Peace Corps. Language interviewers represent a critical resource to the agency and to local Peace Corps language programs. Certification as a Peace Corps LPI tester validates an interviewer's understanding of the principles and concepts of oral proficiency testing and the ability to apply theory to practice. Certification also acknowledges an interviewer's ability to conduct and rate oral proficiency interviews with a high degree of reliability.

Rights and Responsibilities of Peace Corps LPI Testers

Peace Corps LPI-certified testers are authorized to conduct LPIs and to assign ratings in their own local languages. Peace Corps LPI testers are only authorized to conduct testing for the Peace Corps language program in the languages in which the interviewer has been certified. They may not perform Peace Corps LPIs outside of Peace Corps' language programs without written permission from the Peace Corps. Peace Corps LPI testers are not authorized to conduct Peace Corps LPI training.

Peace Corps LPI testers agree to conduct LPIs according to the policies, procedures, and protocol established by the Peace Corps LPI. Peace Corps LPI testers agree to: maintain the highest level of quality in testing and rating during their certification period; to attend refresher meetings; and to uphold the highest professional and ethical standards in test administration and rating.

The Peace Corps makes a considerable investment of resources to prepare post to administer a reliable testing program. Once training and certification is complete, the Peace Corps counts on the trained testers and post's language program to maintain the highest standards of testing and rating throughout the certification period. Testers will be invited on a regular basis to test trainees and Volunteers.

Peace Corps LPI tester certification is valid for a maximum of five years. At the end of five years, testers must recertify to maintain certification. Recommendation for recertification training depends upon the performance as a tester during the previous five years of certification.

Tester Selection

Peace Corps language testers are selected based on the following qualifications.

1. *Proficiency in the languages used for training and testing.* While an effort will be made to provide training in a language spoken by the participant, the challenge of the variety of languages spoken in Peace Corps host countries will not allow for training in

languages other than English, Spanish, and French. Therefore, an important requirement is the interviewer's competence in one of the training languages. The trainer will make efforts to help participants understand by using visual aids (multimedia presentations, hand outs, etc.), and, as a last resort, providing an interpreter. While language limitations on the training language are unavoidable, these cannot be negotiated for the test language: the interviewer should demonstrate at least the Advanced level of proficiency in the local language. Potential interviewers' language skills should be at a higher level than the skill level of the speakers. If interviewers are not Superior, they will not be able to test Volunteers at close of service.

2. *Appropriate personal orientation and background for effective testing work.* Effective interviewers have enough experience with the Peace Corps language training programs or other language teaching and learning activities to allow them to relate effectively to trainees or Volunteers and to understand their needs as language students. In addition, interviewers should relate well on a personal level and be able to put people at ease in the interview situation. Personal skills are essential to maintain an encouraging and enthusiastic interview.
3. *Availability to travel to various testing sites at various times of the year.* The interviewer must travel, sometimes on short notice, to different testing sites and be available for testing as required throughout the year.
4. *Ability to conform to the technical and administrative requirements of the testing program.* In such a large-scale undertaking as the Peace Corps language testing program, each interviewer must follow certain important technical and administrative procedures. There are a number of forms to complete and rules to follow as a normal part of the participation in the program. Prompt compliance with these procedures is as important as the interview.

Preparation for the LPI Training and Certification

Carefully work through the following steps of the instructional program to prepare for the LPI training.

1. *Thoroughly read the Peace Corps' Language Proficiency Interview Manual for Language Testers.* This manual is the central resource for the LPI training and the official guide for interviewers. Interviewers are responsible for keeping the manual up to date when revisions or additions are made and for being aware of any changes in the testing program. When changes are made, post will be notified by the Center and the Training Staff Development Unit (TSDU) promptly and officially. Staff in charge of these communications are the Center's language testing specialist, the language training specialist, and the language training coordinator.
2. *Listen to a prescribed set of interview training tapes.* The training materials include a set of 10 tape-recorded interviews similar to those the interviewer will give in the field. After reading this manual, listen carefully to each taped interview in order and read the explanatory comments provided for each interview. The official rating, comments on

various aspects of the interview, and reasons for the particular rating are indicated for each taped interview. These tapes help interviewers become familiar with the different proficiency levels and with the type of language performance represented in each case. Listen to the tapes and interviewers should review the rating scale in order to accurately judge what level to assign to other interviews. Set aside a full day to listen to the tapes leisurely and carefully and review the manual and the training tapes before meeting with the tester trainer.

3. *Participate in a workshop with the tester trainer.* An LPI trainer who is a certified tester in at least one Peace Corps language and who is also experienced in training testers will visit the post to meet with prospective interviewers. Prospective interviewers will be informed of the date of the visit and asked to attend the tester training workshop.
4. *Certification process.* To become certified, you must:
 - a. Study the training materials ahead of time
 - b. Attend the five-day training
 - c. Prepare two interviews for evaluation
 - d. Complete the certification test
 - e. Receive certification from headquarters (in consultation with trainer)

There are three possible results of the certification process:

- *Full Certification.* Participant is authorized to conduct Peace Corps LPIs for five years or until the next LPI tester trainer workshop.
 - *Provisional Certification.* Participant must have all interviews double-rated by a designated certified tester while preparing to submit another certification round. All provisionally certified testers should complete their certification as soon as possible. By the end of the next pre-service training, testers should present five of their local language tapes for blind second rating to other certified testers. On these interviews, ratings should agree on level and sublevels in three out of five ratings, and none should disagree on more than one sublevel. Provisionally certified testers should listen to fully certified testers' tapes to practice developing probes and rating as part of the interview structure, and review the criteria to distinguish the sublevels. To receive full certification, testers should report their compliance to the program's requirements to Peace Corps/Washington.
 - *Non-certification.* Participant is not qualified to conduct Peace Corps language proficiency interviews (LPIs).
5. *Duration of certification.* Certification lasts for five years or until the next LPI training is provided.

The Training Week

The training agenda is included in Appendix M. Each training day follows this structure:

- *Plenary session.* The trainer leads a discussion in which different aspects of the LPI are discussed, with time for discussion by participants. During an afternoon plenary on the third day, participants discuss implications of the LPI on teaching.
- *Model interviews.* The interview practice begins with a live interview by the trainer, followed by a discussion of the interview structure, techniques, and the evaluation process. During the training, other video-recorded interviews are used for observation and discussion.
- *Practice interviews.* Each participant practices interviewing, with a follow-up discussion for feedback from participants and the trainer. During the first two days, interviews are conducted in the language of the training and on the third and fourth day, participants test in the local languages in which they will be certified. The purpose is to provide practice in the interviewing techniques and to allow for discussion and constructive criticism by the tester/trainer and the other prospective testers.
- *Closing comments.* At the end of each day, participants and the trainer reflect on the day's experience and review, if necessary.

The material is organized to continually build on previously learned material to give the participants the opportunity to process important information and develop skills necessary to become a good interviewer. Each day concentrates on a different aspect of the interview process and emphasizes different elements of the LPI structure and protocol.

Daily Goals

Day 1: The LPI Structure

- Understand the importance of LPI to the Peace Corps
- Understand the background of oral proficiency testing
- Understand expectations of the five-day workshop
- Understand concepts of reliability and validity
- Learn the Peace Corps LPI rating scale
- Understand the four phases of the interview
- Discuss prerecorded interviews

Day 2: Evaluation criteria and elicitation

- Practice using the rating scale
- Learn assessment criteria at each level of the rating scale
- Understand elicitation techniques and the concept of a ratable sample
- Conduct interviews in the language of training

Day 3: Local language practice and implications in teaching

- Become familiar with question types
- Practice elicitation techniques for the Advanced and Superior levels

- Discuss how the principles of the LPI can influence teaching
- Conduct interviews in local language (using trainees, Volunteers, close of service)
- Contribute to discussion on cross-language applications

Day 4: Testing at the Advanced and Superior levels

- Become familiar with post-workshop activities, second rating, and the responsibilities of a certified tester
- Conduct interviews in the training language in pairs and individually
- Prepare certification tapes

Day 5: Certification exam

- Complete interviews for certification round as needed
- Rate pre-recorded testing tapes
- Complete written exam

The Certification Process

The final evaluation for the certification has several assessment instruments.

Certification Interviews

On the fourth day of the training each participant conducts two taped interviews, rates them, and submits them to the trainer as part of the certification process. These interviews must represent the participant's best individual and independent effort at LPI testing and rating. They are done in the trainer's language for evaluation purposes. To avoid confusion or loss of information, follow the very specific presentation format (see Appendix I). The trainer evaluates the tapes after the training has finished, as part as the certification evaluation. The criteria used for this assessment is shown in Appendix J.

Certification Tests: On the fifth day of the training there is a last learning/testing opportunity. Participants use the material learned through the study of the manual and the training to complete two final exercises:

- *Written exam:* Participants demonstrate understanding by explaining some of the terminology used in the training and used when describing feedback on the LPI to speakers. The second section of the test is a multiple choice exam where participants are given sample interview situations and they must select appropriate actions to follow.
- *Listening to testing tapes.* The trainer provides a set of tape-recorded interviews similar to those in the training set but without official ratings indicated. These tapes are in random order, and participants listen to each tape and rate the interview appropriately. This assessment determines whether participants understand the rating scale well enough to assign reliable ratings according to the official standards.

Certification Decisions

Peace Corps trainers are not authorized to certify language testers immediately after the training program. Rather, it is their responsibility to convey the results of the various activities to the language testing specialist in the Center at Peace Corps/Washington, where a final determination of certification will be made. All prospective testers are notified by Peace Corps/Washington about their certification status as soon as possible after the current tour of the LPI trainer has been completed.

Duration of Certification

Certified language testers are certified for five years if they continue to perform interviews without long periods of interruption. If they do not conduct any interviews for two consecutive years, they need to be recertified. Testers can be recertified by attending another complete language tester workshop.

The Language Proficiency Interview and the Rating Scale

The language proficiency interview is an assessment in which a speaker has the opportunity to demonstrate what they can do with the language they have learned. An interviewer establishes a conversation-like rapport with a speaker in order to elicit a ratable speech sample demonstrating the speaker's highest level of proficiency in a given language. This interview provides information regarding patterns of strengths and weaknesses in the speaker's functional ability in order to compare the speaker's linguistic ability with the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines.

Definitions of Terms

Achievement: An achievement test measures what the student has learned from a class. For example, after learning the numbers 1-10, an achievement test demonstrates that a student has learned to count from 1-10.

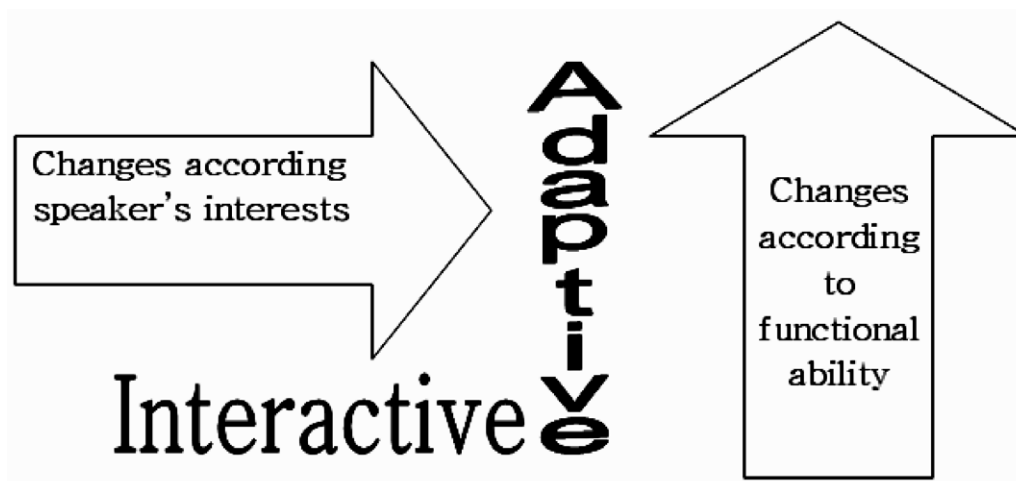
Assessment: The LPI is used to make a holistic assessment of the speaker's proficiency. This assessment is a description of the speaker's linguistic ability, not an assessment of the speaker's quality as a Volunteer. The LPI is an instrument for evaluation based on the totality of the speaker's abilities. It is not based on only one element of the interview, but on the total performance during the interview.

ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines: The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines are the criteria used for LPI rating (see Appendix A). They are generic descriptors of levels of proficiency based on the notion that a speaker's ability progresses as oral skills develop. The Guidelines are based on experience and research over the last 20 years. They were created by ACTFL with government funding, published as public domain, and made available to the Peace Corps. Peace Corps LPI ratings are used for the express purpose of Peace Corps activities, so they are not to be considered the same as ACTFL ratings. The ratings provided by the Peace Corps are ratings from Peace Corps' LPI certified interviewers, for the Peace Corps language testing program. A Peace Corps LPI rating should not be confused with or represented as the ACTFL OPI rating administered and provided by ACTFL testers in universities and other institutions in the United States.

Criterion reference: The assessment of the LPI compares the sample to set criteria. This allows two speakers to have the same rating despite differences in linguistic performance. There is no "perfect" score or "pass" or "fail." The rating is a comparison between the sample of speech and the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines.

Function: The LPI examines what the speaker can do with the language; therefore, it concentrates on function. While competencies learned in class will assist the speaker to perform activities like those in the classroom, the LPI observes what a speaker can do in real-life situations. The LPI is not a competency test, and it does not check what the student learned in class, but competencies will enable the language student to function in real life and, as a result, may enable the speaker to perform those in the LPI setting.

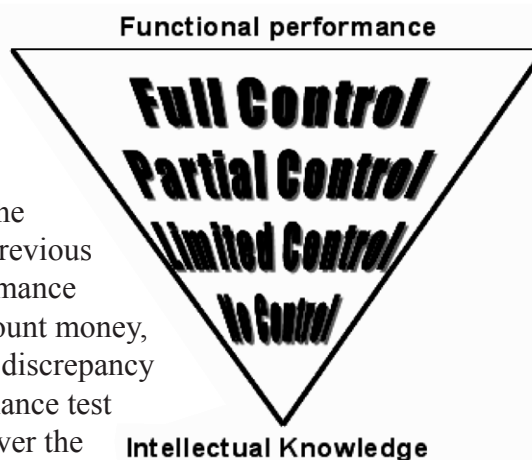
Interactive: One of the challenges for an LPI interviewer is to maintain lively interaction while doing the assessment. The interview is not a set of prearranged questions but a conversation in which the interviewer adapts and changes topics and functions in order to obtain a ratable sample. The interview is adaptive: it changes based on the level of ability of the speaker on the topic at hand and reacts to the speaker's interests and abilities. The LPI is speaker-centered, and no two interviews are identical. This type of assessment will require the full attention and energy of the interviewer, as well as the speaker.



Interview: The LPI is not a test, but an interview. It is a conversation, led by the interviewer, but handled mostly by the speaker. Similar to a television interview or a job interview, the interviewer poses questions which invite the speaker to speak and expand on the conversation. While the conversation goes on, the interviewer asks open-ended questions to obtain enough information to make an assessment.

Oral language: The LPI is an oral assessment: it evaluates speaking ability. There are other forms of assessment based on different language skills (reading, writing, listening, cultural understanding), all of them necessary to learn a language appropriately. The LPI also demonstrates the level of control a speaker has of the language learned. Communication skills are critical to the goals of the Peace Corps training program. Effective oral skills allow the speaker to integrate safely into a new environment and function in the community as a Volunteer.

Performance: A performance test measures what the speaker can do with what they learned. Using the previous example of learning numbers 1-10, during a performance test, the speaker might demonstrate that they can count money, tell how many students are in the classroom, etc. A discrepancy in results between an achievement test and performance test will depend on the level of control speakers have over the



material studied. As speakers practice using the language, their level of control and ability to use what they know will increase. By the time there is full control, speakers do not need to remind themselves of the lessons learned, because the knowledge will be fully integrated into their communication.

Proficiency: The LPI measures proficiency—the functional ability of the speaker to use a language to function in the real world. Proficiency is the command or control a speaker has on the functions of the language. Assessments of proficiency look at what speakers can do with the language and the level of control over the language, not necessarily what they know about the language.

Protocol: A protocol is a convention or code allowing the interviewer to proceed with an activity in a specific way to get a specific response. For example, in order to get the speaker to expand on a topic, a good practice is to ask the speaker to tell you more about it. The prompt “Tell me more about it” is an effective way to encourage speakers to expand on a topic. Because the Peace Corps LPI can be used for a variety of languages, structures and protocols become the scaffolding in which the language assessment is constructed.

Ratable sample: The goal of the interview is to acquire a ratable sample. Through the interview, a sample of speech is elicited to provide enough material to do a clear assessment of the speaker’s performance in the language. This will enable the interviewer and a second rater to come to the same conclusion regarding the rating of the interview. The sample also shows the highest level of ability, which will not change unless there is significant additional language learning.

Reliability: The Peace Corps chose the LPI as an assessment tool for language proficiency because it is a reliable instrument of evaluation. When the structure and protocols of the LPI are followed and a ratable sample has been elicited, it will be possible for two raters, and even two interviewers, to come to the same conclusion regarding the rating of the speaker’s level of proficiency. A positive practice for the testing program is to periodically second rate interviews to confirm the consistency of interviewers in evaluation procedures and rating reliability.

Structure: A good interview has a clear structure that can be followed by another rater and assists in the rating. By closely following the structure of the interview, the interviewer will help the speaker demonstrate function and ability. Interviewers should follow the established structure of the LPI to obtain a ratable sample and to ensure a reliable assessment.

The Rating Scale

There are four levels in the ACTFL Proficiency Scale, and they are described in terms of global functions.

Superior	Can support opinion, hypothesis, can discuss topics concretely and abstractly, can handle a linguistically unfamiliar situation
Advanced	Can narrate and describe in all major time frames and can handle a situation with complication
Intermediate	Can create with language, ask and answer simple questions on familiar topics, and handle a simple situation or transaction
Novice	Can communicate minimally with formulaic and rote utterances, lists and phrases

As an interview progresses, the interviewer poses questions and directs the conversation so the functions of a level are demonstrated on a variety of topics. If the speaker has full control of the functions of one level, without patterns of weaknesses or breakdown, the interviewer can move to the next level by posing questions eliciting the function of the next higher level. This process is repeated, elevating the level of the conversation until the speaker arrives to the Superior level, or patterns of weaknesses or breakdown have been demonstrated. When the highest level at which the speaker can function is demonstrated consistently, the **floor** of the interview is established. When the speaker cannot sustain full control of the functions of a level consistently, the **ceiling** is established. The questions demonstrating the floor are **level checks**, and the questions demonstrating the ceiling are **probes**.

A successful interview is one that establishes a **clear floor** with a variety of level checks, and a **clear ceiling** through a variety of probes. The structure of the interview is the guide to complete this process.

The Sublevels

Once an interview is completed, the sample is evaluated to determine in more detail the quality and quantity of the speaker's performance within that level and the distance to the next level. This information defines the **sublevel** of the interview. The sublevel is a qualifier to describe the performance within the level and the degree of control at the next level. This applies to all levels except the Superior. As mentioned in the Introduction, the ILR scale has more sublevels above the Superior. The ACTFL scale, and the Peace Corps, concentrates on

the lower sublevels for the purposes of our language learning experience and needs. Once a speaker needs to make more distinctions at this level, a different assessment instrument should be used.

The Distinction between Sublevels

The LPI defines three sublevels: **Low**, **Mid**, and **High**. The sublevel is based on quantity and quality at the level and distance to the next level. While a speaker needs to sustain all the functions of the level at all times in order to merit the level, there will be a variety of control on those functions. The distinction of the sublevel is the quantity (the amount of language the speaker can use to perform the functions of the level) and quality (the competence or ability with which the speaker performs the function) of the speaker's performance at the floor. Distance to the next level is determined by the speaker's level of control of the functions at the level above or the ceiling. While there will be speakers who cannot perform the function of the ceiling at all, there will be others who will have some degree of control of these functions. Control of the ceiling provides information about the speaker's progress as a language learner. Speakers who have limited control of the functions of the floor will need to spend all their linguistic energies on sustaining their performance at the floor, while more confidence on those functions will allow them to start showing more ability at the ceiling. Distance from the next level is a qualifier of the sublevel. These descriptions apply to the Novice, Intermediate, and Advanced.

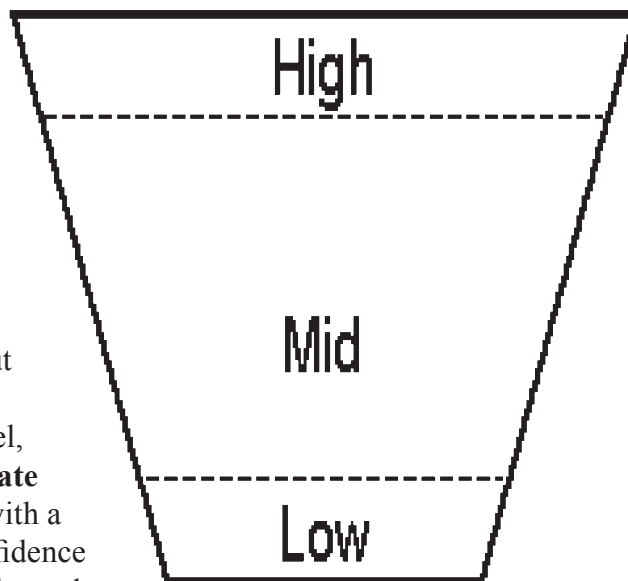
A speaker sustains the level when all the **functions** are performed **consistently**, all the time.

- High:** Performance at the floor exceeds the requirements for the level. Speakers show fluency and ease in the level to suggest they are already performing at the level above. Nevertheless, when challenged to perform the functions of the level above, they show patterns of weakness, moments in which they cannot sustain the functions of the level above.
- Mid:** Performance at the level is strong, showing good quantity and quality. Speakers perform the functions of the level with ease, fluency, and confidence. When challenged to the functions of the level above, speakers demonstrate some ability in those functions, but clearly do not have enough control of those functions to confuse the interviewer into thinking they belong to the level above.
- Low:** Performance at the level is weak but consistent, without breakdown into the level below. Speakers make a great effort to sustain the functions of the level. They show poor control of the details of the functions at the level, with lack of accuracy and fluency. Since all their efforts concentrate on not falling on the level below, when required to perform the functions of the level above, they show no development of those functions.

	Quantity and Quality at the floor	Function at the next level
High	Excellent. Performance exceeds the requirements for the level.	Almost always, with breakdown. Patterns of weakness. Cannot sustain the functions of the level above consistently.
Mid	Good quantity and quality. Performance is strong, with ease, fluency, and confidence.	A little, but not most of the time.
Low	Minimal. Performance is weak but without breakdown into level below. Great effort to sustain the functions of the level. Poor control of the details of the functions at the level, lack of accuracy and fluency.	No development of the functions of the level above.

Example:

Let's consider the difference in sublevels in the Intermediate. If, when checking the functions of the level while trying to establish the floor, there is evidence of breakdown, moments in which the speaker cannot sustain the functions of the level, this speaker has crossed the threshold to the level below: it is **Novice High**. If the functions of the Intermediate are sustained without breakdown into the level below, but with limited quantity and quality, and great effort to sustain the performance in the level, it is an **Intermediate Low**. The **Intermediate Mid** will show good quantity and quality with a strong performance, ease, fluency, and confidence in the functions of the level, but when challenged to the functions of the Advanced, control will be erratic, with some details of the Advanced, but not enough control to indicate that this speaker is Advanced. The **Intermediate High** speaker, as the Novice High, will show their performance at the level above almost always. The Intermediate High can perform the functions of the Advanced level, but not consistently. There will be patterns of weakness in the functions of the Advanced, showing that the speaker does not sustain the level consistently.



The Rating Scale and the Guidelines

Including the levels and sublevels, the rating scale has nine possible ratings, ranging from Novice-Low to Superior. The rating scale, described at length in the Guidelines, is the heart of the language proficiency interview. Interviewers should be familiar with the scale and the descriptors in the Guidelines. Refer to it before interviewing (as an aid to carry out an interview with a ratable sample) and after an interview (in order to give an appropriate rating).

Even the most experienced interviewers should read the descriptions carefully before giving a rating to an interview. The ratings should be considered as ranges rather than points on a scale. The description of proficiency at each level includes weaker and stronger performances over a wide range.

The oral interview is a proficiency test. The purpose of the language proficiency test is to evaluate the Volunteer's language performance to determine how well he or she is able to use the language effectively and appropriately in real-life situations. The interview is a test of functional language ability, not passive skills or knowledge about the language.

A proficiency test is curriculum free. It focuses exclusively on linguistic functional ability without regard to the place, length of time, or manner in which the person has learned the language.

Since a proficiency test does not cover any specified body of material, it is not possible to prepare for it. An oral proficiency interview will test everything a person knows about how to use the language by sampling his or her speech on a variety of topics at a number of levels of difficulty.

In a proficiency test, people will always be asked questions for which they are not prepared. This is because the interviewer's job is to get a sample of the best language of which the person is capable. The probes into linguistic areas for which the person is not prepared find the limits of a speaker's ability. However, in administering LPIs to Peace Corps Volunteers, topics related to their interests and experiences are emphasized.

Content of the Interview

While many LPI trainees ask trainers for a list of questions, trainers consistently have objected to provide a questionnaire to lead the interview. A list of questions could turn the LPI into an interrogation. The Peace Corps' multicultural audiences do not lend themselves to a prescribed list of questions, given that what can be useful in one cultural setting may not be as fruitful in another. Another argument against creating a fixed list of questions is that the Peace Corps test trainees and Volunteers at several stages of their stay in-country. Speakers could familiarize themselves with a predictable list of questions, which could make the LPI an invalid assessment.

The Rating Scale
Superior
Advanced High
Advanced Mid
Advanced Low
Intermediate High
Intermediate Mid
Intermediate Low
Novice High
Novice Mid
Novice Low

The oral interview is not a fixed series of questions; the topics and the questions asked vary from one interview to another in order to adapt to the level, particular cultural idiosyncrasies, and personal characteristics of the speaker. The interview is speaker-centered, but also varied and unpredictable in content. Follow up questions are based on the interests expressed by the speaker during the conversation. In this way, the speaker cannot know what topics the interviewer will introduce. The interview process is always centered on what the speaker can do. In turn, the Peace Corps speakers will prepare for the LPI by developing their proficiency and not by studying a predictable set of questions.

**In the LPI every question has a purpose.
If it does not have a purpose, we do not ask.**

Although the questions and the topics should be different from test to test, the functions will remain the same. As we have already stated, questions should lead to functions and, if the question does not lead to the function and the text type needed, it should not be asked. For example, if the interviewer is checking the functions of the Advanced level on the topic of the first visit to the market, asking what the speaker purchased is a question without a purpose, since it will provide a list of words, the text type of the Novice level. For the same reason, a question like: “What would you do if you inherited a million dollars?” is not a good question for the LPI. While the question elicits complex grammatical structures, it will elicit sentences (“I would give money to my family. I would buy a car. I would take a vacation.”). It will not inspire a speaker to develop complex ideas in the extended discourse of the Superior level. While the question is a good question for students to learn those structures in the classroom, it does not respond to the needs of the interview.

Preparation for the Interview

The speaker:

While the LPI is not an achievement test of the pre-service training competencies, the learning process fostered by the intensive immersion language program during pre-service training will prepare speakers to produce their best performance during the interview. A speaker cannot prepare ahead of time except by developing skills during class and while practicing in the community. In order to optimize performance, speakers are recommended to rest and relax, and speak as much as possible during the interview.

The interviewer:

While the speaker must be prepared to demonstrate language ability at his or her best, the interviewer must be prepared to elicit a speech sample. The energy level of the interviewer, and the enthusiasm projected, will have a direct impact on the speaker’s performance. Therefore, it is as important to the interviewer as to the speaker to be well rested and alert. The mental challenge of the interview process requires a high level of energy.

Administering the Interview

Equipment

All interviews should be tape-recorded. This permits the interviewer to listen again before deciding on a rating and allows a second interviewer to make an independent rating and confirm the original rating. There are instructional benefits in listening to the recorded samples. They can be used to monitor results and allow learners to observe their progress. By keeping these recordings, instructors are able to develop a databank for comparison and further training.

Environment

Establish a proper testing environment. Conduct LPis indoors in a quiet space. Since it is a face-to-face interview between two people, other people who may be waiting for their turn should not be present in the same room; this could distract the speaker from performing up to his or her best ability. Provide a comfortable seat for the speaker and make sure the tape recorder picks up the voice of the speaker as well as the interviewer's. If available, external microphones improve the quality of the recording. Avoid loud background noises, and plan the interview so there will be no telephone interruptions or interruptions from people knocking or entering. Have a clock or watch on hand for discrete timing.

Interview Protocol

Before administering an interview, make sure Volunteers have read the "The Peace Corps Language Proficiency Interview: Fact Sheet for Peace Corps Trainees and Volunteers." Distribute this handout at least one day before the interview, if possible, so they will know what to expect (see Appendix D).

Sit formally, facing each other. While this may seem unimportant, the formality and alertness represented in the positioning and posture will contribute to the speaker's performance. Use body language and the total physical expression of both interviewer and speaker to assist in the concentration and energy level.

Language instructors should not interview their own students if the ratings are to be used for any official purpose. If this situation cannot be avoided, do not rate by what is known about the student's ability from class. The rating must depend solely on the interview. If the results of the interview are to be used for an important decision, such as whether or not the person may remain in-country or may qualify for a certain job, make sure the interview is also rated by a second certified interviewer and any disagreement is resolved. Procedures for handling this situation will be discussed during the workshop.

How Much Have You Learned?

1. What is the language proficiency interview?
2. What is proficiency?
3. What is the difference between an achievement test and a performance test?
4. What is a ratable sample?
5. What are the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines?
6. What are the levels of the rating scale and the functions of each level?
7. What are the sublevels? What is the difference between sublevels?
8. Why is the interview speaker-centered?

The Interview Structure

The LPI is a highly structured conversation. The structure guides the interviewer (and a second rater, if necessary) in the quest for a clear assessment. It allows different interviewers to come to the same conclusions regarding the performance of the speaker. The structure guides the interviewer by directing the attention to what speakers can do consistently and what they cannot do all the time. This protocol, when followed, helps the interviewer to obtain a clearly ratable sample. The LPI is divided into five phases.

The Structure of the LPI			
Stage	Purpose	Psychological Aspect	Linguistic Aspect
Warm-Up	Begin the interview	Put the speaker at ease	Introduce the speaker to the language
Level Checks	Establish the floor	Demonstrate where the speaker can function consistently	Demonstrate consistent control
Probes	Establish the ceiling	Bring the speaker to breakdown	Demonstrate limited control
Role-Play	Real life situation with or without complication	Dramatize a situation	Can function as a level check or probe
Wind-Down	Close the interview	Bring the speaker to comfort level	Exit at a level of full control

Length of the Interview

The length of an interview varies, although in general, a Novice interview is shorter than an Intermediate interview and an Intermediate is shorter than the Advanced. The length of the interview varies due to the activities an interviewer needs to conduct in order to complete the interview. Level checks and the probes should take more time than the warm-up and the wind-down. The higher the speaker's proficiency level, the longer the interview is. Generally, a Novice interview lasts between 5-10 minutes; an Intermediate 10-15; an Advanced 15-20, and a Superior 20-25. While keeping track of time is important, the goal is to provide a ratable sample with enough variety of topics in order to make a clear assessment.

Tips for effective use of time:

- Keep the interview interesting and moving along in the stages of the interview.
- Ask clear, purposeful questions.
- Make every question count.

- Follow up on the same topic until all the functions on that topic are demonstrated.
- Once the functions are demonstrated in the topic, change to another topic and do not ask unnecessary questions.

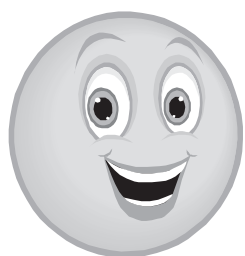
Why is it necessary to be so effective with time? While the main goal of the interview is not time effectiveness, time is of the utmost importance. Speakers begin interviews with a high level of energy and will tire and lose control as time goes by. Exhaustion may cause breakdown not related to linguistic ability. In order to guarantee the speaker's best performance, be as effective as possible with each question.

Help speakers sustain high energy during the interview by maintaining a high level of interest throughout. Explore topics of interest to the speaker and be speaker-oriented in all questions. Express interest in the answers and follow up on answers by asking more questions that give the opportunity to check more functions. Demonstrate interest by looking at the speaker and using body language. "Back channeling" is a helpful strategy to keep conversation moving naturally. Back channel in an interview by making sounds that do not interrupt the flow of the conversation but show interest and attention. Show interest by asking more questions on the topic.

Tips to maintain energy during the interview:

- Listen attentively
- Keep eye contact: look at the speaker when and if appropriate
- Back channel
- Use other verbal expressions of interest
- Follow up

Imagine the speaker's side of this conversation:



— *So you like helping people. Wow! I think that is great! Why do you like helping others?*

— *Hum! That is interesting! Aha?! Yes, yes...*

— *Oh!!!*

— *Can you give me an example of a situation in which you had the opportunity to help others?*

The Warm-Up

The warm-up consists of greetings and simple conversation easy for all but the least able speakers. This phase of the interview:

- puts the speaker at ease;
- reacquaints the speaker with the language, if necessary;

- gives the interviewer an idea of the topics of interest to the speaker; and
- gives the interviewer a preliminary indication of the speaker's level.

The preliminary indication must be confirmed, because many people answer questions at the level and in the style in which they are asked. Double check the preliminary indication in the next phase, the level checks. In fact, the rest of the interview will be devoted to determining whether this preliminary indication is accurate.

Tips for a positive warm-up.

- Make the speaker feel comfortable. Begin with some friendly words of introduction to put the speaker at ease.
- Begin with introductions and small talk to ease into the interview. Use high frequency expressions familiar to the speaker.
- Be warm and friendly but objective. Maintain the role of interviewer at all times.
- Do not speak about his or her previous training, instructors, or interviewers. This information is not necessary for this assessment.

Level Checks

The purpose of this phase is to find the highest level at which the speaker can sustain all the functions all the time. To find this level, the interviewer tests the full range of the speaker's ability in the functions of the level. Explore a variety of topics in order to confirm sustained control, no matter the topic.

The level indicated in the warm-up may be misleading. For this reason, the interviewer follows a procedure of level checks from one level to the next until finding the level in which the speaker cannot function all the time anymore. If the speaker demonstrates full and easy control of the functions of a level, the interviewer raises the level of the questions and begin the level checks at the next level, until either the floor is established at the Superior level, or the ceiling is reached, that is, the level in which the speaker cannot function any longer.

In the level checks, the interviewer checks the functions of each level in a variety of topics to see if the speaker can perform consistently. While checking the functions, the interviewer checks all the elements of the assessment criteria to confirm that these functions are carried out at the level. When the speaker successfully passes a series of level checks, this performance provides a floor to the rating. The next phase aims at finding the ceiling.

The **floor** establishes the highest level of sustained linguistic performance of the speaker.

Probes

Probes confirm the floor by demonstrating the speaker's control at the level above. The absence of full control confirms the maximum level of ability. To probe, the interviewer takes the person one level above the floor (confirmed during the level checks) several times in different ways. If this phase is successful, every speaker should leave the testing room feeling he or she has been tested to the maximum limit of his or her ability. An interviewer should never probe beyond one level above the floor.

Alternate Level Checks and Probes

While the process of finding the floor is an ascending process, going from one level to the next higher level until breakdown is found, probing is alternated with level checks. The purpose to alternate level checks and probes is psychological as well as linguistic. Maintaining the speaker at the level of linguistic breakdown for too long may cause more breakdown than necessary and may cause the interviewer to produce breakdown in areas where the speaker once had shown full control. In order to avoid coming to a level of psychological breakdown, be attentive to possible signs of impending linguistic breakdown. These may be oral as well as physical responses signaling that the speaker is coming to the level at which linguistic ability is stretched to the maximum.

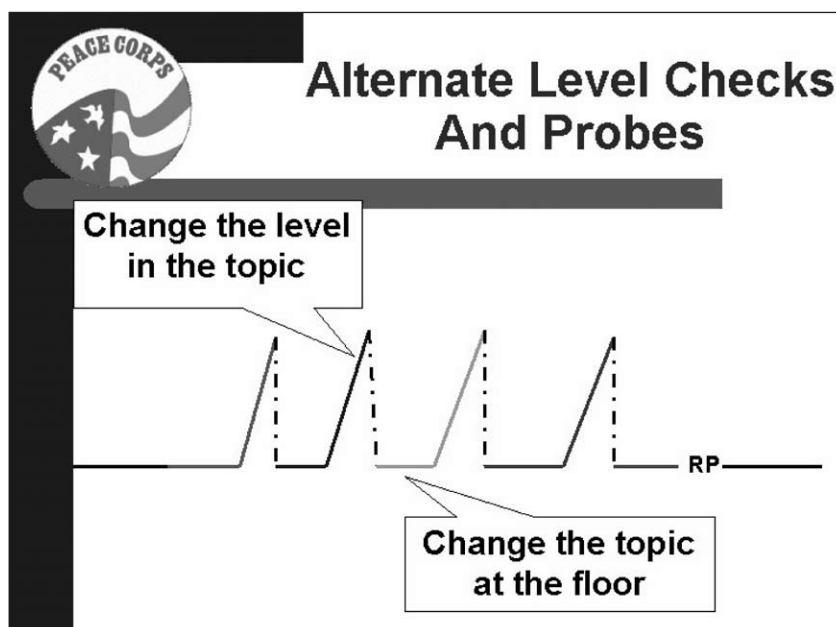
Signs of breakdown	
No response	The speaker resorts to silence or talks about something else.
Bad structures/ lost of control	The linguistic structures begin to fail.
Hesitation	The speaker begins to express doubts about what he is saying or how to say it.
Self-correction	The speaker begins to doubt the structures in use, sometime choosing the wrong one.
Reduction of speed	The speaker slows down to think more about the correct way to express a thought.
Dramatization gestures / dialogue	When language fails, physical demonstrations may appear.
Stop	The speaker may stop the conversation without finishing the thought or idea.
False starts	After stopping, the speaker may want to begin the explanation in a different way or make a new attempt to answer the question with another language.

Once the speaker gets to a of emotional breakdown, it may be difficult to restore the speaker's ability to function fully. The speaker may feel frustrated and have a sense of failure. These emotional responses to linguistic breakdown can have a negative effect in the interview. While we want to demonstrate linguistic breakdown, we want to be careful not to cause psychological breakdown.

Caution: Once the interviewer has evidence of breakdown and has demonstrated clearly that the speaker does not sustain the level on the topic, the next step is to come down to the floor to restore the speakers' functional ability on the floor. To restore functional ability, change

the topic at the floor, establish the floor with level checks, and then spiral the topic to the functions of the ceiling.

This process of alternating level checks and probes is called the **iterative process**. The speaker moves from full control to breakdown in a variety of topics to confirm there are patterns of weakness in the performance of the speaker. One breakdown in one topic does not provide enough information about the level of control of the speaker. A repetition of the movement from level checks to probes, to level checks, and then probes again is necessary.



How to Change Topics

Follow the structure of the LPI to explore a topic on the floor and, once the level checks demonstrate sustained control of the functions of the level, change the level on the same topic by spiraling or raising the level on the topic by looking to a function of the next level. This results in a more complex function within a topic where the speaker demonstrates full control on the level below. Once the breakdown is demonstrated, the discussion of this topic is complete and a new topic should be explored at the floor. After the floor is established, spiral to the level above on the new topic. Never probe more than one level above the floor while looking for evidence of breakdown.

The **ceiling** is one level above the floor. Once the ceiling is demonstrated, there is no need to explore other higher levels.

Just as the level checks show what a speaker can do, the probes show what the speaker cannot do. Without this phase of the interview, speakers may appear to be more proficient than they really are. The probes allow an interviewer to explain why a person's speech is not at a higher level, providing diagnostic information with specific examples.

During the Level Checks and Probes

- Listen carefully. Let the speaker talk. Do not interrupt. All comments should be made to increase or direct the speaker’s speech.
- Act interested in the speaker and his or her experiences. This is the best encouragement. Maintain eye contact when culturally appropriate. Body language, as well as words, will reflect the interviewer’s interest. Avoid looking distracted or bored. The speaker will perceive the lack of interest and will be less willing to talk.
- Rate speakers only on the language with which they express their thoughts, not on the validity or agreement with their ideas. Do not behave as an authority, e.g., “I don’t think you understand our culture. The truth is . . .” The interview is about the speaker’s linguistic abilities, not about personal agreement with the speaker’s opinions.
- Follow up every clue leading to an area of interest.
- Find out what the speaker can do, as well as what they cannot do all the time.
- Do not inhibit the person by correcting grammar during the test.
- Include a situation (role-play) in all Intermediate and Advanced interviews. The situations can serve as either level checks or probes.

Role-Play

Even when the role-play is not an obligatory phase for all interviews, it is a very important stage of the interview for most cases. This part of the interview provides an opportunity to develop a real-life situation with the purpose of checking functions more difficult to elicit without a situation. One clear example is asking questions for Intermediate level speakers. Most Intermediate level role-plays provide the opportunity for the speakers to ask questions and participate in a social transaction without complications. These two functions are necessary in order to complete an Intermediate level interview and are easily completed with a role-play.

When the role-play is required	
Superior	Optional
Advanced High	
Advanced Mid	Required
Advanced Low	
Intermediate High	
Intermediate Mid	
Intermediate Low	
Novice High	
Novice Mid	No
Novice Low	

The role-play will not be necessary at the Novice Low or Novice Mid because the speaker has already shown he or she cannot function in a real-life situation. A role-play will be too difficult and will produce too much breakdown. On the other hand, speakers at the Advanced High and Superior level will not need a role-play because they have already demonstrated they can function in the language as a full participant in the conversation. The tasks of the role-play may already be demonstrated, or there will be other important and lengthy functions

needing more time and attention. Use the role-play at the Superior and Advanced High as a way to explore another topic at the Superior level, or as a way to look for other sociolinguistic elements of the level, such as formal contexts, discourse, etc.

The role-play can function as a level check (to demonstrate a function of the floor), or a probe (to demonstrate once more that the speaker cannot sustain the functions of the ceiling). The interviewer selects the situation based on the function needed and the appropriateness of the topic suggested in the role-play cards.

The Role-Play Cards

There are 30 role-play cards. They are divided in three groups, and each color represents a different level: Intermediate (light blue), Advanced (yellow), and Superior (green) confirm color with Jacky. The text of the cards is included in this manual as Appendix B. At the Intermediate level, most cards invite a social transaction without complication, and require speakers to ask questions. The Advanced level role-plays request a narration of a story, and the solution of a social transaction with a complication. These situations do not require asking questions, they ask speakers to tell a story from beginning to end, report an event and handle a situation requiring higher level skills. The Superior level cards are proposals of a complex topic of discussion, or a formal situation in a formal context, so the speaker shows the ability (or the limitations in ability) to develop a topic in a formal environment.

All the functions of the floor must be demonstrated in order to have a ratable sample.

Present the role-play to the speaker in English and make sure it is appropriate to the life and work of the Volunteers in the country in which they work. Role-play situations should also be culturally sensitive. The post or interviewers in each country should review the content of each situation in order to make sure that they are culturally appropriate and relevant for the local context. For example, a situation about missing a train at a post where there is no train will be less helpful if this is not part of the Volunteers' daily life. If there are some role-plays that are not relevant, replace them.

In order to prepare rich role-plays, create situations that will allow the speaker to address as many functions as possible. For example, an Intermediate level role-play that encourages the speaker to greet a person, ask questions and negotiate a price, is a better role-play than a situation that only requests the greeting.

Protocol of the Role-Play

There are several stages in the execution of the role-play.

Introduction. This may be done in the local language or English, depending on the level of comprehension of the speaker. Because the purpose of this part is to make the speaker understand the task at hand, use the most efficient way to make the speaker understand what is expected.


Read the card. Give the speaker the opportunity to read the card aloud.

Assign parts. Once the speaker understands the situation, assign the parts so there is no confusion on who is doing what.

Begin the action. Initiate the role-play by beginning the action. Once the speaker is participating in the activity, allow him or her to take control of the situation and handle the activity accordingly.

Complete the social transaction. The role-play is finished when the social transaction proposed in the card is complete. Do not lose sight of the goals during the role-play. Intermediate situations should be simple transactions without complication; Advanced situations should present a complication.

Closure. End the situation leaving no doubt the activity is finished and the interview is continuing out of the role-play. Take the cards and put them aside. Use body language to demonstrate the next question is not related to the role-play. Express it verbally, as well, so there is no confusion.



Protocol

- Interviewer:
 - *Now we are going to do something different. I am going to give you a situation so that we can do a little drama. Read it aloud for the recording*
- Assign roles
 - *¿Do you understand the situation? I am going to play the part of the _____ and you will be the _____.*
- The interviewer initiates the action
 - *Let's begin. "Hello! How can I help you?"*
- Allow that the interviewee take control and do the activities requested in the card
- End: Close the situation in such a way that the interviewee understands that the role play is finished.
 - Take the card and put it away
 - *We have finished with the situation and we are almost finished with the interview. Now I would like to know....*

Note: Except when role-plays are presented, do not work from any prepared written questions. Likewise, avoid taking notes or making any written notations during the interview. This will interrupt the flow of conversation and distract the speaker.

Wind-Down

This phase should leave the speaker with a feeling of accomplishment or success after stretching speaking ability to the limit. Normally, the wind-down should return to the floor. It is helpful, particularly at the lowest levels, to end the test by returning briefly to a topic discussed previously. Take your time in order to move the speaker to a comfort level and to a sense of accomplishment. At the Novice level, this is almost impossible to attain, but as much as possible, make sure that the speaker can do something before you close the conversation. Of course, it is always appropriate to close by thanking the speaker for the interview.

How Much Have You Learned?

1. What are the five stages of the interview and the purpose of each stage?
2. How can a tester keep a high energy level during the interview?
3. Why is it a good practice to follow up on the information presented by the speaker?
4. How does a speaker demonstrate breakdown?
5. Why is it necessary to alternate level checks and probes?
6. What is the protocol of the role-play?
7. Why is it necessary to do a wind-down?

The Assessment Criteria

Although the process of assessment is done after the interview is over, interviewers must keep assessment in mind while they are interviewing. The five elements of the assessment criteria serve as a short guide to a good structure and a ratable sample (see page 39 for a chart of the elements). The five elements serve as an easy-to-remember outline to assess the speaker's performance while going through the interview. While listening and processing, try to elicit them from the speaker. The criteria will guide the way to a complete interview.

Five elements to assess speaking.

- Functions: What the speaker can do with the language
- Content: Topics of conversation
- Context: Formal or informal environment in which the speaker can function appropriately
- Accuracy: Level of comprehensibility for a specific audience
- Text Type: Extension and complexity of speech

When interviewing and rating, the interviewer considers all these elements. If a speaker sustains the characteristics of the level consistently, all the elements of the criteria must be present consistently throughout the interview. If one element is missing or not clearly demonstrated, evaluating the interview becomes more difficult and sometimes impossible.

Functions

As we have seen, the most important element is **function**. Functions are the tasks that the speaker performs during the interview.

Functions are like a trunk in a tree: they sustain all the elements of the assessment criteria.



Proficiency means functional ability, and it is demonstrated through the interview in the functions the speaker is asked to perform. Functions refer to what a speaker can do with the language. (See chart next page.) Typical functions include asking questions, giving information, narrating, describing, persuading, speculating, etc. The importance of functions is emphasized through this manual because functions are expressed in contexts and contents, with accuracy on a certain text type. For example, questioning is a language function used in order to take part as a full participant in a conversation. Because this is a function that can be performed in contexts both formal and informal, and in sentences, it is defined as a function of the Intermediate level.

Functions

Superior	Handles abstract topics and situations, supports opinions, hypothesizes
Advanced	Can get into, through, and out of situations with a complication, narrates, describes, explains, compares and discusses in past, present, and future time/major aspect frames
Intermediate	Creates with language and maintains simple conversations, asks and answers questions, can get into, through, and out of simple social and/or transactional situations
Novice	Produces formulaic utterances and lists, but shows no functional ability

Content

The content refers to the topics of conversation addressed in the interview. The content is the element that varies the most, because it depends on the interests and experience of the speaker as well as the range of vocabulary and expressions a speaker knows. At the lower levels, the content is usually restricted to predictable common vocabulary and autobiographical information; at the higher levels, it covers a wide range of both familiar and unfamiliar topics. For example, to demonstrate a speaker’s ability to perform the Advanced level functions of narrating and describing in past and future, the interviewer can ask about the training a speaker had for his or her job, how the first day was, the speaker’s plans for the future; or request an anecdote of the first driving lesson, how did it felt, an accident experienced and how it will feel living in-country without a car. In both cases, the function—narration and description in past and future—is the same, but the content is different.

Content

Superior	Expression and defense of opinions about current events and other topics Practical, social, professional, and abstract topics Particular interests and special fields of competence
Advanced	Concrete topics going beyond self and community, family, extending to work, community, and current events
Intermediate	Everyday topics, such as self, home, family, interests, and leisure or recreation Daily routine, familiar surroundings Routine travel needs
Novice	Minimum courtesy requirements and high frequency, formulaic, mostly memorized expressions, basic objects, months, body parts, numbers, situations, colors, time, clothing, weather, date, weekdays, family members, year, foods

Context

Language functions are carried out in a variety of contents within a specific context—with the family, at a party, with the best friend, at work, with the governor, at a public event or in a public confrontation. These contexts range from the most informal and friendly to the most formal and sometimes antagonistic. Linguistic ability is affected by the social circumstance within which a topic is being discussed. It is not the same to thank your mother for a well-cooked dinner as it is to publicly thank the community members for participating in a fundraising effort. These contexts or settings can range from informal daily situations to formal situations or circumstances.

At the lower levels, a setting might center on the description of one's own family to friends. At the higher levels, the discussion might center on differences in family structure in different cultures, in the context of a job interview. Language functions are always carried out within a specific context. As the interview progresses, the context moves from the friendly conversation where the interviewer is a sympathetic listener (one who supports and understands as meaning is expressed) to normal communication with an unsympathetic listener (the interviewer who does not assist and expects the speaker to provide all the meaning) to the discussion of issues with a formal interviewer (who expects intelligent and thoughtful ideas).

Context

Superior	Most formal and informal settings	Formal interviewer
Advanced	Most informal and some formal settings	Unsympathetic listener
Intermediate	Some informal settings and a limited number of transactional situations	Sympathetic listener
Novice	Most common informal settings	Very sympathetic listener

Accuracy

Accuracy refers to the precision, quality, and acceptability of the message spoken by the speaker. There are six elements considered in the concept of accuracy.

- **Grammar:** the mastery of structure and syntax.
- **Vocabulary:** the lexical terms at the disposal of a speaker.
- **Fluency:** the facility and rate of speech.
- **Pronunciation:** the way in which sounds are produced; refers to the phonology of the language.

- **Sociolinguistic ability:** competency in using idiomatic expressions and other linguistic devices appropriate to the culture of the language, such as filling in pauses for thinking time and being able to adapt the style and tone of language to the circumstances.
- **Comprehensibility:** the ability of the speaker to use vocabulary, fluency, pronunciation, and sociolinguistic ability.

All these elements contribute to make it possible to understand what the speaker says. The higher a speaker's accuracy with language, the higher the comprehensibility will be. The variation of these elements of accuracy ranges from a speaker at the Novice level, whose accuracy may be so low as to be incomprehensible, to a Superior speaker, whose accuracy is so high to make miscommunication rare.

Text Type

Text type is the amount of language produced. The amount and quality of text type produced relates directly to the ability of the speaker to express complex thoughts. The Novice speaker will be limited to very brief utterances and simplified ideas, while the Superior speaker will be able to express complex thoughts and detailed ideas through extended discourse. Text type is also related to the role of the speaker. A Novice speaker is reactive and passive; an Intermediate speaker reacts to questions and statements of the interviewer; and an Advanced speaker participates fully in the conversation. (Please refer to the table on page 40.)

Text Type

Superior	Link paragraphs into extended discourse
Advanced	Link sentences into paragraph-length speech patterns
Intermediate	Discrete sentences
Novice	Isolated words and phrases; lists

While different languages will define the notion of text type in different ways, the following elements of conversation—isolated words, sentences, paragraphs, and extended discourse—will help you determine the text type a speaker is able to produce.

Isolated words: Elements of minimal discourse, associated with memorized material without complete meaning.

Example:



Speaker: Coffee. Brown. Good!

Interviewer (thinking): *Does he like brown coffee?
Does he want the coffee with brown sugar?
Does he want coffee without milk?
I do not understand!*



Sentences: Utterances with a complete thought or message. Sentences may be isolated, connected, or in strings. While the message conveyed by these groups of words begins to be comprehensible, they still do not represent the cohesiveness of the paragraph.

Example:



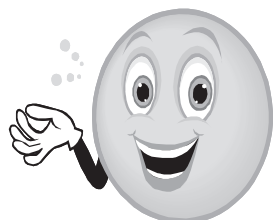
Speaker: My typical day?
I wake up. It is six o'clock. I eat breakfast. I go to work. I work very much. I like it! In the night, I go to sleep at nine o'clock. I am tired.

Interviewer (thinking): *And ... , after ... , because ... ,
but ... , so ... , then ... ,
No connection! Let me add ...*



Paragraph: A group of sentences internally organized to provide one complete idea. These sentences are connected to each other to elaborate and detail one message. The sentences are strategically organized in sequence to give relevance and order to its different elements. Grammatically, the paragraph is defined by the use of connectors and expressions linking one sentence to the next.

Example:



Speaker: My typical day? I have a very busy day. First, I wake up at six o'clock because I need to leave my house by seven. I do not have time to eat breakfast, so I go to work where I may have a cup of coffee. All day I am running from one office to another, preparing documents and materials needed by my boss. It is very hectic all day long with so many assignments. Finally, after a long day at work, I come home to rest. Then I go to bed and fall asleep immediately because I am very tired!

Extended discourse: A set of paragraphs elaborating a complex thought by bringing into consideration a variety of ideas to demonstrate one point. The speaker demonstrates enough linguistic ability to develop an argument, give detail and explanations to support opinion and hypothesize. This group of paragraphs is organized to clearly present a point and persuade.

Example:



Speaker: There is no such thing as a typical day. The world is filled with so many variables that, even when we try, it is not possible to replicate one day from the other. And why would any individual want to repeat the events of a boring day? ...

Elements of Accuracy According to Level						
Level	Grammar	Vocabulary	Fluency	Pronunciation	Sociolinguistic Ability	Comprehensibility
Superior	Occasional errors in low frequency and complex structures, no patterns of error	Broad vocabulary and a variety of communicative strategies	Ability to link paragraphs and speak with ease	Never interferes with meaning	Appropriate idiomatic expressions and cultural references	Errors rarely interfere with communication or distract the native speaker from the message
Advanced	Handles elementary constructions accurately most of the time, but does not have thorough control; some more complex structures	Ability to use general vocabulary for general interest topics and circumlocution	Able to link sentences into paragraphs by using connectors with only occasional grasping for words	Generally comprehensible	Some idiomatic expressions and cultural references	Understood without difficulty by speakers unaccustomed to dealing with foreigners
Intermediate	Evidence of accuracy in elementary constructions, but only partial control	Ability to use vocabulary related primarily to immediate environment and self	May evidence considerable groping and usually speaks in discrete or isolated sentences	Errors frequent but generally comprehensible to a sympathetic listener used to dealing with foreigners	Able to use some common expressions of courtesy and social relations	Understood, with some repetition, by speakers accustomed to dealing with foreigners
Novice	No functional ability	Rote utterances and memorized material	Extremely limited	Some intelligibility expected	None	May be difficult to understand, even for speakers accustomed to dealing with foreigners

Elements of the Assessment Criteria				
Proficiency Level	Global Tasks and Functions	Context/Content	Accuracy	Text Type
Superior	Discuss topics extensively, support opinions and hypothesize. Deal with a linguistically unfamiliar situation.	Most formal and informal settings. Wide range of general interest topics and some special fields of interest and expertise.	No pattern of errors in basic structures. Errors rarely interfere with communication or distract the native speaker from the message.	Extended discourse
Advanced	Narrate and describe in major time frames and deal effectively with an unanticipated complication.	Most informal and some formal settings. Topics of personal and general interest.	Understood without difficulty by speakers unaccustomed to dealing with foreigners.	Paragraphs
Intermediate	Create with language, initiate, maintain, and bring to a close simple conversations by asking and responding to simple questions.	Some informal settings and a limited number of transactional situations. Predictable, familiar topics related to daily activities.	Understood, with some repetition, by speakers accustomed to dealing with foreigners.	Discrete sentences
Novice	Communicate minimally with formulaic and rote utterances, lists and phrases.	Most common informal settings. Most common aspects of daily life.	May be difficult to understand, even for speakers accustomed to dealing with foreigners.	Individual words and phrases

How Much Have You Learned?

1. What are the five elements of the assessment criteria?
2. What are the contents and contexts of each level?
3. What is the difference between speaking with memorized material and creating with the language?
4. How is accuracy defined in the language proficiency interview?
5. What is the text type for each level?
6. What is the difference between text type at the Novice and the Intermediate level?
7. What is the difference between a paragraph and extended discourse?

Obtaining a Ratable Sample of Speech

The objective of the interview is to obtain a ratable sample. In order to get a ratable sample, the interviewer must elicit good answers with as much speech as possible. The sample must be substantial enough to allow the interviewer (or a second rater, if necessary) to make a reliable rating decision. The best guide to an accurate rating is the interview structure.

Important Terms

Ceiling: The next level above the floor where the speaker demonstrates that control cannot be sustained consistently. The amount of breakdown may vary depending on the control of the functions on the next level. These limitations of control also contribute to provide information about the sublevel.

Elicitation: As the conversation progresses, the interviewer directs the conversation so the speaker provides the information **and** the sample of speech needed in order to make an assessment. The interviewer provides **prompts** to encourage the speaker to move in the direction needed. The elicitation techniques of the interviewer will encourage speech. Some characteristics of good elicitation are:

- Conversational style
- Questions with purpose
- Follow up
- Good transitional techniques
- Response to the speaker's interests
- Encouragement to talk

A prompt is a sound, statement, or question that invites a response.

Floor: The level at which the speaker can function without breakdown to the level below. The functional ability demonstrated is consistent throughout the interview. The mistakes made by the speaker do not reflect on the performance of the functions of the level, but may be reflective of the quality of control and, therefore, provide information about the sublevel.

Ratable sample: The set of responses stimulated by questions from the interviewer. The responses provide sufficient information for the interviewer to define the floor and the ceiling.

Elicitation

There are a variety of techniques that an interviewer can use to prompt or elicit speech from the speaker. The first and most important is to listen carefully to what the speaker says. This is a challenge for an interviewer, since, while participating in the interview by asking appropriate questions, the interviewer needs to make an assessment of the sample produced by the answers.

While listening and processing, ask the following questions:

What am I hearing?	Think of the elements of the assessment criteria.
What else do I need to complete the sample?	Check that all the functions and variety of topics of the floor are complete.
Where do I go from here to get what I need?	If something is missing, plan to get what is needed.

While formulating questions:

Are my questions open-ended?	Open-ended questions invite the text type and elaboration of complete tasks. Closed questions do not provide enough information for the assessment.
Do they target the functions and corresponding text type?	If a narration is needed, ask for the full story; if paragraphs are needed, invite more development of ideas.

The interviewer's behavior has a direct connection with the speaker's behavior and how much they talk:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exhibit positive interviewer behaviors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid "teacher behaviors."
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The LPI is highly structured, but feels like a conversation. Every question should elicit a ratable sample while the speaker receives the sense of an informal conversation. Each question in an interview has one or more purpose. Questions without a purpose lead to an unratable sample, no matter how much speech the speaker may produce in response. When each question has a purpose, the chances of obtaining an adequate ratable sample in an efficient interview are increased.

Elicitation Techniques

The goal of the interviewer is to conduct the interview so that the speaker is less aware of the testing context and more interested in conveying a message about personal life and the surrounding world without awareness of the language structures in use. The speaker who concentrates on the message demonstrates control over form without thinking about it. This is another reason not to include grammar questions or other questions that involve issues other than function. While grammar is considered for the assessment, the speaker should concentrate on the content and context of the function and not on the learning process that took place up to this point.

The challenge for the LPI interviewer is to avoid the interrogatory mode while developing the interview. The LPI should not function as a questionnaire where questions are fired and answered. Topics should be developed to elicit different functions before they are abandoned, and, when necessary, spiraled from one level to the other. Because the interview is adaptive and interactive, the questions and the flow of the interview should reflect the flexibility based on the functional ability of the speaker, and the continuous relationship between the interviewer and the speaker.

The **level of complexity** of the question will vary
according to the stage of the interview.

Warm-Up Questions

Warm-up questions initiate the interview and acquaint the speaker with the testing environment. The interviewer should assume that a conversation is going to take place, so instead of starting at the Novice level (where there is no functional ability), the conversation should start at the Intermediate. Still, questions should be easy, simple, and with the purpose of making the speaker comfortable. Use this time as an opportunity to learn about the speaker and gather some background information in order to continue the conversation.

Level Checks and Probes

These questions increase in complexity and variety as the interview progresses.

There are three general ways to elicit the speaker's participation in an interview:

- General comments inciting the speaker to express thoughts or ask questions
- Questions
- Role-play

General Comments

During every interview, there are instances to stimulate a speaker with a small comment that triggers the flow of conversation without too much participation from the interviewer. When these moments occur, a good interviewer learns to take advantage and steer the conversation in a productive direction. The interviewer will know through experience and the context of the conversation when these incidental comments are appropriate and effective.

Imagine the following scenario:

Interviewer: Tell me about your summer job.

Speaker: I work in a zoo helping in the research with wild animals.

Interviewer: Oh! That must be a dangerous job!

Speaker: Not really. I never touch the animals. I only clean their cages when they are out. And then I prepare their food and leave it ready. I do not feed the animals. There is another person to do that.



Another scenario:

Interviewer: What is your favorite place for vacations?

Speaker: Definitely London.

Interviewer: Really! I lived in London for three years.

Speaker: Where? Do you like London? Do you know Piccadilly Circle?



In these situations, the speaker feels compelled to make comments or to ask questions without the interviewer requesting them directly. The interviewer opens the door for the speaker's participation. There are infinite possibilities to this type of elicitation. When the speaker takes the initiative to provide the functions needed for the assessment with no apparent prodding from the interviewer, elicitation is usually positive.

Questions

The most effective way to get speakers talking is by asking questions. In order to make the best use of the speaker's time and energy, every question must have a purpose.

If the question has no purpose, **do not ask!**

Every question should invite the speaker to provide open discourse with as much detail as possible. A good question reveals a function as well as the text type the speaker generates in the answer. If the cause of the brief speech was the question, a speaker cannot be penalized in the assessment.

Questions to Avoid

Type of closed question	Example	Reason
Yes-no	Do you like movies?	Text elicited: isolated word
Cloze questions (a question that requires a specific answer)	You wash your hands with soap and ____?	Text elicited: isolated word
Specific vocabulary	What do you use to write a letter?	Text elicited: isolated word
Translations	What does that word mean?	Text elicited: isolated word
Proper names, numbers, etc.	What are your parents' names?	Proper names do not provide information about the speaker's ability with the language
Either/or questions	Do you live in an apartment or in a house?	Interviewer provided all vocabulary necessary
Lists of verbs	What did you do at the beach?	Text elicited: isolated words

At times, you may want to direct the speaker with an introductory question. This gives the lower level speakers an opportunity to switch topics at a slower pace. These same questions can function as an ice breaker to lead the speaker into more speech: *Do you live in an apartment or in a house? Can you describe your house?* This consideration will not be necessary for more fluent speakers. In such case, a closed question does not have a function and should not be asked. A more efficient way to direct this conversation may be to go directly to the second question: *Please describe the place where you live. What is it like?* This last alternative gets to the question that provides ratable material more quickly.

The most useful question encourages the speaker to clearly demonstrate a function. The rule of thumb to follow in the selection of topics is to choose a topic of interest to the speaker. If the speaker is interested, the effort on the part of the interviewer to encourage speech is minimal, while a topic of no interest to the speaker requires more effort from the interviewer to maintain the interview flow and the participation of the speaker.

Concentrate on the **speaker's interests**; not yours.

Following the structure of the interview, questions can function in different categories:

Introductory/Transitional Questions

Introductory or transitional questions initiate the discussion of a topic. These questions serve as a transition from the previous topic to the new one and bring the speaker from breakdown at the ceiling to full performance at the floor. The transition phrases assist smooth movement from one topic to another.

Transitional Phrases

You mentioned that ...

I know you ... Can you explain...?

So, you studied biology in the university. What kind of courses ...

This topic you mention makes me think about ...

Follow-Up Questions/Level Checks

A follow-up question directs the speaker to expand, elaborate, or clarify information in the same level as the introductory question. These questions allow the interviewer to demonstrate quantity and quality at the level and provide the speaker with opportunities to demonstrate his or her general proficiency within the topic. Their goal is to demonstrate the floor.

On the topic of the training program:

Tell me about a typical training day for you.

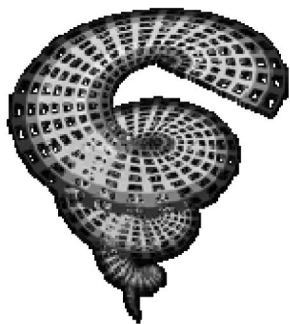
So, what about after training and on the weekends?

You mentioned that you really like learning about small business. Why is that?

Follow-up questions are on the same level. They are level checks that expand and ask for elaboration or clarification on the same topic.

Spirals/Probes

Spirals and probes are questions that move the interview from one level to the next higher level without changing the topic. You increase the level of the functions by remaining in the same topic to increase the level of difficulty of the task but not the topic area of vocabulary. Change the function but not the topic.



On the topic of work in the community:

You mentioned that you work in this community.

(Intermediate) Tell me more about your project.

(Intermediate) What do you like best about it?

(Advanced) What was involved in selecting this community?

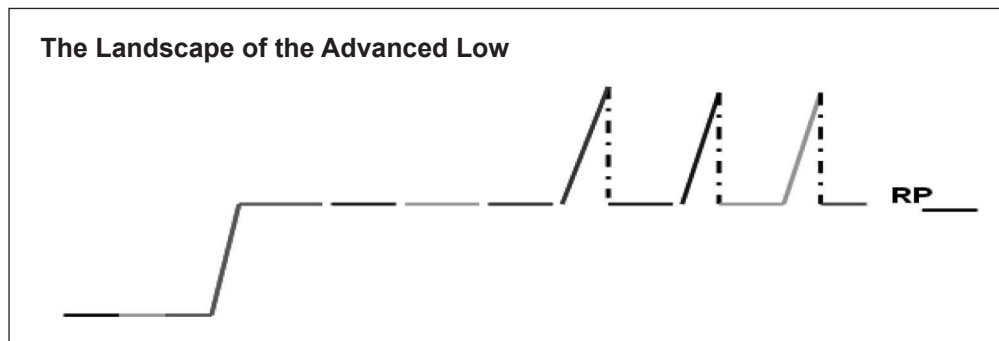
(Advanced) Can you tell me about the first few days at work?

(Advanced) ...and your plans for next project?

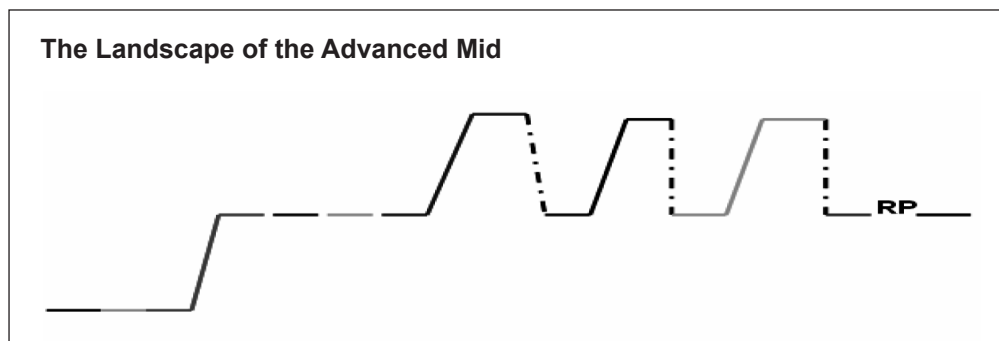
Spiral questions change the function while maintaining the same topic.

The spiral question may bring two possible outcomes: a new floor or breakdown. If the speaker is able to function fully in the new floor, follow up on the topic with the functions of the new level until the new floor is established. Once full control is demonstrated on

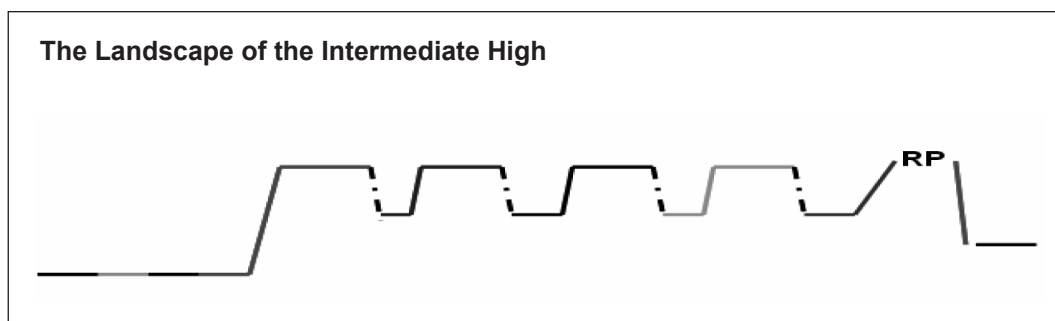
that topic, explore other topics at the new level to demonstrate consistency of control in a variety of topics. Explore all the functions in the level and, once the new floor level has been established, spiral the last topic into the next level.



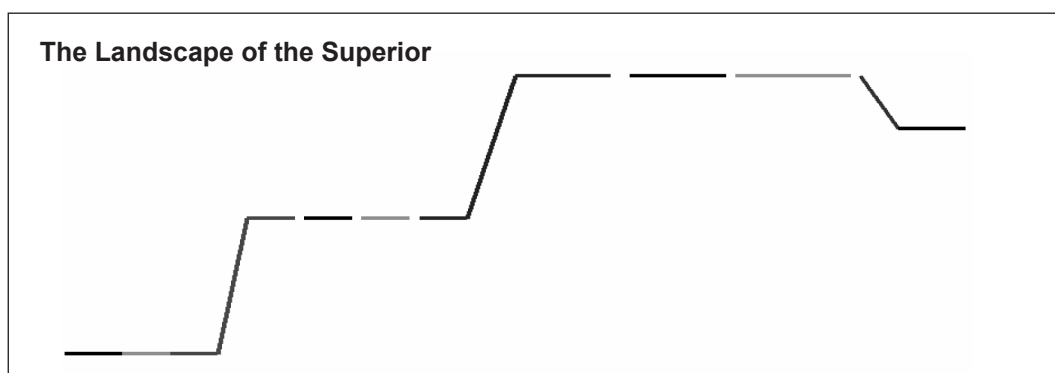
If the spiral resulted in breakdown, the ceiling is established. After demonstrating the level of functional ability at the next level, return to the floor by changing the topic in an introductory question. The decision whether to follow up or change topics is based on the level of control over the functions at the ceiling. If the speaker cannot function at all, the breakdown signals to change the topic and go back to level checks on the floor below. At that time, check for quantity and quality at the floor and spend time considering the sublevel (Low or Mid?) before the next spiral. If the speaker shows partial control, follow up at the ceiling in order to observe if the speaker controls the functions most of the time. If that is not the case, change topic and level check to confirm quantity and quality at the floor (Mid or High?). If the speaker shows control most of the time, introduce another topic on the floor and spiral into another probe soon to show consistency of control (High?).



A speaker who shows good control of the functions of the next level may be in the process of establishing a new floor. It will be necessary to explore the **consistent** control of the functions of the level, in this case. If there are moments in which this speaker demonstrates lack of control, it is a High of the level below. This speaker shows the ability to function at the next level, but not consistently. Most of the features of the next level are demonstrated, but not all the time. This lack of consistency must be taken in account to decide that the speaker is not of the level yet.



Given the needs of this profile, most of the iterative process should be spent on probes, at the ceiling, to demonstrate the level of consistency at the ceiling. The good quality and quantity of the floor will be clearly demonstrated in the first stages of the interview and in the level checks. What is in question is the level of control at the next level so more time should be spent there. Once the floor is established, there is no need to revisit the level below.



The Role-Play

The role-play is the only predesigned question. The cards indicate a specific course of action to unavoidably elicit the function, content, context, and text type necessary. (See page 28 for more comments.)

The Wind-Down

After the role-play, there is still one more stage to complete, and the interview is incomplete without it. The wind-down functions like a period of cooling down before completing an exercise routine. By bringing the speaker back to questions at the floor or below, the speaker can leave the interview with a sense of accomplishment and “can do” that will result in a more positive attitude toward the interview experience.

Never let a speaker finish the interview at the level of breakdown.

Topics of Conversation

While there are no rules about which topics to discuss in the interview, there are some principles to follow regarding the choice of topics.

- **Address topics of interest to the speaker.** The speaker-centered interview quickly engages the speaker.
- **Avoid sensitive topics.** Any topic can become sensitive if the speaker is emotionally involved. A topic that is emotionally loaded can damage the interview if it causes emotional breakdown that affects the speaker's performance. The simplest topic, regardless of the level, can become a sensitive topic, so be alert to the speaker's reactions. For example, a death in the family can make the topic of the family inappropriate for the interview if it imposes other challenges to the speaker. When confronted with such a situation, change the topic immediately and proceed with a safer question.
- **Avoid the "hothouse special."** Topics frequently practiced may give a false sense of the sustained functional ability. This is a major reason to address different topics during the interview. There are topics that may damage the interview because, by addressing them, the interviewer may lose control of the interview: the speaker talks too much and the material provided does not assist in the assessment. One such topic can be religion. Because many religious people have strong feelings about their beliefs and may preach frequently on the topic, the level of proficiency in the topic may seem higher than the level demonstrated on topics such as working at home or daily routine. While the hothouse special may give more text, the information gathered on this topic may mislead the rating. If there is a sense that the speaker has repeated a topic too frequently, change the topic.
- **The Peace Corps as a topic of conversation may be a hothouse special.** A Volunteer's life is constantly submerged in that topic, so use it sparingly. For example, Volunteers working with an HIV/AIDS project talk about the causes of the disease frequently. While it is important to explore a speaker's interests and work, present the topics from different perspectives. This will prevent speakers from reproducing memorized material.
- **Topics to avoid.** Any topic that may cause discomfort to the speaker or to the interviewer should be avoided at all times. This applies to culturally sensitive topics on both sides. Sex, politics, and denigrating stereotypes are clearly not good topics for the LPI. While some of these topics may be good practice in informal conversation, they have no place in a situation where speakers feel pressured to perform at their best. There will be topics that may not cause discomfort to the interviewer, but will cause a lot of discomfort to the speaker. For example, if a question is asked about a speaker's father and it is revealed that the father is in prison, the speaker may be uncomfortable talking about this topic. **At the first sign of discomfort, change the topic. Do not follow up.**

Final Comments

The guiding principle for the interviewer is that every question must elicit information that confirms the level of the Volunteer. The time of the interview is limited, and the extension of the interview may cause breakdown not related to the proficiency level. So, make every question count toward obtaining a ratable sample.

Above all, **be a good listener**. A response to one question may open up a new area to be explored.

Elicitation at Different Levels

As the interview progresses, the tasks required by each level represent a higher level of difficulty and, therefore, complexity. Progress along the scale implies a higher level of sophistication and experience in order to express more complex thoughts. For example, at the Novice level the topic of weather can be handled by a few words about whether it is hot or cold; the Intermediate level requires more explanation of activities and preferences according to the weather; and the Advanced level requires some narration and description about the last storm experienced. The Superior level speaker might discuss the effects of weather on economic development. The complexity of thought and knowledge required at the Superior level demands more than simple linguistic control as well as an increase in volume and structure of the speaker's discourse. For example, in order to speak about the weather, the speaker can appropriately respond in different levels of text type and sophistication in the answer.

Sample responses to "Tell me about the weather."	
Novice	Cold! I like it.
Intermediate	The weather is good. It is cold. I need a sweater. Is very different in my home.
Advanced	I love the weather in this city. Here is cold and dry, while in my hometown it is hot and humid. When it is raining, I like to go out and walk in the rain. But I do not like being wet all the time, so when it is raining and I have to work, I prefer to stay inside.
Superior	The weather in this area has changed in the last years as a consequence of global warming. Imagine that several years ago this was a beautifully green area, with a prosperous agriculture and amazingly interesting natural life. The impact of global warming is felt in this area in ways you would not imagine. For example, pastures are not as green, and, as a consequence, the produce is not as rich as it used to be. This has had a huge impact on the economy of the area. Global warming has changed nature and has impacted the economy. Once these changes have happened, there is no end to the transformation of local life. Without economic prosperity, the quality of life of all individuals is affected. Natural resources dwindle and local activities, social gatherings, and, of course, eating habits are disrupted. Weather has changed and community life has been disrupted.

Level-Appropriate Questions				
Level	Functions	Text type	Questions	Example
Superior	Support opinion, hypothesis, can discuss topics concretely and abstractly	Extended discourse	Express an opinion, support the opinion, speculate about potential outcomes	How important is it for a country to have elections? What arguments can you provide to defend your position? And if there were no elections?
Advanced	Narrate and describe time frames	Paragraph	Tell complete stories and give descriptions about the past or the future	Tell me how the accident happened and what you did afterwards. And how are you going to deal with similar problems in the future?
Intermediate	Create with language, ask and answer simple questions	Sentences	Talk about familiar topics such as family, daily routine, personal activities	Tell me about your family. What do you want to know about my family?
Novice	Formulaic and rote utterances, lists, and phrases	Words	Enumerate, greetings, etc.	Can you describe your best friend? What are her favorite colors? What kind of weather do you prefer?

Novice Level Elicitation

Functions	Text type	Questions	Example
Formulaic and rote utterances, lists and phrases	Words	Enumerate, greetings, etc.	Can you describe your best friend? What are her favorite colors? What kind of weather do you prefer?

Given the functional limitations of a Novice speaker, testing at this level presents challenges that other levels do not. The speaker's ability to understand what is being said creates an obstacle that the interviewer must overcome in order to provide opportunities to speak. While understanding the question is crucial to get an answer, listening is a different skill, which will require a different evaluation instrument. In order to overcome this limitation, the interviewer can assist by repeating, rephrasing, simplifying, suggesting an answer, or initiating the speaker's response.

When the speaker does not understand "Tell me about your family."		
Repeat:	Say the same words again.	Tell me about your family.
Rephrase:	Express the same question with different, more simple words.	Can you describe your brothers and sisters?
Simplify:	Ask another question about the same topic requiring easier answers.	Who are the members of your family?
Suggest an answer:	Give a possible answer and bounce the question back to the speaker.	In my family I have two brothers and one sister. And you?
Initiate the answer:	Start the answer by suggesting a possible answer.	Father, mother ...

Intonation can be another technique to facilitate understanding and participation. The tone of a question or an affirmative or negative expression can help understanding and answering.

Contextualization will facilitate understanding and will sustain the conversational style even at the Novice level. By staying in the topic, the interviewer is giving the speaker time to raise the comfort level and to prepare to give better answers. Refrain from hopping from topic to

topic. With the comprehension limitations of the Novice level, changing topics abruptly can be more confusing. Instead, stay on the topic and vary the vocabulary around it. For example:

On the topic of the family:

- What family members live with you?
- How old are your brothers?
- What are their favorite colors?
- What days of the week does your father work?
- What are your mother's favorite colors?
- What foods does she prepare?
- When is your sister's birthday?
- What do you say when your father comes to the house?



The content and contexts of the Novice level relate to a variety of fields encountered in the first lessons of language learning. When there is no functional ability at the Intermediate, the interviewer can resort to those first competencies learned by beginners: family members, numbers, dates, days of the week, months, clothes, colors, food, greetings, etc. The purpose is to get lists of words, memorized phrases, and rote utterances (repeated many times automatically).

To probe a Novice speaker, questions should elicit the functions of the Intermediate level. Alternate between level checks of the Novice and probes in the Intermediate by moving from memorized expressions to questions that ask the speaker to create with language in a topic tailored to the speaker.

Example:

- (Novice) When is your birthday?
- (Novice) What kinds of food do you eat at a birthday party?
- (Intermediate) And how do you celebrate your birthday?

Intermediate Level Elicitation

Functions	Text Type	Questions	Example
Create with language; ask and answer simple questions	Sentences	Talk about familiar topics such as family, daily routine, personal activities	Tell me about your family. What do you want to know about my family?

The contents and contexts of the Intermediate relate to familiar and daily activities and routines. These functions are presented in the informal context of a friendly conversation. This is the level of the present and usual or customary. Family, friends, community, hobbies

or routines are good choices of conversation. Check the speaker's personal interests so that new topics are suggested by the information provided from the initial questions. Once a topic is established, follow up with details about it. Ask: *Why? How? What? And then ...?*

Creating with language means using learned and memorized material to create a message. Speakers are able to combine and recombine what they learn to express personal thoughts and information. For example, while the Novice Mid will be able to make a list of family members, the Intermediate will be able to provide details of activities and descriptions about real family members.

Comprehensibility is an important element of the Intermediate performance. The interviewer should develop a relationship with the speaker in which the speaker relies only on the ability to express meaningful information. Because the speaker is still limited to the personal and the familiar, the speaker may try to lean on the interviewer to complete the message by asking for vocabulary or for understanding. The Intermediate level speaker will need a sympathetic listener, but may have to repeat and rephrase in order to be understood. An interviewer who provides vocabulary or accepts incomprehensible speech becomes more than a sympathetic listener and opens the door to more dependency on the interviewer's assistance to complete the message. Invite the speaker to explain, repeat, and rephrase in order to send a clear signal to the speaker that a complete message must be produced independently. Do not ask for translations, since the use of a foreign word indicates the speaker does not know or remember the exact word. Ask for an explanation or description, a **circumlocution**, to convey the message and the meaning without the exact word. If the construction or pronunciation is incomprehensible, ask the speaker to clarify to make sure the message is clear enough to be understood with some repetition by a sympathetic listener. Do not settle for the incomprehensible: if attempts do not produce a comprehensible message, consider it evidence of breakdown and do not plague the speaker with more requests for clarifications they cannot produce.

A critical task at this level is the ability to ask questions. Being able to question enables speakers to participate fully in the normal give-and-take of conversation. This skill should be well-developed in Peace Corps trainees and Volunteers. If speakers can answer questions but not ask them, they will not be able to function fully at the Intermediate level. It is often difficult to elicit questions in a conversation where the speaker is expecting the interviewer to do the asking. If the interviewer cannot create a situation where the speaker can generate questions naturally, make sure to give the Intermediate level speakers an opportunity in the role-play or the wind-down.

<p>The Intermediate level speakers can participate in a normal conversation by answering and asking questions.</p>

The text type of this level is the **sentence**. The variations in text type will go from isolated sentences, coordinated sentences, to a string of sentences. Still, the text type of the Intermediate level is statements that are isolated from each other, without the cohesiveness

of a more sophisticated and organized thought. A string of sentences may convey a full message, but the internal organization of the message will still lack cohesiveness, transitions, and organization.

Advanced Level Elicitation

Level	Functions	Text type	Questions	Example
Advanced	Narrate and describe time frames	Paragraph	Tell complete stories, about the past or the future	Tell me how the accident happened and what did you do afterwards. And how are you going to deal with similar problems in the future?

The Advanced level moves from the familiar, personal, customary, and immediate contents and context, to topics of personal and general interest, work, and out of the purely personal. Intermediate level speakers talk about themselves and at the Advanced level they speak about others and their contexts. This shift reflects the increased ability of speakers to relate linguistically to the surrounding world. Speaking about topics of the community or national interest allows speakers to show the ability to expand contexts beyond the personal. Consider talking about current events at this level, including the celebration of holidays, news, local, national, or international events and conditions.

While Peace Corps Volunteers must show their ability to speak about their Peace Corps experience at the Advanced level, a variety of topics must be discussed in order to demonstrate the same level of fluency and consistent ability in other areas where the speaker has not practiced as much. Speakers may show a higher level of ability in topics they frequently practice in their daily experience (health issues, technical training, counterparts, safety and security, the goals and mission of the agency, etc.), while the same level of ability may not be shown in other areas (sports, life in the United States, current events, the latest news, etc.). Therefore, it is necessary to explore an ample range of topics to demonstrate their abilities across the level.

Advanced speakers should also demonstrate the ability to participate in a monolingual context. Therefore, the interviewer should change from a sympathetic listener to a non-sympathetic listener: act monolingual and expect the speaker to handle the complications imposed by the lack of assistance and support from a sympathetic listener. This is the real-life environment of their community when they speak to people who only speak their native language. Ask for explanations and clarifications to get the meaning of the message clearly expressed, look beyond vocabulary to the clarity and detail of the message, check the completeness of the story, and ask for the details and the explanations necessary to understand exactly what happened and how. Ask for clarification, elaboration, and illustration.

Time frames allow the speaker to relate not only to the immediate and present, but also to the past and future. Narration and description in different time frames are important tasks of this level, so request stories, anecdotes, and incidents of the past and the future. Sometimes it is very simple to move a topic from the Intermediate level, but others, more elaboration will be needed in order to get to the narration of a full story. For the most effective elicitation at the Advanced level, gather a variety of stories to show the ability to narrate and describe. Refer back to topics already mentioned and explore time frames (present, past, and future) in descriptions and narrations within the topic. When narrating an episode or event in the past, get the whole story by asking for more details and explanations of those events. Check for quantity and quality of the narration and description.

When moving from the Intermediate into the Advanced, spiral topics by changing functions on the same topic. If the interviewer is not able to establish the floor at the Advanced, the ceiling is in the process of being established at the Intermediate level. If the breakdown shows lack of control of time frames and other features of the Advanced, return to the floor by changing the topic and requesting a function of the Intermediate level. If the speaker shows some control, explore the level of control of these functions by following up on the topic and asking more questions in the same topic. Once the level of control is determined, change the topic by going back to the floor before spiraling up to a new probe.

After establishing the floor at the Intermediate level, probe for the Advanced level functions by spiraling the same topic into higher-level functions. If the probes show no control, change to a new topic and establish the floor at the Intermediate before probing again in the Advanced. If probes show some control, follow up in order to determine how much and then change the topic on the floor before spiraling once again to the Advanced.

Stories, Incidents, and Anecdotes

When testing at the Advanced, the elicitation of stories, incidents, or anecdotes is indispensable. Descriptions of past events or places give the time frame, and the storytelling provides narration and description together, as well as other elements linked to the time frames, such as control of aspect, sequencing, and details. These will provide information regarding the quantity and quality of control of the functions of the level. While speakers can tell a story at the Intermediate (sketchy, in sentences, fragmented, etc.), the Advanced level speaker will produce a detailed account of the past event, combining narration and description and organizing the elements of the story in a fluid chronology where important elements are given more relevance than others (background and foreground).

- Step 1: Refer back to a topic already mentioned.
*You mentioned that you went on a cruise last summer.
Can you tell me about that trip?*

- Step 2: Ask for a description of the place, the event, or the circumstances.
*How did the ship look like inside?
How was the day organized? How did it compare to ...?*

- Step 3: Ask for a story from beginning to end.
*Can you tell me about a memorable experience during that trip?
And your plans for your next vacation?*

Within the level, check the control of aspect, details in the description, and ease, while the speaker moves from one time frame to another. As control increases, speakers will provide more details, sequencing, connectors, and other markers that assist in the organization of the time frames. This control of the internal qualities of the time frames provides information about the sublevel. For example, the Advanced Low will have consistent control of time frames (without confusing present, past, and future), but limited control of the elements of aspects that allow them to establish sequencing (order of events happening one before the other), foreground and background (previous and ulterior information necessary to understand the event).

Notice all the elements connected to the storytelling at the Advanced in the following story:

When I was a child, I used to live in an apartment building with an interior garden. I liked that garden very much because it had many hiding places. My friends and I used to play there for hours and hiding away from our mothers was one of our favorite past times.

One day, while we were playing, my older brother decided to help me hide really well so our mother could not find me. So he lifted me into a hole in the wall right between two big pots among the oldest plants. I had never tried that hole because it was too high for a small child like me, but when my brother lifted me, I went through the hole without a problem.



The complications began when I tried to change positions. I could not turn and my head was stuck! I have never in my life been as scared as I was when I could not get out of there. That place was dark, dirty, and it smelled like dead trees. I thought I was going to die! Finally, after a long while (it felt to me like ages!), my mother heard my cries and came running to the rescue. After that, I lost my interest in the garden, and even today, I do not like to be in tight places. I think I am claustrophobic.

While past narration is the most complicated function of the Advanced in many languages, the future time frame belongs to this level as well. Frequently, interviewers ask about future plans, and activities after the interview, etc. An important consideration is the level of control speakers demonstrate when the narrations and descriptions offer linguistic marks of time change, for example, when speaking in the past about events occurring later (I thought I was going to die!). This sequencing should be considered in the evaluation of quantity and quality.

In order to encourage paragraph-length discourse, ask questions that invite the speaker to say more and explain in detail. Do not interrupt the flow of the conversation by asking more questions until the speaker has completed the paragraph. Interruptions may show only sentences and not the necessary text type. While the speaker's discourse is in progress, check whether the story and the components of the paragraph are sufficiently demonstrated. Ask for more details and explanations in order to have the whole picture of the narration or description included.

Superior Level Elicitation

Level	Functions	Text Type	Questions	Example
Superior	Support opinion, hypothesis, can discuss topics concretely and abstractly	Extended discourse	Express an opinion, support the opinion, speculate about potential outcomes	How important is for a country to have elections? What arguments can you provide to defend your position? And if there were no elections?

At the Superior level, speakers must demonstrate the ability to function in a more formal environment and to express complex thoughts and ideas in a sophisticated type of discourse. Therefore, the interviewer must assume the attitude of a more formal interviewer and elevate the level of their language to go in-depth into more complex considerations of the topics. Here the interviewer must deal with the speaker like an educated speaker—as an equal in a professional environment. The art of the Superior level interview consists of the elicitation of topics, the proposal of issues inciting the speakers' reflection, and Superior level discourse. As an interviewer at this level, it is helpful to present opposing and contradicting positions in the topic without personally antagonizing the speaker. A useful technique is to quote others to contradict or present another view on the subject. ("I agree with you, but there are those who say ...") A direct confrontation may hinder the speaker's ability to give a thoughtful reply as a consequence of psychological discomfort after the confrontation. Since interviewers do not rate factual content but only linguistic expression in any given area, they do not have to be subject matter experts to interview effectively. They must, however, be mentally flexible and quick enough to pursue a topic in-depth, if necessary, looking for related topics, implications, and associated issues, and to offer a range of topics.

The Superior level explores topics of a concrete and an abstract nature, but consider them from a more global and general perspective, moving from the individual and personal to the general and impersonal. An important caveat is the distinction between concrete and abstract. While the Advanced level deals with topics from the personal and anecdotal, the

Superior deals with the same topics dealing with the idea, issue, or controversy the topic demands. This transformation from the anecdotal to the issue is an important distinction between the Advanced level discourse and the Superior. It follows that topics such as pollution, corruption or safety and security are concrete topics in the Advanced level when relating anecdotes, examples and incidents; and in the Superior level when addressing the issues and controversies around them. Other topics such as justice, love, hate, violence, etc. are purely Superior level when discussed as abstract issues. The distinction between the two refers to actions vs. ideas, specific facts vs. personal opinion on global issues.

Advanced vs. Superior Questions

Why did Christopher Columbus want to get ships from the kings of Spain?	Advanced: it refers to incidents and explanations in concrete language
What were the most important changes brought by the discovery of a new world?	Superior: it deals with issues and ideas of concrete and abstract language

Interviewers can convert topics presented at the Advanced level into the Superior by listening attentively to the stories and information offered while developing the Advanced level functions. This will result in spiraled topics from the speaker’s interest. During the different stages of the interview, the interviewer can gather topics insinuated or directly commented, in order to propose them at the Superior level. For example, if the speaker comments on how difficult transportation is around the community due to traffic, the interviewer can ask for an opinion on the causes of this problem; if it is mentioned that the speaker likes working with children, the interviewer can ask about the importance of a positive relationship between children and adults in a given society. Because these topics come from the expressed interest of the speaker, they will result in a more interesting discussion at the Superior level.

If the probes into the Superior result into total breakdown (the speaker is unable to express a clear opinion and resorts to Advanced level speech), the interviewer should not continue developing Superior level probes, but return to the Advanced level by asking for more time frames and descriptions. If the probes demonstrate functional ability at the Superior level, even if the control is not sustained, the interviewer should follow up on the probe in order to demonstrate the level of control of the functions of the Superior level. Depending on the speaker’s ability, the interviewer should continue with probes on the Superior level or return to the baseline of the Advanced level and request more stories and details in order to check quality and quantity of the Advanced (possibilities for Advanced Low). If the speaker has demonstrated good quantity and quality of the Advanced level and the probes point at the Advanced Mid or High, the Advanced floor has been sufficiently demonstrated and the interviewer should look for opinions and then supported opinion and the other functions of the Superior. Valuable time can be saved by exploring the Superior level without going to the narrations on the floor of the level below.

Some concrete topics for the Superior:

Health care, corruption, genocide, regional antagonisms, violence in the family or the community, gender roles, security for individuals/business/organizations, technology, education, pollution, terrorism, unemployment

Some abstract topics for the Superior:

Human indifference, beliefs, art and literature, beauty, truth, reality vs. imagination

In order to elicit Superior level speech, conduct the interview using Superior level language. Express questions in a more formal manner than the other levels. The most effective way to produce this effect is by using a prelude to the question where the interviewer sets the tone and suggests a more formal and educated language. The prelude directs the speaker to consider the topic more thoughtfully and leads into ideas instead of anecdotes.

Consider the difference the prelude makes in these two questions:

Question 1: What do you think about AIDS? What is the problem?

Question 2: AIDS has become a world-wide epidemic in our contemporary world. There are those who say that this problem should be dealt with at the family level, making the family the primary caretaker for the patient, while others consider that this responsibility should fall on the shoulders of the national government. What arguments can be presented in favor and against both positions, and what is your position on this dilemma?

By giving an introduction, the interviewer suggests the level of language and depth of the answer. Question 1 is ambiguous and does not lead the speaker into a Superior level of complexity and depth. Question 2 directs the speaker to evaluate and consider the topic as an issue. The wording proposes a language that is more elegant and precise, and the grammar structures propose a higher level of complexity.

The “Triple Punch”

In order to elicit the functions and discourse of the Superior level, a useful technique is the Triple Punch:

1. Ask for supported opinion
2. Challenge the opinion
3. Spin the hypothetical

In order to explore all the functions of the Superior level in a given topic, the interviewer must be very efficient and precise while posing questions.

First: Spiral a topic that has been developed at the Advanced level. Move from the concrete topic to an issue.



Mechanical problems are a normal complication of owning a car. It seems that there is a need for an agreement between car owners and the government in order to provide a road system that protects drivers' investment. What are the reasons why this has not been completely attained?

Next: Elicit the speaker's opinion on some aspect of the issue. Follow up by challenging that opinion, playing the devil's advocate.

But there are those who blame the government for its lack of vigilance in the care of the roads. What arguments can be presented to support the idea that individual participation on decisions regarding the maintenance of the road infrastructure should complement the government actions?

Then: Use the speaker's supported opinion to propose a hypothetical situation. Frame the question so the speaker must elaborate on eventual outcomes.

Imagine that poor countries were able to provide good road quality and, as a consequence, they had better automobiles and transportation. What changes would we see in those countries? What would be the positive and negative consequences?

Other examples of Superior level questions:

Poverty

Opinion	Poverty is a problem in all societies. In your opinion, what are the most important reasons why this problem has not been solved?
Supported Opinion	There are those who think that poverty is a necessary evil and, therefore, trying to solve this problem is not a necessary effort for government and organizations. What arguments can be presented to encourage a government to fight this problem?
Hypothesis	Imagine that we were able to eradicate poverty from the world. How do you think this absence would impact life? What changes would be the most noticeable for a society?

Transportation

Opinion	Public transportation offers a variety of challenges to the people who don't own cars. What are the major problems of public transportation in your community and what are possible solutions to them?
Supported Opinion	I see what you mean by quality of service, but there are those who say that in order to have better service, the government would have to support the drivers in every community. How can you defend your opinion that public transportation should remain a private practice and not a government project? What arguments can be presented to discourage those who consider the government as the solution to the transportation problem?
Hypothesis	Imagine that instead of taking control of public transportation, the government created programs to educate drivers and give economic support to individual owners. How do you think this would change the transportation systems of your community and your country? What would be the positive and negative consequences?

Democracy

Opinion	In today's world, democracy has become the ideal for many countries, while dictatorships and other forms of government have become models we strive to eradicate. What makes democracy such a desirable government model?
Supported Opinion	There are those who think that the ideal of democracy has to be considered against the need to maintain order and development and that a democratic process can affect and impact progress in negative ways. What arguments can be presented to defend the position that democracy should be the first priority of governments and that this ideal does not negate progress and development?
Hypothesis	How do you think a democratic world would improve life for the future of humanity? How would this ideal change the social reality of countries?

The United Nations

Opinion	There are organizations, like the United Nations, which promote world peace and other global goals. How do you think the existence of these organizations benefit the world?
Supported Opinion	The ideal of an organization where all countries are represented to discuss the great problems of the world collides with the realities of countries and individuals who are looking for their own interest. Under these circumstances, what are some limitations and freedoms for an organization that goes beyond national interests?
Hypothesis	Imagine that the United Nations were able to complete one of its goals (peace, health, education). How would this impact the value of the organization? What would be the ultimate consequence? Would it be able to substitute local government?

Language Teaching

Opinion	The Peace Corps make a huge investment in developing the linguistic ability of the trainees. Do you think this is necessary? Why or why not?
Supported Opinion	Should it be the responsibility of Volunteers to communicate in the local language, or can they do their jobs without language knowledge? What arguments can be presented in favor and against both possibilities?
Hypothesis	Imagine that the development of language skills was not considered part of trainee development. What would be the consequences for the trainee and for the program? What challenges would be presented to the Peace Corps as an international organization?

In order to elicit extended discourse while posing the request for opinion, the interviewer can ask compound questions requiring essay-like answers. Some examples of this type of question are:

Possible questions to elicit extended discourse:	
Pros and Cons	What arguments can be presented in favor and against adding one more year to the education curriculum?
Advantages and Disadvantages	What are the advantages and disadvantages of living in a big city?
Different points of view on an issue	Consider the problem of poverty from economical and social perspectives.
Different aspects of a situation	Can you explain the unemployment situation from the perspective of employers, and the government?
Causes and effects of a problem	What are the causes of youth delinquency and what are the effects of this problem in our society?

How Much Have You Learned?

About Obtaining a Ratable Sample of Speech

1. What are good elicitation techniques?
2. How should the interviewer behave during the interview?
3. How is that behavior different to “teacher behavior” in the classroom?
4. What techniques can an interviewer use to help the speaker understand a question?
5. What is the difference between narration and description at the Intermediate level and the Advanced?
6. What are good techniques to elicit narration at the Advanced level?
7. What is the difference between Advanced level discourse and Superior level discourse?
8. Why is the prelude necessary at the Superior level?
9. What is the triple punch and how is it done?

About Elicitation Techniques

1. Why should every question have a purpose?
2. What is the most useful question?
3. How is spiraling done?
4. Why should a tester avoid sensitive topics?
5. Why are the “hot house special” topics to avoid?
6. What topics can be used at each level?

Interviewer Behavior Versus Teacher Behavior: Question Types

As you develop good interviewing skills, keep in mind this important distinction: The interviewer is not a teacher. While the interview is in progress, the interviewer is only an interviewer. This means that practices followed in the classroom do not have a place in the oral interview. For example, while a teacher may be tempted to correct grammatical errors, or to provide vocabulary to assist the student, an interviewer will participate in the interview as a conversation partner and will not interrupt the stream of the conversation to create “a learning moment.”

Avoid Teacher Behavior

Do not...	Example:
Correct	<i>No! That is not correct. What is the correct form?</i>
Complete sentences	<i>... because you do not like it.</i>
Provide vocabulary	<i>... and the kitchen. Those are the parts of the house.</i>
Restate and correct	<i>So you went to the store and bought cheese.</i>
Invite to correct	<i>Can you give me the right pronunciation?</i>
Remind speaker of something previously learned	<i>You already studied the past tense...</i>
Insist on what is expected the speaker already knows	<i>I know you know the numbers!</i>
Make statements of approval on form instead of communication	<i>Yes! Put, not putted</i>
Focus on grammar structure instead of the message	<i>Good use of the present tense!</i>
Look for a specific term or structure	<i>It is night, so it is not good morning! How do we say it?</i>
Put words in the speaker's mouth	<i>You mean that it was an accident?</i>
Give clues	<i>That word sounds like the name of a fruit you like</i>

In many ways, the teacher role can be detrimental to the interview purpose. By interrupting the flow of the conversation, the interviewer is limiting the speaker to just a few words, interrupting the message and indicating to the speaker to concentrate on the lesson and not the communication. This is a waste of valuable time. Given that the interview is an

assessment of performance (what the speaker can do), reminding the speaker what they cannot do creates unnecessary breakdown. Errors happen as a natural part of communication and serve as indicators of a speaker’s capability and comprehensibility. By letting mistakes happen, there are more elements to evaluate for the assessment.

Good Interviewer Behavior

Encourage by:		For example:
Inviting more speech	←-----→	<i>Tell me more about that.</i>
Expressing interest in the message		<i>That is very interesting. How do you do that?</i>
Asking for clarification when misunderstandings can occur		<i>I do not understand why she was so upset. What was the problem?</i>
Asking for more details		<i>So what happened when you opened the box?</i>
Asking for more information		<i>You mention three reasons. What is the third?</i>
Encouraging longer text		<i>Give me a detailed description of the wedding.</i>
Asking open questions	←-----→	<i>And how did the accident happen?</i>
Reacting positively to self-correction		<i>I understand what you mean. Keep going.</i>
Following up		<i>And what happened next?</i>

Open questions, while guiding the speaker through different functions in the interview, concentrate on the message and on what the speaker can do with the language: they check the functional ability of the speaker and, therefore are proficiency-oriented questions.

The interviewer should focus on maintaining control of the conversation so that the interview feels like a conversation and all questions purposely lead the speaker through the interview structure. If the goal of the interview is lost and questions lose their purpose, it may be an interesting conversation, but it will provide an unratable sample. While the interviewer sounds like a good conversationalist, it is a conversation with a purpose—to get a ratable sample. In the context of the LPI, the interviewer is not a teacher, but a conversation partner.

The Role of English

The role of language is extremely important in the process of adapting to a local culture. In the beginning, Peace Corps trainees and Volunteers struggle with the desire to use English and their need to use the local language(s). Dependency on English is understandable and many times necessary, but learners in a total immersion situation such as the Peace Corps program must begin to rely on their knowledge of local language for communication as soon as possible. The language learning program should support this effort and the LPI should reflect the same message. Speakers should receive a clear message that English is not the language of communication in their communities, and that even when they may be

understood, their effort to use the local languages will be a step toward achieving the mission and goals that brought them into the country. Reinforce this message by communicating clearly that English is not permitted for communication during the interview.

English, or any other language, should not be accepted during the LPI. When English is permitted, the connection between the interviewer and the speaker can turn into a dependency for understanding that can affect the total outcome of the interview. When the interviewer is willing to accept and understand a language other than the one being tested, the responsibility to be comprehensible (accuracy) does not rely on the speaker alone. As a result, more English may interfere in the conversation and the speaker may not make the best effort to communicate in the language of assessment. If the interviewer allows English, this cannot be considered against the speaker at the time of evaluation. If the interviewer allows the use of English, it may not be clear that this language interference is a limitation of the speaker's linguistic abilities. Although the speaker may generally function at the Advanced level, the interference of English may reduce the level of comprehensibility to that of a sympathetic listener: the Intermediate level. The final rating will be affected negatively.

By insisting on using only the local language (acting monolingual), the interviewer can take advantage of the speaker's use of English to request clarification, circumlocution, or an explanation of those English terms used by the speaker. When the message is sent that English is not acceptable, the speaker will make the best effort to communicate in one language only. Avoiding English is more difficult at the lower levels, but Advanced and Superior levels should be able to overcome their desire to use English. When the request to speak in a local language is not fulfilled, consider this as evidence of breakdown in terms of comprehensibility. When summing up the elements of the assessment criteria, consider how the interference has affected accuracy.

The same measures apply to requests for translations. The speaker may need a word and ask for help in translating the term at hand. Any request that may result in the speaker's dependency on the interviewer as their interlocutor may be rejected or bounced back for clarification, explanation, or circumlocution. These tasks should be mastered at the Advanced level. While interviewers may want to give the word, they run the risk that the speaker will repeat the request and interrupt the interview. The effort the speaker makes to explain will provide more ratable material.

Act monolingual! Ask for clarification, explanation, or circumlocution.



I don't understand that!
Can you explain what you mean with other words?
Please, describe.
What do you mean when you say...?

The Role of Grammar

Many interviewers find it difficult to make a distinction between checking grammar points and checking functional ability. Grammar has been a central focus in teaching for so many years and the transition from a grammar-oriented teaching program to a proficiency-oriented program has been a difficult and slow task.

A proficiency-oriented program does not deny the importance and usefulness of grammar in the learning process. Grammar assists adult learners in understanding a language. While younger learners learn more intuitively, adult learners need logic and structure to assist them in their understanding and assimilating process. Nevertheless, the goal of the Peace Corps language program is communication—pure linguistic understanding of a language. That is the reason why the Peace Corps language program has very specific competencies a learner needs in order to function as a Volunteer. These competencies point at functioning in the community and using the language for communication with native speakers of the local language. These competencies will assist the Volunteer in the three goals of the Peace Corps mission. The goals are better served by preparing the trainee linguistically to function in the language more than to understand the structural rules of that language.

The Role of Vocabulary

Vocabulary questions elicit a limited text type. Beyond the Novice level, isolated words or strings of words do not give any information to determine the level of the speaker. Making lists of words is a Novice level function. As a consequence, a question such as: “*What do you like to eat?*” can be a good question to elicit a list of words from a speaker who cannot create with language and only knows isolated words. On the other hand, it becomes a question without a purpose if the speaker is already demonstrating that he or she can function fully at the Intermediate level. The best way to use vocabulary is to contextualize it in a question that requires the speaker to use those words to talk about a topic. For example, the question: “*Compare the eating habits of Tanzania with those of the United States,*” requires speakers to use the same words as before, but to organize an idea using those words.

The Role of Silence

Many times teachers tend to fill every moment with words to avoid silence. Especially when classes are big, or when a dynamic session is planned, teachers try to avoid vacuums that may result in a slow down or an end to an activity. During the interview, the interviewer must distinguish the type of silence that occurs in the conversation to determine what to do about it. Befriend a creative silence where a speaker is organizing thoughts and preparing to give the interviewer a good answer. In such a situation, silence is gold and it must be treasured and respected. An empty, awkward silence is a sign of breakdown. Move the interview in another direction and steer the speaker to another topic to maintain the flow of conversation. The interviewer must be attentive to the speaker’s reactions and decide what to do.

If silence is creative, wait. If it is a breakdown, intervene.

The Role of Interruption

A critical interviewing skill is the **interruption**. For example, to check a speaker's control of time frames and control of narration, you ask a question that prompts the speaker to tell a story. The speaker tells the story in the present but does not make temporal distinctions and digresses often. Allowing the speaker to continue in that line of conversation will not provide useful information for the assessment. When the speaker's line of conversation is leading toward useless speech, stop that line of conversation and bring it back to a direction that will inform the assessment. There is no need to be abrupt or discourteous, but firmly take control of the interview and lead it in the direction needed. This is the moment in which the interviewer clearly shows that he or she is leading the conversation. The principle to follow is to foster ratable material and to avoid unratable speech.

The Overall Attitude of the Interviewer

It is the interviewer's responsibility to create a rapport with the speaker that will invite and encourage the speaker's highest level of performance. In the best interview, the speaker forgets that he or she is in a test and enjoys the conversation while providing rich assessment material. The interviewer should maintain a friendly attitude, but testing demands an objective attitude on the part of the interviewer, an attitude that requires the speaker to show that he or she can function independently in the target language. Show interest by giving physical signals of interest and attention, but always lead the conversation towards the production of a ratable sample, and evaluate the sample for its own merits. Encourage speakers to speak as much as they can, but send the message that clarity and comprehensibility in the local language is of the most importance in order to sustain communication.

When the speaker fails to show functional ability, it should be because the speaker's best effort cannot achieve a higher level of precision. Since the final evaluation is done after the interview is finished, avoid evaluative comments that may affect the speaker's performance in any way. Friendliness cannot be confused with lack of control of the interview process. Although the interviewer allows the speaker to be the one who speaks the most, the interviewer should always be leading the interview. Interviewers may have to encourage speakers to answer as fully as possible or to speak a little louder. However, this should be the limit of coaching.

**The interviewer is not a teacher, not a friend, not a translator.
The interviewer is an LPI interviewer.**

How Much Have You Learned?

1. Why should an interviewer avoid teacher behavior during the interview?
2. What is the difference between checking grammar points and checking functional ability?
3. Why is it better to contextualize vocabulary?
4. When should an interviewer be silent and when should an interviewer interrupt?
5. What rules of thumb can an interviewer use regarding allowing the use of English in the interview?
6. What are the consequences of a interviewer's positive attitude during an interview?

Principles of Rating and Providing Feedback

Precision in rating makes the LPI a reliable instrument. In order to maintain the value of the assessment, it is necessary for interviewers to be as accurate as possible on their rating. If the rating is changed for reasons other than the serious evaluation of the ratable sample and comparison to the Guidelines, the evaluation cannot be trusted. A second rating can supply a second opinion on the speaker's performance. By giving interviewers the opportunity to rate other interviews and compare results with their original rating, interviewers will be able to refine their rating abilities. **Inter-rater reliability**, a major concern in all tests of speaking, is the degree to which two interviewers listening to the same interview will give it the same rating. With a clearly ratable sample experienced interviewers will differ only slightly (one sublevel above or below) in giving ratings to the same interview.

Inter-rater reliability assists the program to maintain the quality of the assessment, and, at the same time, keeps interviewers rating in the same way and interpreting the Guidelines consistently. As a second benefit, confirming interviewers' reliability through a second rating provides the Peace Corps with evidence that assessments can be trusted to provide the information to make appropriate decisions for the program. Extensive standardized training such as the LPI training, certification procedures, and periodic recalibration in refresher courses help assure the reliability of interviewers. Furthermore, a second rating invites interviewers to sustain a conversation about evaluation among interviewers.

After the language proficiency interview is administered, the interviewer begins the evaluative stage. While the assessment criteria and the structure of the interview help to give a preliminary opinion on the rating, a careful evaluation of the sample needs to be done in order to reach a more precise assessment. This process is a very important part of the Peace Corps testing program given that the evaluation informs decisions regarding trainees and provides information about the quality of the teaching program. Reliability of the results makes the LPI the ideal instrument to check the functional ability of speakers. As a consequence, careful attention must be given to this last part of the interviewer's job.

The Seven Stars of the LPI Assessment

- ☆ Record a ratable sample
- ☆ Eliminate what the speaker is **not**
- ☆ Evaluate the floor
- ☆ Check the interview structure
- ☆ Use the assessment criteria to evaluate sample
- ☆ Compare sample to the Guidelines
- ☆ Consider assessment with a second rating

Rating a Sample

Record a Ratable Sample

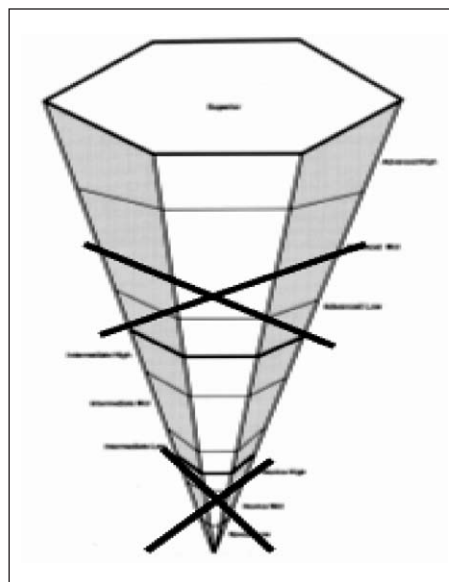


In order to provide the most precise and accurate rating, interviewers should study a sample from different perspectives. This way, the interviewer will better understand the speaker's performance. The first and most important step is to record a ratable sample.

The previous chapters are dedicated to the production of this sample—a sample with a clear floor, a clear ceiling, and a good structure. The second element of this step is recording. Without a recording the interviewer cannot return to the interview and listen carefully to the details of the sample. While the interview is in progress, there are many details that the interviewer is not able to evaluate carefully. Listening to the recording after an interview when the interviewer can concentrate exclusively on what the speaker said, will provide the best opportunity to check all the elements of rating.

Eliminate Proficiency Levels

After studying the speaker's performance, the interviewer can follow a process of elimination to quickly decide what levels should not be considered for evaluation. These are the levels to which the speaker definitely and obviously does not belong. By default, the level at which the speaker showed breakdown—the ceiling—will be identified. By identifying the ceiling, the floor will be clearly defined, and the interviewer will be able to check the details of the floor.



Evaluate the Floor

In order to evaluate the floor, it is necessary to consider quality and quantity: that is, how the speaker performed the functions at the floor in terms of the amount of text provided and the control of the functions demonstrated. Focusing on the performance of all the functions of the level will determine the sublevel. Once the floor has been carefully considered, the interviewer can look at the breakdown at the ceiling to determine the amount of control of the functions of the next level. Review *The Distinction between Sublevels* on page 17.

Check the Interview Structure

A clear interview structure helps confirm the interviewer's opinion. The structure will show the ceiling and the floor. By observing what the interviewer is doing during the interview, and the results, the rater will be able to have a better understanding of the participant's performance. Use the *Guide for the Interview Process* as a checklist to ensure each interview is complete (see Appendix E).

What are the questions doing?

Did the interviewer:

Follow up on the probe (High/Mid)

Change the topic down at the floor (Mid/Low)

Did the follow-up questions:

Ask for more text (minimal discourse: Low)

Expand (showing quantity and quality: Mid)

Show excellent control of the function (basis for the High)

Breakdown at the next level (High)

Use Assessment Criteria to Evaluate Sample

By checking the structure, the interviewer will also have a broader understanding of the elements of the assessment criteria. By considering the five elements—**function, context, content, accuracy, and text type**—the interviewer will be closer to an accurate rating.

Compare Sample to the Guidelines

Once these elements have been considered, the interviewer can use the Guidelines to focus on the description of the two proximate sublevels applicable to the sample. By reading them carefully, the interviewer can decide which sublevel describes the speaker's performance best. This final conclusion may confirm or deny the initial assessment, but it will be the final opinion. The Guidelines are the final criteria with which the sample is compared and the interviewer should always keep them in mind.

There may be occasions when interviewers will find themselves between two sublevels. If, after going through the process, the interviewer is still undecided regarding the sublevel, the best approach is to give the lower rating to the interview. In order to avoid this situation, it is important to produce an interview with a clear demonstration of the floor and the ceiling. If the dilemma cannot be resolved, the rule is to **rate low**. By rating low, the interviewer is acknowledging what the doubt is implying: the speaker does not fully demonstrate that he/she belongs to the sublevel above. The speaker needs to learn more and practice in order to develop more control of the functions of the level in order to fully belong to the sublevel above.

When in doubt, rate low.

Consider a Second Rating

Second rating is a useful tool for the interviewer as well as for the testing program: it provides a second opinion on the recorded samples. This confirms the accuracy of the initial rating, or it may produce a difference of opinion that will need to be clarified. By inviting the conversation about the elements of evaluation among interviewers, it ensures the quality of the program.

The Peace Corps language testing program will second rate all interviewers on a regular basis. All interviewers should practice at second rating other interviews and see their interview ratings confirmed by other interviewers. By checking that all interviewers are testing and rating equally, comparing the samples to the Guidelines and following the LPI structure, the second opinion will confirm the quality of the testing as well as that of the testing program in general.

In the end, make a holistic evaluation: consider all the elements of the totality of the recorded sample. Use the assessment criteria, the interview structure, and the Guidelines, and evaluate the sample after the interview. Because the LPI is a global assessment of language proficiency, rating should not be based on individual language factors such as vocabulary, grammar, fluency, or pronunciation, that are interpreted analytically (i.e., by counting mistakes). The combined analysis of all elements will contribute to the global rating.

Logistics of the Testing Program

Testing for the Peace Corps is individual work, but it belongs in the context of a larger program that goes beyond the individual speaker and interviewer. In order to maintain an organized process, the language coordinator, or the person in charge of coordinating the testing program, controls and coordinates the administration of testing as well as the record keeping and administering of results. These results are shared with the speaker, the post management, Peace Corps/Washington, and the United States Congress. Consequently, it is important to maintain the highest level of consistency and reliability.

In order to support this effort:

- Make sure to record the interview with the best sound quality, without interruptions.
- Keep records of notes and comments until a final evaluation is administered. This way, if there is the need for discussion of the interview, comments will be available.
- Submit ratings in writing, accompanied by the recording.
- Do not reveal a final rating until the coordinator has determined the final rating. This will allow opportunity for second rating, if necessary, and the possible changes that it could bring. This will eliminate the possibility of offering different ratings for one interview.
- Provide positive feedback to speakers.

Giving Feedback

An important use of the LPI is to inform speakers of their progress as learners. The rating scale can function as a stepladder to learning and as a guide to continue developing skills and increasing proficiency levels. The ultimate goal of language learning is to become a Superior level speaker—a speaker who is understood clearly because there is no pattern of error and who can deal with formal as well as informal situations of varying complexity. The feedback an interviewer provides helps the language learner assess their skills honestly and plan for improvement.

Benefits of Positive Encouragement

A positive attitude is indispensable when giving feedback. Describe a speaker’s ability according to what the speaker has demonstrated; then, comment on the next step: what the speaker should do to further develop language skills.

Praise the speaker’s performance: Describe the floor	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment what they can do • Acknowledge comprehensibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define the text type • Report topics of conversation

Recommend next steps: Describe the ceiling	
If the sublevel is Low	Recommend providing more speech, expanding on the functions of the level
If the sublevel is Mid	Recommend providing more speech, concentrating on developing the functions of the next level
If the sublevel is High	Recommend practicing for more control of the functions of the level above

Instead of dwelling on what speakers did wrong, emphasize what they did right, and make suggestions for growth and development. Always be very positive in the feedback and give praise and encouragement to continue developing skills.

The problem with “You did well!”

- Implies that there is a wrong way of communication.
- Denies the possibility of doing better.
- Can be discouraging for those who have limited ability or think that their skills are insufficient.

The problem with “You did poorly!”

- Responds as a teacher after an achievement test instead of as an interviewer.
- Mistakes the purpose of the LPI. The LPI is not an achievement test (a test that reviews that the student knows what was taught). It describes the ability of a speaker to perform tasks in a given language. If the message was understood, the main purpose of communication was fulfilled.
- Emphasizes mistakes and calls attention to communicative insufficiencies.
- Focuses attention on grammar instead of communication and function.

Feedback after the LPI should be a response to performance more than about the specific rating. In fact, it is strongly recommended **not** to give a rating immediately after the interview. The interviewer is not ready to come to a conclusion about the rating until the speech sample has been studied and the “Seven Stars” have been considered. Given the possibility of a second rating, there may be a difference of opinion that would give speakers

a mixed message about their performance and the reliability of the interviewer, the LPI as an assessment tool, and the testing program in general. Preliminary ratings can raise questions and problems that affect the testing program by showing hesitation and contradictory opinions in the final rating. It is advisable to wait until the administrator of the language program provides an official final rating so that no hesitation in the final rating is expressed.

When should another interview be administered?

In order to avoid having to administer a second interview, avoid interviewing when the conditions may limit the possibilities of obtaining an optimal performance. If a situation has occurred to produce emotional breakdown, for example, it is advisable to give the speaker more time to settle before beginning the interview.

Under normal circumstances, if the interview has produced a ratable sample, another LPI should not be administered until more learning and practicing has occurred. The level of performance and, therefore, the rating will not change overnight.

How Much Have You Learned?

1. How does the language proficiency interview use rating to confirm its reliability of an assessment instrument?
2. What are the five steps to produce an accurate rating?
3. How does the structure help the assessment?
4. What kind of feedback should interviewers give speakers immediately after the interview?
5. Why should interviewers avoid giving preliminary ratings?
6. How can the interviewer contribute to the reliability of the testing program?
7. Who should provide the final rating?
8. Why should interviewers provide positive feedback to the speaker?

Implications of LPI Principles in Teaching

A better understanding of the LPI, the rating scale, and the assessment criteria can strengthen the language program during pre-service training and help trainees reach a higher level of proficiency. Language facilitators and coordinators regularly comment that the LPI training helps them establish realistic expectations for learners, facilitators, and the overall program. The focus on communication and performance in the LPI is a direct match to the focus of the language program on getting learners to the Intermediate level in the first few months of their stay in-country.

The Peace Corps first uses the LPI to assess outcomes at the end of pre-service training following the initial intense learning experience in-country. At this point, the interviewer is responsible for certifying that trainees are linguistically prepared to be Volunteers. Interviewers advise trainees of their progress as learners and give them guidance to continue their linguistic development on their own while in service. Peace Corps/Washington collects the results and reports to Congress on compliance with the mandate and on the quality of the general language program of the organization. The information gathered allows the language program to evaluate the results of the local teaching program. Since pre-service training ends with the LPI, the interview provides information about the overall success of the teaching. At that point, the program organizers analyze the effectiveness of the program, and based on the results, modify its content and organization.

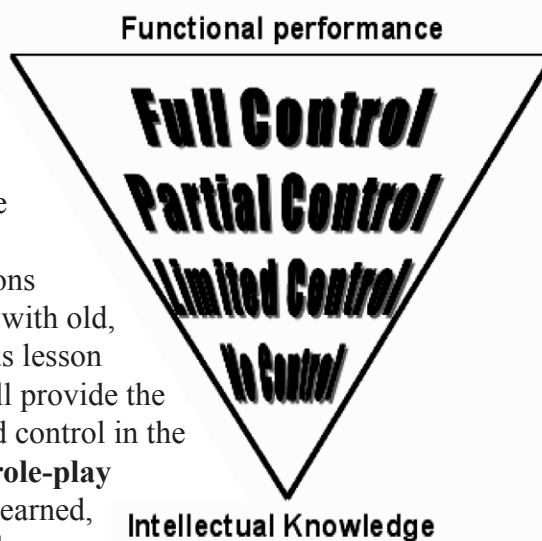
After pre-service training, there are other opportunities for speakers to assess their ongoing and independent language program with an LPI. Their increase in linguistic ability is witness to the diligence of their ongoing language learning progress, and even their incorporation into the community. Additional LPIs help Volunteers to measure their progress as they work in the field. By close of service, the LPI provides important data for future Peace Corps/Washington reference.

This final recording of Volunteer functional ability provides information regarding the speakers' linguistic progress and development during service. In many cases, this report is very useful to speakers, since the record enables Peace Corps/Washington to provide a reference regarding their linguistic development to graduate school admission, job searches, etc.

The language proficiency interview training offers interviewers a unique opportunity to sharpen teaching skills. It provides guidance and reflection on how to set realistic expectations and how to structure classes. Concepts such as the elements of the assessment criteria point to the importance of learning all aspects of oral communication—functions, content, context, accuracy and text type—and helps to place grammar in a better and practical perspective as it relates to communication. Ultimately, it provides a broader understanding of the possibilities to test and evaluate communication in the classroom context.



Many interviewers also recommend the use of the LPI structure as a model for classroom instruction. Similar to the interview, the teaching period must have a warm-up—a period of introduction and reacquaintance of the learner with the language. This period of conversation gives the learner an opportunity to activate the language and prepare for the learning process. By building confidence, the learner is better prepared to produce and intake language. Like the **level checks**, the classroom should provide opportunities to review the known material as the blocks on which new learning can be established. New material, like in the **probes**, will demonstrate limited, partial, or full control, which reflects the quantity and quality of their mastery of the functions developed in the lesson. Alternating new material with old, and providing opportunities to recycle the previous lesson into the new one, like in the **iterative process**, will provide the speaker with opportunities to build confidence and control in the competencies developed through the lesson. The **role-play** provides situations to actively use what has been learned, and prepares the learner to use the functions and the information in situations like those encountered in real life. Learners should never leave the classroom at the level of breakdown, frustrated, or feeling that they cannot continue learning the language. Therefore, a period of **confidence building**, similar to the wind-down, needs to be included in each lesson period. It is very important for teachers to send learners home with a sense of accomplishment that will assist them to continue the learning process on their own.



Another important concern addressed in the LPI is the role of the teacher in the learning process. The LPI encourages the elimination of any “teacher behavior” that may interfere in the learner’s creative process. Therefore, providing vocabulary, correcting, restating, or interrupting should be avoided in the interview. In the same fashion, the language facilitator should use these behaviors sparingly. Similar to the interview, facilitators should allow learners to complete their learning process and their communicative efforts without interruption. While correcting is an important function of the teacher/facilitator, they should select the opportunities to allow learners to reflect on mistakes and allow time for uninterrupted communication and creation with the language. Facilitators should allow for a learner centered classroom experience where the learner can take the most active role in the learning process, and the facilitator participates in the process only as an assistant or consultant, but not the center of all knowledge. For this reason, good interviewer behavior can assist classroom activities. An enthusiastic attitude accompanied by expressions of interest, follow-up questions, and the interlocutor’s response to message over form will encourage learners in their communicative efforts. When the learner concentrates on communication over form (grammar, pronunciation, etc.) and uses all the resources at hand to convey meaning and message to their interlocutors, a more effective communicative approach is attained.

As in the LPI, the classroom experience should concentrate on what students **can do** with the language, the functions the competencies are trying to develop, assisting the learner on the development of skills, and observing performance of what the student can do with what the student knows. The ACTFL Guidelines can serve as a stepladder for learning and in organizing the order of competencies and expectations, always aiming at skill development for functioning in real life.

The following chart is an example of how competencies can be organized in order of the proficiency level which the activities can develop:

LPI Level	Competency
NL	Greetings, family, house, people description, Ask for help, time
NM	Social events, accept and decline invitations, compliment and describe dress, food, likes and dislikes, transport, Telephone calls,
NH	Family and personal routine, surroundings, shopping, directions, weather, physical needs
IL	Declining unwanted attention, giving advise and condolences, Peace Corps
IL	Peace Corps, Work, HIV/AIDS, narrations
IM	Condolences, time frames: narrations, future plans, reporting

While Peace Corps does not subscribe to any given language teaching methodology, understanding of the field of language acquisition will provide ideas to develop and enhance language learning. Facilitators are invited to use all the resources available to them, from effective teaching techniques and methodologies to the resources available in the learning environment of Peace Corps trainees and Volunteers. While technology may not be available at all times, the resources in the Internet are a rich fountain of ideas and materials available to all posts around the world.

Because the needs of the learners are defined by their interest to serve the community and the Peace Corps, language teaching can be integrated with technical and cross cultural training to encourage these motivated learners into higher capacity to do their job.



Competency-Based Training

The LPI is a perfect match to the language teaching program by supporting the drive to develop competencies and performance during training. The Peace Corps language teaching program is the cornerstone of the trainees' preparation for a successful proficiency test at the end of the pre-service training. This intense period of learning and adaptation to the country's new environment, while filled with challenges for the learner, is one of the best opportunities ever presented to a language learner. The greatest advantage is to learn a language in an environment of total immersion where the learner is highly motivated to learn while the surroundings are strongly supporting the learners' development.

While these qualities enable in certain ways the work of the language facilitator, in other ways it presents challenges to the program: their expectations and demands on the quality and efficiency of the program will be higher. An additional challenge, especially for those trainees who recently finished university studies, relates to the quality of learning materials. Because of the highly competitive publications market in the United States, students are used to books, language laboratories, and support materials with a strong theoretical background in language acquisition, the ultimate techniques and resources and connections with technology, and the highest quality of presentation and illustration. Given the limitation of resources of the Peace Corps, and the scarcity of materials in so many languages used by Volunteers, the learning experience of the trainee is different to what they are used to. That process of adaptation to low tech learning, with longer range of expectations and a practical approach to communication with local speakers is in itself another challenge.

The Peace Corps language program is distinguished by the recognition of the trainees as skilled people, highly motivated learners with a rich background that will assist them in their learning process. In general, adults are experienced learners whose cognitive skills are fully developed. This means they can make generalizations, understand semantic and syntactic relationships and integrate the new language into their already developed first language. They are also self-directed and independent. They have strong feelings about how and what they need to learn, and they take responsibility for that learning. And, because of their personal investment in the Volunteer program for the next few years, they understand the importance of being able to communicate in the new language in this new endeavor they have undertaken.

The competency-based approach used by the Peace Corps takes advantage of these strengths. Trainees study the language used by native speakers to express themselves in a variety of situations. Because Peace Corps Volunteers need to be able to function immediately in a new language and culture, a competency-based curriculum includes the most essential language



elements to survive in a new culture. It is designed to be relevant and useful by basing lessons directly on the needs of the learner. Needs assessments and revisions of teaching materials are a continuous process that maintains the relevance of the program to each group of learners. By basing instruction on competencies, lessons and learning goals are clear and concrete. The learners know what success will look like from the start and can assess their own progress toward mastery of the competencies. This type of program is flexible in terms of time, learning style, and instructional techniques. It adapts to the learner's ability and to

the level of difficulty of the material under study. There is no need to linger over a lesson once mastery of a competency has been demonstrated and, within program constraints, extra time can be devoted to more difficult competencies. This approach allows for a variety of techniques, addressing the needs and learning styles of the learners, and there is always room for experimenting with new methods in order to attain proficiency as quickly as possible.

This approach focuses not only on language, but also on the cultural context and purpose of the communication. Some competencies are closely tied to work tasks, such as reporting an absence, explaining a procedure, or making an appointment with a supervisor. Others reflect basic survival needs like buying food, handling emergencies, and using local transportation. Still other competencies are part of ordinary social transactions, such as discussing home and family, requesting clarification, or expressing likes and dislikes. The competencies included in Peace Corps pre-service training are those which Peace Corps Volunteers will need most during their initial months in the country.

The competency-based approach teaches the language, not about the language. It capitalizes on the speaker's interests and needs in order to develop communicative ability. As a natural consequence, the role of grammar and accuracy take a second priority, and communication takes precedence over correctness, precision, and grammar accuracy. It maximizes peer interaction, and encourages participants to interact with the community in order to use and refine the skills learned in class. With so many authentic resources at hand, learners and teachers can use authentic language, with no need to resort to artificial classroom language.

The competency-based training, together with a proficiency approach to linguistic development, aims as well at setting the basis for the continuous language learning expected of the Volunteers beyond the pre-service training. Due to time constraints and the overall mission of the Peace Corps to make the Volunteer a participant of the local community, pre-service language training helps trainees reach a minimum proficiency level as part of the requirements for being sworn in as Volunteers. It is expected that, after swearing in, Volunteers will manage their continued language development by employing language learning strategies, working with tutors, and using self-study materials in order to attain the highest level of proficiency and therefore the highest level of ability to communicate with

the community in which they live. The ability of some members of the community to speak English, or the Volunteer's work teaching English cannot be a waiver to the expectation expressed in the Peace Corps' mission. The Volunteer's responsibility to learn and develop the ability to communicate with the community in the community's language is a matter of the mission, an important element of safety and security, and an effective way to participate fully in the community life.

Part of the pre-service training addresses the need of the trainees to continue learning on their own. During this period, trainees should be introduced to self-directed learning skills and strategies.

Ongoing Language Learning

The first months of language learning during pre-service training are the head start experience in the linguistic preparation of a volunteer. While pre-service training gives the learners the first survival lessons and the tools to continue learning, it does not complete the language learning in country. During pre-service training learners are introduced to the possibilities and resources available to them in order to continue the development of their linguistic skills. The expectation of continuing learning is the strongest arguments in favor of student centered teaching.

In fully self-directed learning, the learner is responsible for:

- Deciding what to learn
- Setting the learning goals
- Deciding how to learn
- Identifying and locating the resources
- Scheduling the learning
- Monitoring and evaluating

A learning activity is more or less self-directed depending on how much of the decision-making about these matters is in the hands of the individual learners. During the first weeks of training, most of the six components listed above are controlled more by trainers or facilitators. As trainees gather knowledge and experience throughout pre-service training, they should take on more and more control of their learning. The aim is to prepare the trainee for a life of fully self-directed learning after swearing in at the end of training. The ACTFL Guidelines can function as a plan to skills development. Each sublevel demands higher control of the communicative functions and enables more complexity of performance. The goal of the program is to turn trainees into lifetime learners through their stay in country, and to build confidence in the Trainee so that they can create plans on how to continue learning and building skills as they move from facilitator-directed activities to self-directed activities.

More Control by Facilitators -----	More Control by Trainee
Class Activities and Assignments	Fully Self- Directed Activities

The Peace Corps encourages learners to take an active role in their learning. It is important for trainees to understand that they are ultimately responsible for their learning. Their language trainers serve as facilitators in the learning process. Keeping language notebooks, discussing their learning with their instructors, and monitoring their own progress with self checklists for competency achievement are some of the ways to actively involve trainees in the training program. Fostering independent learning skills, will not only aid in their ongoing learning after pre-service training, but it will also prevent over-dependence on the language/cross-cultural facilitator during training.

Integrating Language with Other Training Content

In order to prepare trainees for their assignments and community integration, pre-service training must cover several different content areas in addition to language training. The most effective way to cover all the material is to integrate the training components as much as possible. Integration also allows for the reinforcement of content. Designing an integrated curriculum and delivering sessions that incorporate other content requires the language trainer to be familiar with the learning objectives for cross-cultural, health/medical, safety and security, technical, WID/GAD, and any other pre-service training components. In this aspect, language staff works closely with the rest of the programming and training staff in planning for pre-service training.

As competencies from all content areas are reviewed, the training team may see where competencies intersect and where opportunities for team teaching occur. For example, all trainers may have selected the competency *The trainee will be able to conduct a community meeting*. When this occurs, the training staff can discuss how this competency will be taught so that all collaborate in the development of this competency. All instruction, whether team-taught or not, should include at least two training components. For example, if the session has a technical focus (the trainee will be able to conduct community meetings) language or culture can be built in to the lesson plan as well. Language trainers can incorporate and reinforce other training content. Likewise, they may be able to assist technical trainers, medical officers and other trainers with the planning and delivery of sessions to reinforce the language competencies.

Both the language training and the language testing programs aim at the development of proficiency. The attainment of this goal will provide a stronger support to the volunteers in their work, their incorporation to the community in which they work and a better understanding of the cultures with which they get in contact. This will contribute as well to the attainment of the Peace Corps mission of service and cultural exchange.

How Much Have You Learned?

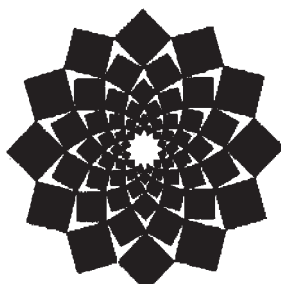
1. How can understanding the language proficiency interview contribute to the Peace Corps' language training?
2. In which instances is the language proficiency interview used for assessment in your post?
3. How can the structure of the interview be applied to the language lesson structure?
4. How can the principles of the language proficiency interview be applied to teaching?
5. What forms of evaluation other than the language proficiency interview can be used?

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APPENDIX A

American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages



ACTFL PROFICIENCY GUIDELINES – SPEAKING

Revised 1999

The *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines — Speaking* (1986) have gained widespread application as a metric against which to measure learners' functional competency; that is, their ability to accomplish linguistic tasks representing a variety of levels. Based on years of experience with oral testing in governmental institutions and on the descriptions of language proficiency used by Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR), the *ACTFL Guidelines* were an adaptation intended for use in academia (college and university levels particularly) in the United States. For this reason, the authors of the *Provisional Guidelines* (1982) conflated the top levels (ILR 3-5), expanded the descriptions of the lower levels (ILR 0-1), and defined sublevels of competency according to the experience of language instructors and researchers accustomed to beginning learners. Their efforts were further modified and refined in the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines* published in 1986.

After additional years of oral testing and of interpretation of the *Guidelines*, as well as numerous research projects, scholarly articles, and debates, the time has come to reevaluate and refine the *Guidelines*, initially those for Speaking, followed by those for the other skills. The purposes of this revision of the *Proficiency Guidelines — Speaking* are to make the document more accessible to those who have not received recent training in ACTFL oral proficiency testing, to clarify the issues that have divided testers and teachers, and to provide a corrective to what the committee perceived to have been possible misinterpretations of the descriptions provided in earlier versions of the *Guidelines*.

An important example is the treatment of the Superior level. The ILR descriptions postulate a spectrum of proficiency abilities from 0 which signifies no functional competence, to 5 which is competence equivalent to that of a well-educated native speaker. Due to the language levels most often attained by adult learners, the *ACTFL Guidelines* do not include descriptions of the highest ILR levels. The ACTFL Superior level, roughly equivalent to the ILR 3 range, is thus to be seen as a baseline level; that is, it describes a particular set of functional abilities essential to that level, but not necessarily the whole range of linguistic activities that an educated speaker with years of experience in the target language and culture might attain. Keeping this distinction in mind reduces the tendency to expect the Superior speaker to demonstrate abilities defined at higher ILR levels.

For this reason, among others, the committee has broken with tradition by presenting this version of the Speaking Guidelines in **descending** rather than ascending order. This top-down approach has two advantages. First, it emphasizes that the High levels are more closely related to the level above than to the one below, and represents a considerable step towards accomplishing the functions at the level above, not just excellence in the functions of the level itself. Second, it allows for fewer negatives and less redundancy in the descriptions when they refer, as they must, to the inability of a speaker to function consistently at a higher level.

Another significant change to the 1986 version of the *Guidelines* is found in the division of the Advanced level into the High, Mid, and Low sublevels. This decision reflects the growing need in both the academic and commercial communities to more finely delineate a speaker's progress through the Advanced level of proficiency. The new descriptors for **Advanced Mid and Advanced Low** are based on hundreds of Advanced-level language samples from OPI testing across a variety of languages.

The committee has also taken a slightly different approach to the presentation of these *Guidelines* from previous versions. The full **prose descriptions** of each level (and, when applicable, its sub-levels) are preceded by clearly delineated **thumb-nail sketches** that are intended to alert the reader to the major features of the levels and to serve as a quick reference, but not in any way to replace the full picture presented in the descriptions themselves. Indeed, at the lower levels they refer to the Mid rather than to the baseline proficiency, since they would otherwise describe a very limited profile and misrepresent the general expectations for the level.

This revision of the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines — Speaking* is presented as an additional step toward more adequately describing speaking proficiency. Whereas this effort reflects a broad spectrum of experience in characterizing speaker abilities and includes a wide range of insights as a result of on-going discussions and research within the language teaching profession, the revision committee is aware that there remain a number of issues requiring further clarification and specification. It is the hope of the committee that this revision will enhance the *Guidelines*' utility to the language teaching and testing community in the years to come.

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SUPERIOR

Speakers at the Superior level are able to communicate in the language with accuracy and fluency in order to participate fully and effectively in conversations on a variety of topics in formal and informal settings from both concrete and abstract perspectives. They discuss their interests and special fields of competence, explain complex matters in detail, and provide lengthy and coherent narrations, all with ease, fluency, and accuracy. They explain their opinions on a number of topics of importance to them, such as social and political issues, and provide structured argument to support their opinions. They are able to construct and develop hypotheses to explore alternative possibilities. When appropriate, they use extended discourse without unnaturally lengthy hesitation to make their point, even when engaged in abstract elaborations. Such discourse, while coherent, may still be influenced by the Superior speaker's own language patterns, rather than those of the target language.

Superior speakers command a variety of interactive and discourse strategies, such as turn-taking and separating main ideas from supporting information through the use of syntactic and lexical devices, as well as intonational features such as pitch, stress and tone. They demonstrate virtually no pattern of error in the use of basic structures. However, they may make sporadic errors, particularly in low-frequency structures and in some complex high-frequency structures more common to formal speech and writing. Such errors, if they do occur, do not distract the native interlocutor or interfere with communication.

ADVANCED HIGH

Speakers at the Advanced-High level perform all Advanced-level tasks with linguistic ease, confidence and competence. They are able to consistently explain in detail and narrate fully and accurately in all time frames. In addition, Advanced-High speakers handle the tasks pertaining to the Superior level but cannot sustain performance at that level across a variety of topics. They can provide a structured argument to support their opinions, and they may construct hypotheses, but patterns of error appear. They can discuss some topics abstractly, especially those relating to their particular interests and special fields of expertise, but in general, they are more comfortable discussing a variety of topics concretely.

Advanced-High speakers may demonstrate a well-developed ability to compensate for an imperfect grasp of some forms or for limitations in vocabulary by the confident use of communicative strategies, such as paraphrasing, circumlocution, and illustration. They use precise vocabulary and intonation to express meaning and often show great fluency and ease of speech. However, when called on to perform the complex tasks associated with the Superior level over a variety of topics, their language will at times break down or prove inadequate, or they may avoid the task altogether, for example, by resorting to simplification through the use of description or narration in place of argument or hypothesis.

ADVANCED MID

Speakers at the Advanced-Mid level are able to handle with ease and confidence a large number of communicative tasks. They participate actively in most informal and some formal exchanges on a variety of concrete topics relating to work, school, home, and leisure activities, as well as to events of current, public, and personal interest or individual relevance.

Advanced-Mid speakers demonstrate the ability to narrate and describe in all major time frames (past, present, and future) by providing a full account, with good control of aspect, as they adapt flexibly to the demands of the conversation. Narration and description tend to be combined and interwoven to relate relevant and supporting facts in connected, paragraph-length discourse.

Advanced-Mid speakers can handle successfully and with relative ease the linguistic challenges presented by a complication or unexpected turn of events that occurs within the context of a routine situation or communicative task with which they are otherwise familiar. Communicative strategies such as circumlocution or rephrasing are often employed for this purpose. The speech of Advanced-Mid speakers performing Advanced-level tasks is marked by substantial flow. Their vocabulary

is fairly extensive although primarily generic in nature, except in the case of a particular area of specialization or interest. Dominant language discourse structures tend to recede, although discourse may still reflect the oral paragraph structure of their own language rather than that of the target language.

Advanced-Mid speakers contribute to conversations on a variety of familiar topics, dealt with concretely, with much accuracy, clarity and precision, and they convey their intended message without misrepresentation or confusion. They are readily understood by native speakers unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives. When called on to perform functions or handle topics associated with the Superior level, the quality and/or quantity of their speech will generally decline. Advanced-Mid speakers are often able to state an opinion or cite conditions; however, they lack the ability to consistently provide a structured argument in extended discourse. Advanced-Mid speakers may use a number of delaying strategies, resort to narration, description, explanation or anecdote, or simply attempt to avoid the linguistic demands of Superior-level tasks.

ADVANCED LOW

Speakers at the Advanced-Low level are able to handle a variety of communicative tasks, although somewhat haltingly at times. They participate actively in most informal and a limited number of formal conversations on activities related to school, home, and leisure activities and, to a lesser degree, those related to events of work, current, public, and personal interest or individual relevance.

Advanced-Low speakers demonstrate the ability to narrate and describe in all major time frames (past, present and future) in paragraph length discourse, but control of aspect may be lacking at times. They can handle appropriately the linguistic challenges presented by a complication or unexpected turn of events that occurs within the context of a routine situation or communicative task with which they are otherwise familiar, though at times their discourse may be minimal for the level and strained. Communicative strategies such as rephrasing and circumlocution may be employed in such instances. In their narrations and descriptions, they combine and link sentences into connected discourse of paragraph length. When pressed for a fuller account, they tend to grope and rely on minimal discourse. Their utterances are typically not longer than a single paragraph. Structure of the dominant language is still evident in the use of false cognates, literal translations, or the oral paragraph structure of the speaker's own language rather than that of the target language.

While the language of Advanced-Low speakers may be marked by substantial, albeit irregular flow, it is typically somewhat strained and tentative, with noticeable self-correction and a certain grammatical roughness. The vocabulary of Advanced-Low speakers is primarily generic in nature.

Advanced-Low speakers contribute to the conversation with sufficient accuracy, clarity, and precision to convey their intended message without misrepresentation or confusion, and it can be understood by native speakers unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives, even though this may be achieved through repetition and restatement. When attempting to perform functions or handle topics associated with the Superior level, the linguistic quality and quantity of their speech will deteriorate significantly.

INTERMEDIATE HIGH

Intermediate-High speakers are able to converse with ease and confidence when dealing with most routine tasks and social situations of the Intermediate level. They are able to handle successfully many uncomplicated tasks and social situations requiring an exchange of basic information related to work, school, recreation, particular interests and areas of competence, though hesitation and errors may be evident.

Intermediate-High speakers handle the tasks pertaining to the Advanced level, but they are unable to sustain performance at that level over a variety of topics. With some consistency, speakers at the Intermediate High level narrate and describe in major time frames using connected discourse of paragraph length. However, their performance of these Advanced-level tasks will exhibit one or more features of breakdown, such as the failure to maintain the narration or description semantically or syntactically in the appropriate major time frame, the disintegration of connected discourse, the misuse of cohesive devices, a reduction in breadth and appropriateness of vocabulary, the failure to successfully circumlocute, or a significant amount of hesitation.

Intermediate-High speakers can generally be understood by native speakers unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives, although the dominant language is still evident (e.g. use of code-switching, false cognates, literal translations, etc.), and gaps in communication may occur.

INTERMEDIATE MID

Speakers at the Intermediate-Mid level are able to handle successfully a variety of uncomplicated communicative tasks in straightforward social situations. Conversation is generally limited to those predictable and concrete exchanges necessary for survival in the target culture; these include personal information covering self, family, home, daily activities, interests and personal preferences, as well as physical and social needs, such as food, shopping, travel and lodging.

Intermediate-Mid speakers tend to function reactively, for example, by responding to direct questions or requests for information. However, they are capable of asking a variety of questions when necessary to obtain simple information to satisfy basic needs, such as directions, prices and services. When called on to perform functions or handle topics at the Advanced level, they provide some information but have difficulty linking ideas, manipulating time and aspect, and using communicative strategies, such as circumlocution.

Intermediate-Mid speakers are able to express personal meaning by creating with the language, in part by combining and recombining known elements and conversational input to make utterances of sentence length and some strings of sentences. Their speech may contain pauses, reformulations and self-corrections as they search for adequate vocabulary and appropriate language forms to express themselves. Because of inaccuracies in their vocabulary and/or pronunciation and/or grammar and/or syntax, misunderstandings can occur, but Intermediate-Mid speakers are generally understood by sympathetic interlocutors accustomed to dealing with non-natives.

INTERMEDIATE LOW

Speakers at the Intermediate-Low level are able to handle successfully a limited number of uncomplicated communicative tasks by creating with the language in straightforward social situations. Conversation is restricted to some of the concrete exchanges and predictable topics necessary for survival in the target language culture. These topics relate to basic personal information covering, for example, self and family, some daily activities and personal preferences, as well as to some immediate needs, such as ordering food and making simple purchases. At the Intermediate-Low level, speakers are primarily reactive and struggle to answer direct questions or requests for information, but they are also able to ask a few appropriate questions.

Intermediate-Low speakers express personal meaning by combining and recombining into short statements what they know and what they hear from their interlocutors. Their utterances are often filled with hesitancy and inaccuracies as they search for appropriate linguistic forms and vocabulary while attempting to give form to the message. Their speech is characterized by frequent pauses, ineffective reformulations and self-corrections. Their pronunciation, vocabulary and syntax are strongly influenced by their first language but, in spite of frequent misunderstandings that require repetition or rephrasing, Intermediate-Low speakers can generally be understood by sympathetic interlocutors, particularly by those accustomed to dealing with non-natives.

NOVICE HIGH

Speakers at the Novice-High level are able to handle a variety of tasks pertaining to the Intermediate level, but are unable to sustain performance at that level. They are able to manage successfully a number of uncomplicated communicative tasks in straightforward social situations. Conversation is restricted to a few of the predictable topics necessary for survival in the target language culture, such as basic personal information, basic objects and a limited number of activities, preferences and immediate needs. Novice-High speakers respond to simple, direct questions or requests for information; they are able to ask only a very few formulaic questions when asked to do so.

Novice-High speakers are able to express personal meaning by relying heavily on learned phrases or recombinations of these and what they hear from their interlocutor. Their utterances, which consist mostly of short and sometimes incomplete sentences in the present, may be hesitant or inaccurate. On the other hand, since these utterances are frequently only expansions of learned

material and stock phrases, they may sometimes appear surprisingly fluent and accurate. These speakers' first language may strongly influence their pronunciation, as well as their vocabulary and syntax when they attempt to personalize their utterances. Frequent misunderstandings may arise but, with repetition or rephrasing, Novice-High speakers can generally be understood by sympathetic interlocutors used to non-natives. When called on to handle simply a variety of topics and perform functions pertaining to the Intermediate level, a Novice-High speaker can sometimes respond in intelligible sentences, but will not be able to sustain sentence level discourse.

NOVICE MID

Speakers at the Novice-Mid level communicate minimally and with difficulty by using a number of isolated words and memorized phrases limited by the particular context in which the language has been learned. When responding to direct questions, they may utter only two or three words at a time or an occasional stock answer. They pause frequently as they search for simple vocabulary or attempt to recycle their own and their interlocutor's words. Because of hesitations, lack of vocabulary, inaccuracy, or failure to respond appropriately, Novice-Mid speakers may be understood with great difficulty even by sympathetic interlocutors accustomed to dealing with non-natives. When called on to handle topics by performing functions associated with the Intermediate level, they frequently resort to repetition, words from their native language, or silence.

NOVICE LOW

Speakers at the Novice-Low level have no real functional ability and, because of their pronunciation, they may be unintelligible. Given adequate time and familiar cues, they may be able to exchange greetings, give their identity, and name a number of familiar objects from their immediate environment. They are unable to perform functions or handle topics pertaining to the Intermediate level, and cannot therefore participate in a true conversational exchange.

APPENDIX B

Role-Play Cards

Intermediate

- ✓ Creates with language
- ✓ Participates in a simple conversation by asking and answering questions
- ✓ Handles a simple situation or social transaction without complication
- ✓ Requires a sympathetic listener
- ✓ Creates discrete sentences

Advanced

- ✓ Narrates, describes, and compares in all time frames
- ✓ Handles a situation with complication
- ✓ Does not require a sympathetic listener
- ✓ Creates paragraphs

Superior

- ✓ Supports opinion and hypothesizes
- ✓ Discusses concrete and abstract issues
- ✓ Handles linguistically unfamiliar situations
- ✓ Has no patterns of error
- ✓ Creates extended discourse

You are a teacher in a secondary school. Your colleagues inform you that the school will be closed for a few days due to an unexpected event. Ask questions to find out what is happening.

You want to move to a new apartment in this neighborhood. Ask the owner four or five questions to find out more information about the new residence.

You are invited by your host family mother to attend a _____, which is a traditional ceremony. Ask four or five questions to learn about the activity and how to prepare for it.

Your parents are coming to visit you at the capital. Make a phone call to reserve hotel rooms for you and your parents. Ask questions to get the information you need.

You are posted in a local organization in your community. Introduce yourself to the director, speak about your American city, your family, and ask a few questions about the place.

You are at the bus station in your town. Ask the attendant a few questions to get information in order to plan your trip to _____, a famous spot in the country.

You just arrived to your new community. You are not familiar with the community's resources and you need to learn some specific information for day-to-day survival. Ask questions of your neighbors to get information about this new community.

You are left alone in the kitchen with the housemother while you wait for dinner to be ready. Make conversation with her to pass the time and enjoy the moment.

You are at the local market getting food for your dinner. Buy groceries from your favorite vendor and negotiate your price.

You are meeting a new friend from the local community. You think this person could become your partner in local activities. Ask a few questions to get to know him or her better.

You just arrived to your community and you need to meet the mayor as protocol for community entry. Tell him about the objectives of your project.

You are interviewing a celebrity, _____, for an article you are writing for the local paper. Ask questions to get information so you can introduce him or her to the readers as a family person.

While visiting the countryside, you lost your money and personal documents. Go to the police station to ask for help. Give as much information as possible so the police can help you.

You are having house problems. Report them to your landlord and ask for action.

You just came back home after a great adventure in the country. Tell your best friend about an interesting incident that occurred during your trip. Describe the event and give details about the place.

You were attacked on your way back to your home. Report the incident to your supervisor the next day. Describe what happened and the steps you took after the incident.

At a gathering, people learn that you're a volunteer from the United States. They are very interested to know how you became a Peace Corps Volunteer. Describe what you did to become a Volunteer.

You are a coach for a local children's team sport. Describe your plans for the team to your supervisor. Explain how you are going to prepare the players, and your expectations for the future of the team.

You bought a birthday gift for your mother. Later, you found out that your sister bought the same gift. Take the gift back to the store and figure out a good excuse to convince the shop assistant to return your money.

You are feeling sick and experiencing strange symptoms. You are worried that you might have been infected with a serious disease. Call your doctor and give a careful description of your symptoms.

You were a witness to a traffic accident. You saw the whole incident. Explain to the police what happened. Describe the incident in detail so the police can make a decision about who was responsible.

You are the guide of a group of local tourists. Tell them about today's schedule. Make sure they know important events, times, and places.

You arrived late to a meeting with a community leader. Explain what happened and apologize.

After selecting and sampling your groceries in the market, you discover that you have forgotten your money at home. Speak to the owner and explain the situation in order to make arrangements for paying.

The neighbors in your community are resisting the idea of developing a plan to handle garbage and recyclable items. In a community meeting, give a speech to persuade them of the benefits of addressing this issue and the consequences of not doing so.

You are attending the opening ceremony of the new health center in your community. At the time of the official speeches, you are invited by the leaders of the event to make a brief speech. Address your audience.

The community council is having a discussion about the importance of supporting children's education. There are those who think that all children should be educated, while some consider it unnecessary to educate girls. Give a speech to this audience regarding the importance of education and address the implications that lack of education or differentiation by sex may have to the future of the community.

Your community is concerned about the possible construction of a nearby new road. Some consider the new road a means to develop the community and access new opportunities, while others are more concerned with the unwanted changes, development, and progress the road could bring to the community. Consider both positions and take a stand to support the construction of the road or to cancel the project.

The leaders of your community have organized a surprise party in your honor and have presented you with a present in recognition for contribution to the community. Make a brief speech to accept the award and give a message to your audience.

Terrorism has become a major concern around the world. Some consider the problem a result of social inequalities, while others blame political strategies and national pride as the cause. Discuss this issue and support your opinion regarding the causes.

APPENDIX C

Peace Corps Language Proficiency Interview Tester Training Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the Peace Corps language proficiency interview (LPI) tester training program?

The Peace Corps LPI tester training program trains language teachers and specialists to give the Peace Corps LPI to Volunteers at the end of pre-service training, during service and at the close of service. This program consists of a five-day workshop during which workshop participants learn about the Peace Corps LPI and the scale used to rate the Peace Corps LPI. During the workshop, participants both observe and practice administering and rating the LPI.

The Peace Corps LPI tester training program, including tester training workshops and the collection and organization of Volunteer testing scores, is housed at Peace Corps/Washington. All information should be forwarded to:

Language Testing Program
Peace Corps/Center
1111 20th Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20526
USA

2. What is the Peace Corps LPI?

The purpose of the Peace Corps LPI is to determine the oral proficiency level of Peace Corps Volunteers. The Peace Corps LPI usually consists of a 5-30 minute conversation, during which the Peace Corps-certified interviewer determines the level of speaking skill of the interviewee. The interview has several parts, including a warm-up and questions designed to probe for a speaker's proficiency level. The interview is recorded so that the interviewer can review it, before providing a final rating.

3. How is an interview rated?

The Peace Corps has based its ratings in the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines to rate the LPI since 1989. The rating is based on five assessment criteria: **functions, context, content, accuracy and text type**. These criteria are holistic: a Volunteer's score is based on the overall performance and not on one criterion.

The LPI scale has four major levels, Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, and Superior. The Novice, Intermediate, and Advanced levels also have sublevels: Novice-Low, Novice-Mid, Novice-High, Intermediate-Low, Intermediate-Mid, Intermediate-High; and Advanced Low, Advanced Mid, and Advanced-High. Workshop participants learn the detailed descriptions for each level, listen to audiocassette samples at each level, and watch videos of Peace Corps LPI performances at each level.

4. How is the LPI different from training received on the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) rating scale?

For a number of years, the spoken language proficiency of Peace Corps trainees and Volunteers was assessed according to the language interview developed by the Foreign Service Institute in Washington, D.C. Until 1969, FSI staff administered most Volunteer interviews, when the Peace Corps contracted with the Educational Testing Service to assume responsibility for the language

proficiency interview testing program and the training of Peace Corps staff and language teachers to administer the FSI interviews to Volunteers. In the 1980s, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) developed an academic rating scale parallel to the FSI scale. The ACTFL Guidelines have been used for Peace Corps LPI ratings since 1989.

The FSI scale is slightly different from the ACTFL and Peace Corps LPI scale. The FSI interview evaluates the speaker's mastery of specific linguistic areas: pronunciation and accent, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, fluency, and listening comprehension, compared to the ACTFL levels described in Question 3. Scoring is based on a six-point numerical system; with 0 as the lowest score and 5 the highest score. Each of the six levels has a specific description, which helps the tester decide which category best describes the speaker's interview performance. A supplementary rating system was also adopted to allow for the considerable increase from one numeric category to the next highest one. Each category score except five was modified to include a plus (for example, 1+, 2+, etc.) to show that the speaker's proficiency exceeds the minimum requirements for the category but does not sustain the next higher category.

5. Who are the tester trainers?

The tester trainers, who carry out the tester training workshops, are college and university professors or language professionals in the United States and Canada. Generally, they are ACTFL trainers experienced in conducting workshops for the Peace Corps.

6. What is the distinction between ACTFL OPI and Peace Corps LPI

Peace Corps language proficiency interview certification is the certification received by individuals who participate in the Peace Corps language tester training workshop and successfully meet the certification criteria for the program. These workshops are designed especially to assist testers in-country to evaluate the functional ability of Peace Corps Volunteers and their ability to perform the tasks for which they are preparing to serve as Volunteers. On the other hand, ACTFL certification is granted to participants of ACTFL-sponsored workshops who successfully complete the certification criteria for the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. This certification is used primarily to evaluate language learners in U.S. universities, educational systems, and other professional organizations. It is important to note that participants will receive Peace Corps LPI certification and **not** ACTFL certification.

7. What is the difference between the Peace Corps language proficiency interview (LPI) and the oral proficiency interview (OPI)?

The Peace Corps language proficiency interview (LPI) is used to describe the interview and rating used in the Peace Corps as opposed to the oral proficiency interview (OPI), which is used to describe the interview, and rating for ACTFL purposes. The distinction is necessary to acknowledge and reflect the differences in the training and certification needs and procedures of language interviewers/testers trained at Peace Corps sites from those trained by ACTFL for application within the American academic community. The OPI procedure seeks to probe global language proficiency skills in a wide range of language contexts. The Peace Corps LPI also seeks to probe global language proficiency skills, but within the language content and context areas relevant to Peace Corps activities and work tasks. Therefore, the context for and content of the Peace Corps LPI is different than that of the OPI, and the two interviews are not necessarily identical. The **scale** used to rate both interviews, however, is the same.

8. What are the criteria for Peace Corps certification?

Peace Corps LPI workshop participants are evaluated on the following criteria:

- Attendance at and participation in the workshop
- Performance on the practice interviews during the workshop
- Accuracy in rating the testing tapes of taped interviews
- Evaluation of interview structure, elicitation techniques, and rating reliability on two tape-recorded interviews conducted by the participant and submitted to the trainer by the end of Day 5 of the workshop.

9. How long will it take to find out about certification?

The amount of time for notification of speakers' certification varies. Each Peace Corps LPI tester trainer conducts workshops at three different posts during a three-week period. Certification decisions will not be made until two weeks after the tester trainer returns to the United States. All participants are notified through personal letters. All letters are sent to the country director of the Peace Corps post where the workshop was conducted via diplomatic pouch (which can take from two to six weeks). Therefore, it may take about two months for participants to receive notification. However, participants in the first of the three workshops will wait longer than participants of the last workshop.

10. How are certification decisions made?

Certification decisions are made by a review committee consisting of the language testing coordinator and two language experts with a great deal of input from the tester trainer.

11. In how many languages can a participant be certified?

A tester can be certified in as many as five languages, as long as the language coordinator can verify that the tester is proficient in all the languages listed. (The tester trainer, in most cases, will not be able to verify a participant's language proficiency in local languages.)

12. Can participants administer Peace Corps LPIs in English or other languages in which they have not been certified?

Testers cannot be certified to test in English. Testers can be certified to test in up to five languages but can test **only** in the languages in which they have been certified to test.

13. Can testers test people who are not Peace Corps Volunteers?

Testers cannot **officially** test individuals who are **not** Peace Corps Volunteers. Testers who are teachers are encouraged to apply what they have learned for their own internal evaluations of students, but they cannot provide any official score report or certificate outside of the Peace Corps.

14. How long does certification last?

Certification is valid for five years from the date of certification. At the end of this time, testers are encouraged to participate in the next tester training workshop.

15. If a participant is not certified after a workshop, what can the participant do to receive certification later?

Depending on the recommendation of the review committee, a participant will be certified, provisionally certified or not certified. A provisionally certified tester will have a period defined by the review committee in which the tester will work with a mentor to further develop his/her interviewing and rating skills. Participants who are not certified must participate in another tester training workshop and meet the criteria when another tester training workshop is offered in the region.

16. How can certified testers be re-certified?

The Peace Corps recommend that all certified testers carefully review the training manual and training tapes and discuss the scale and interview techniques with other certified testers during the five-year certification. After certification lapses, testers must participate in another language testing workshop when offered at the site.

17. Can Peace Corps Volunteers use Peace Corps LPI ratings in the United States to obtain college credit?

Peace Corps Volunteers should contact the college or university of their choice to see if the institution will accept an LPI rating for credit or exemption from specific language courses. Volunteers need to have records of their score via the official signed score report or written verification from the country director. The office of the language testing specialist at the Center for Field Assistance and Applied Research at Peace Corps/Washington keeps records of these results for a limited amount of time. If Volunteers need this information or a letter of recommendation, they can request a reference about their test in-country by contacting:

Language Testing Program
Peace Corps/Center
1111 20th Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20526
USA

The Peace Corps will not offer testing certification in the United States. For certification within the United States, Volunteers may want to do an official OPI administered by ACTFL. This will be an evaluation separate and independent from the Peace Corps. Check www.actfl.org for more information.

APPENDIX D

The Peace Corps Language Proficiency Interview

Fact Sheet for Peace Corps Trainees and Volunteers

Background

The Peace Corps language proficiency testing program responds to a Congressional mandate that *“No person shall be assigned to duty as a volunteer (...) in any foreign country or area unless at the time of such assignment he possesses such reasonable proficiency as his assignment requires in speaking the language of the country or area to which he is assigned.”* (Peace Corps Act 1961.) Individual countries have been establishing a minimum level of functional ability to perform the Volunteer’s duties and, at the end of their pre-service training, testers certify whether they have reached this level and therefore are prepared to continue their service in-country. This required creating a plan for language assessment so that testers are prepared to answer to this need. For a number of years, the spoken language proficiency of Peace Corps trainees and Volunteers was assessed through a face-to-face interview originally developed by the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) in Washington. Until 1969, the bulk of Volunteer interviews were administered for the Peace Corps by FSI staff. From 1969 until 1996, the Peace Corps language proficiency interview tester training program was carried out through a contract with the Educational Testing Service. Since that time, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and ETS developed a parallel academic rating scale. Beginning in 1989, the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines were introduced into the language testing programs at Peace Corps sites. The Peace Corps LPI tester training program, including tester training workshops and the collection and maintenance of Volunteer testing scores, is now housed in the Center for Field Assistance and Applied Research at Peace Corps/Washington.

Practice Interviews for Language Tester Training

You may be asked to volunteer to be interviewed as part of a workshop that prepares language instructors to become certified Peace Corps LPI testers. The instructors are learning a method of assessing oral proficiency, and part of the training requires them to practice skills that they are taught. The language testing program at Peace Corps/Washington is grateful to Volunteers who participate in the practice interviews. In a practice interview, the instructor’s skills are being tested, not the speaker. Therefore, a practice interview is not an official interview, and no official rating can be given based on it.

Interviews During Peace Corps Service

During your service as a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will participate in language proficiency interviews during and at the end of your language training program for on-site diagnostic and instructional purposes. Sometimes the oral interview is administered during initial language training, after one year of service and at the end of in-country service. The individual Peace Corps program determines the frequency of testing.

General Structure of the Interview

The language proficiency interview typically consists of a 5-30 minute conversation, during which the Peace Corps LPI-certified interviewer determines the level of speaking proficiency attained. During the interview, you may be asked to do some role-playing. The interview will be recorded so that the interviewer can listen to it again, and it may be second-rated by another interviewer.

Content of the Interview

The primary purpose of this face-to-face interview is to give you an opportunity to demonstrate, in a realistic conversational situation, the extent of your spoken proficiency in the host country language(s) as well as your ability to understand the spoken language. The interviewer is not interested in “tricking” you or finding out what you do not know. The interviewer makes every effort to put you at ease, to engage you in interesting topics of conversation, and to lead you in gradual stages up to your maximum level of speaking proficiency.

The specific content of each interview is not fixed. Therefore, there will be differences in the topics discussed from one interview to another. It is not useful for Volunteers to try to anticipate details of the conversation based on the experiences of others, to attempt to prepare a conversation beforehand.

Although the interviewer does not cover the same topics in each conversation, he or she does assess the Volunteer’s proficiency according to the ACTFL Guidelines for speaking, which describe the speaker’s functional ability in the language.

Interview Scoring and Interpretation

The results of the interview are reported as Peace Corps ratings of the language proficiency interview. These ratings are based on the descriptions provided in the ACTFL Guidelines. These Guidelines include four levels divided in three sublevels each. LPI ratings should be considered as ranges rather than points on a scale, since the description of proficiency at each level includes weaker and stronger performances over a wide range.

Score Reporting

The rating received from the interview is indicated on the Peace Corps certificate of language proficiency, which you will receive. Your name, language tested, date and country of testing are also indicated on the certificate. The Peace Corps LPI-certified language tester and the Peace Corps country director sign the certificate. In addition, your scores are kept on file for two years. During this two-year period, you can request Peace Corps/Washington to provide written verification of your language proficiency rating for use by academic institutions and prospective employers. Requests for score verification and inquiries of this testing program can be directed to:

Peace Corps Language Testing Program
Peace Corps/CENTER
1111 20th Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20526

APPENDIX E

Guide for the Interview Process

Interview Structure

WARM-UP

- ▷ The interview had a warm-up to put the speaker at ease before beginning to do level checks.
- ▷ The interview began at the Intermediate Level and not at the Novice (eliciting lists, closed questions, specific vocabulary, etc.).
- ▷ It provided useful information about the speaker, which could be used for future questions.

LEVEL CHECKS

□ Novice

- ▷ The interview was maintained as a conversation.
- ▷ Novice level questions were presented as a result of the total breakdown of the speaker at the Intermediate level.
- ▷ The questions were open and contextualized, and elicited lists of words, memorized material, etc.
- ▷ There were follow-up questions to keep the speaker providing more language in the topic (e.g., for numbers: the telephone number, the birth date).
- ▷ After establishing the floor at the Novice, there were attempts to demonstrate that the speaker could create with the language (Intermediate level probes): there was an attempt to do the iterative process.

□ Intermediate

- ▷ The interviewer kept a friendly manner that encouraged the speaker's enthusiasm (back-channeling, eye contact, expressing interest).
- ▷ The flow of the conversation was kept without long pauses and silences.
- ▷ The interview was centered on the speaker, who did most of the talking. Topics responded to the speaker's interests.
- ▷ There were follow-up questions exploring different functions within the level on the same topic without topic-hopping. They demonstrated the quantity and quality of the speaker's performance at the level.
- ▷ The floor was clearly established in a variety of topics before probing to the Advanced. It showed the sublevel (what kind of speaker it was: minimal, excellent, etc.).
- ▷ Once the floor was established at the Intermediate, the interview did not go down to elicit Novice level speech (lists, memorized material, etc.).
- ▷ The iterative process was used to demonstrate the ceiling. If probes demonstrated breakdown, the subject was changed and the floor was established once more to show quantity and quality before the next probe.

- ▷ Probes demonstrated the distance from the ceiling. When they showed some control, they were followed up in order to demonstrate the level of control (most of the time, sometimes; Mid or High sublevels). When they showed total breakdown, the probe was followed by a change in topic and the return to the floor to demonstrate the quantity and quality of the Low or Mid sublevels.
 - ▷ The role-play was appropriate to the level and contributed to the assessment: the simple situation/transaction demonstrated functions that were not handled in other parts of the interview.
 - ▷ The speaker had the opportunity to ask questions.
 - ▷ All the functions of the level were demonstrated.
 - ▷ Once the floor was established at the Advanced level, the interview did not return to level checks at the Intermediate.
- **Advanced**
- ▷ The time frames were explored: the interview demonstrated that the speaker could provide a full narration from beginning to the end, maintaining control of time markers (verbal tenses, connectors of sequences, etc.). There were a variety of stories.
 - ▷ There is evidence of control of the narration, description in the major time frames: present, past and future.
 - ▷ The speaker demonstrated the ability to sustain the paragraph discourse, developing ideas from beginning to the end, using cohesive devices such as connectors and other linguistic features (chronology).
 - ▷ The ability to express opinions and to speak about topics other than the personal is demonstrated (the community, work, etc.).
 - ▷ A clear floor was established demonstrating quantity and quality in order to make a clear assessment of the sublevel.
 - ▷ Once the floor was established, the interview did not go down to Intermediate level checks again.
 - ▷ Probes into the Superior came out of the topics explored at the Advanced level. When probes demonstrated total breakdown, the topic was changed and the floor was established once again before another probe; when the probes functioned partially, more follow up probes showed the control of the functions (Mid/High).
 - ▷ The role-play was appropriate to the level and contributed to the assessment: the situation/transaction with a complication demonstrated functions that were not handled in other parts of the interview.
 - ▷ All the functions of the level were demonstrated.
 - ▷ Once the floor was established at the Advanced level, the interview did not return to level checks at the Intermediate.
 - ▷ If there was some control of the functions of the Superior, level checks did not go down to the time frames, but to the opinion.
- **Superior**
- ▷ Once the Advanced level floor was established, the tone of the interview slightly changed to a more formal interview.

- ▷ The flow of the conversation was kept despite the elevation of the language into the abstract and the breadth of the topics.
- ▷ The interview elicited supported opinion in the abstract by moving the topic from the Advanced opinion into a defense of a position previously exposed by the speaker (devil's advocate). This was attained by introducing the question with a prelude that indicated, by the raised discourse level, the request for an abstract topic.
- ▷ The elicitation of the hypothesis came out of the topic developed in the abstract at the extended discourse (supported opinion), as a way to consider speculations about the consequences, results, effects, and impact, of a possibility that is not real. It leads to speculation and not to grammar structures.
- ▷ The Superior level checks demonstrated that the speaker has full control of the low frequency structures and that there is no pattern of errors.

ROLE-PLAY

- ▷ The role-play was introduced when the rating was already established, as a way to check functions that could not be checked before.
- ▷ The role-play was used to check functions, as a level check or a probe.
- ▷ It was introduced clearly, and the roles were assigned.
- ▷ The tester followed through with the activity and all its functions.
- ▷ The speaker took control of the situation and completed the social transaction.
- ▷ The tester answered with short utterances, allowing the speaker to do most of the talking.
- ▷ The situation was with or without complication depending on the level (Intermediate or Advanced).
- ▷ There was a clear transition from the role-play back to the interview.
- ▷ The role-play was a linguistically rich experience and it contributed to the assessment.

WIND-DOWN

- ▷ After the role-play, the speaker had a clear idea that the interview was ready to end.
- ▷ The wind-down lasted at least a couple of minutes to give the speaker the opportunity to relax and get a sense of accomplishment.
- ▷ Questions at this time were at a level where the speaker had full control (at the floor or below).

STRUCTURE

- ▷ The phases of the interview are clearly identifiable.
- ▷ The level checks are pitched at the appropriate level.
- ▷ There is an appropriate number of level checks and probes.
- ▷ The probes target two continuous levels.
- ▷ The role-play is used when needed, at the appropriate time.
- ▷ The length of the interview is appropriate for the level.

ELICITATION

- ❑ The interview sustains a friendly and professional conversational manner at the Intermediate and Advanced levels, and it changes in tone and depth when addressing the functions of the Superior.
- ❑ The interview is centered on the speaker, who does most of the talking.
- ❑ The interviewer does not correct or helps the speaker.
- ❑ There is back-channeling, prodding, and encouragement for more speech.
- ❑ The flow of the conversation was kept without long pauses and silences.
- ❑ There is enough wait time (time to think or to answer), when necessary, but the interview does not have silence and empty spots.
- ❑ There is evidence that the interviewer is listening.
- ❑ Questions are predominantly open-ended.
- ❑ There are follow-up questions.
- ❑ The iterative process is followed: when probing, topics are spiraled up to the next level from the floor; after the ceiling is demonstrated, a new topic is explored at the floor before the next probe.
- ❑ The interview pursues the topics introduced by the speaker.
- ❑ Topics are appropriate for the linguistic level of the speaker.
- ❑ The interview explores a sufficient variety of topics and contexts.
- ❑ **Every question has a purpose.**
- ❑ There is an efficient use of time.

RATING

- ▷ The rating is based on the evidence in the sample.
- ▷ It is a ratable sample that clearly demonstrates patterns of strengths and weaknesses.
- ▷ The sample provides enough evidence to satisfy all the elements of the assessment criteria.
- ▷ When second rated, both raters agree on level and sublevel.

APPENDIX F

Language	Codes	Countries Where Taught
Adja	10	Benin
Afrikaans	400	Namibia, Lesotho, Botswana, Malawi
Agni	337	Ghana
Akan (Twi)	2	Ghana
Aklanon	243	Philippines
Albanian	310	Albania, Macedonia
Anoufo	456	Togo
Antandroy	500	Madagascar
Antanosy	446	Madagascar
Antesaka	499	Madagascar
Arabic (colloquial Jordanian)	9	Jordan, Chad, Cameroon, Niger, Mauritania, Morocco
“Arabic Eastern”	5	Morocco, Jordan
“Arabic Western”	6	Morocco, Jordan, Niger
Armenian	330	Armenia
Asanti	435	Ghana
Asi/Odionganon	276	Philippines
Ateso	477	Uganda
Aucan	478	Suriname
Aymara	12	Bolivia
Azerbaijani	487	Azerbaijan
Bambara (Mainke)	14	Mali, Burkina Faso
Bamenda	182	Cameroon
Bamikeke	180	Cameroon
Bangla	416	Bangladesh
Bantayanon	459	Philippines
Bantuanon	460	Philippines
Bara	498	Madagascar
Bariba	11	Benin, Nigeria
Basa	178	Benin
Bassar	36	Togo
Bemba	7	Zambia, Tanzania
Bengali	20	Bangladesh, Nepal
Berber	21	Morocco
Betsileo	492	Madagascar
Betsimisaraka	493	Madagascar
Bhojpuri	236	Nepal
Bikol	216	Philippines
Bikol-Legaspi	489	Philippines
Bikol-Norte	490	Philippines
Bislama	424	Vanuatu
Boholanon	245	Philippines
Bontoc	254	Philippines
Bulgarian	309	Bulgaria, Romania
Burmese	24	Bangladesh, Thailand
Cakchiquel	464	Guatemala
Caramoranon	332	Philippines
Cebuano (Sebuano)	169	Philippines
Chaga	261	Tanzania

Chavacano	279	Philippines
Chichewa	263	Malawi
Chinese (Cantonese)	28	China
Chinese (Mandarin)	30	China
Chitonga	425	Malawi, Zambia
Chitumbuka	323	Malawi
Chokwe	34	Namibia, Zambia
Chuukese	303	Micronesia
Creole	411	Cape Verde
Cuyonon/Cuyunin	461	Philippines
Czech	296	Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine
Dagbani	437	Ghana
Damara>Nama (Khoe-Khoe)	401	Lesotho, Namibia
Dangme	438	Ghana
Dendi	15	Benin
Dholuo	305	Tanzania
Dhopadhola	476	Uganda
Ditemari	16	Benin
Dogon	448	Mali
Dutch	479	Suriname
Efik	189	Nigeria
English	999	Fiji, Namibia, Tanzania, Uganda
Eshira	318	Gabon
Ewe	40	Togo
Fanagalo	42	S. Africa, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe
Fang	165	Cameroon
Fante	222	Ghana
Fijian	234	Fiji
Fon	46	Benin
French	47	Benin, Togo, Gabon, Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Zambia, Guinea, Cameroon, Chad, Madagascar, Niger, Senegal
Fulde	293	Mali, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Niger
Fula	48	Gambia
Ga	49	Ghana
Georgian	481	Georgia
Ghomala	431	Cameroon
Gilbertese	266	Fiji
Gonja	439	Ghana
Goun	18	Benin
Gourma	39	Togo
Greek	54	Albania, Armenia, Bulgaria, Jordan, Georgia, Romania, Ukraine, Macedonia, Malawi, Paraguay
Guarani	55	Bolivia, Paraguay
Guerze	443	Guinea
Gujarathi	56	Zambia, Kenya
Gulmanchema	429	Burkina Faso
Haitian Creole	57	Haiti
Hassynia	423	Mauritania, Morocco
Hausa	58	Niger
Hiligaynon/Ilonggo	171	Philippines

Hindi	60	Fiji, Nepal
Hungarian	298	Romania
Ibaloi	342	Philippines
Ibanag	241	Philippines
Ife	22	Togo
Ifugao	252	Philippines
Igbo	63	Nigeria
Ikalanga	239	Botswana, Zimbabwe
Ila	166	Zambia
Ilocano (Ilokano)	64	Philippines
Ilonggo/Hiligaynon	288	Philippines
Itawis	341	Philippines
Ivatan	269	Philippines
Jaxanke	417	Senegal
Jola	334	Gambia
Jula	427	Burkina Faso
Kabiye	455	Togo
Kabre	190	Benin
Kako	432	Cameroon
Kalenjin	225	Kenya
Kamba	224	Kenya
Kankanaey	253	Philippines
Kanouri	188	Niger
Kaonde	8	Zambia
Kapampangan (Pampango)	244	Philippines
Kapingamaran	468	Micronesia
Kaqchikel	501	Guatemala
Kasem	440	Ghana
Kazakh	327	Mongolia, Kazakhstan
Kek'chi	465	Belize
Kenya Sign Lang	486	Kenya
Khmer	273	Thailand
Kikuyu	74	Kenya
Kimbu	82	Tanzania
Kimvita	227	Kenya
Kinaray-a	242	Philippines
Kiribati	312	Kiribati
Kissi	187	Guinea
Kiswahili	407	Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya
Kiunguja	228	Tanzania
Kono	223	Nigeria
Kosraean	258	Micronesia
Kotokoli	191	Chad, Togo
Kpelle	186	Guinea
Krio	80	Belize
Kryghyz	331	Kyrgyzstan
Kumba	183	Nigeria
Kuna	413	Panama
Kuria	488	Kenya
Kusaal	441	Ghana
Kusaie	231	Micronesia

Lobiri	430	Burkina Faso
Loocnon	285	Philippines
Luganda	88	Uganda
Lumasaba (Lugiisu)	408	Uganda
Lunda	89	Zambia
Luo	90	Kenya
Lusoga	409	Uganda
Luvale	426	Zambia
Luyha	229	Kenya
Macedonian	338	Macedonia
Mahafaly	497	Madagascar
Maithili	237	Nepal
Malagasy	92	Madagascar
Malinké	418	Mali
Mandarin	457	China
Mandinga	265	Gambia, Guinea, Senegal
Mano	250	Guinea
Maragoli	230	Kenya
Masai	98	Kenya, Tanzania
Maya	99	Belize, Guatemala
Mina	217	Benin, Togo
Mitsogo	433	Gabon
Mobo	58	Togo
Mongolian	324	Mongolia
Moore	102	Burkina Faso
Moroccan	405	Morocco
Mortlockese	484	Micronesia
Mpongwe	177	Gabon
Mwoakilese	482	Micronesia
Namonuito	469	Micronesia
Ndebele	339	Zimbabwe, South Africa
Nepali	103	Nepal
Ngabe	414	Panama
Nukuoro	470	Micronesia
Nyamwezi (Sukuma)	106	Tanzania
Nyanja	107	Zambia
Nzebi	434	Gabon
Obamba	320	Gabon
Odionganon/Asi	268	Philippines
Oshidonga (Ndonga)	403	Namibia
Oshikwanyam (Kwayama)	404	Namibia
Otjiherero (Herero)	402	Namibia
Palauan	240	Micronesia
Pangasinan	238	Philippines
Peul	282	Chad
Pidgin (Tokpigin)	172	Cameroon
Filipino	284	Philippines
Pingilapese	304	Micronesia
Pohnpeian	471	Micronesia
Polish	300	Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Romania, Ukraine,
Ponapean	204	Micronesia

Porohanon	462	Philippines
Portuguese	116	Cape Verde, Mozambique, East Timor
Pulaar	333	Guinea, Mauritania, Gambia, Senegal
Puma	317	Nepal
Quechua	117	Bolivia, Peru
Romanian	311	Romania, Moldova, Bulgaria, Macedonia
Romblomanon	463	Philippines
Rotuman	302	Fiji
Rugciriku	450	Namibia
Rukiga	308	Uganda
Rukwangali	451	Namibia
Rundi	119	Tanzania, Uganda
Runyankore	307	Uganda
Russian	299	Uzbekistán, Kazakhstan, Kryghyzstan, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkmenistán, Ukraine
Ruyuro-Rutooro	306	Uganda
Safuapik	483	Micronesia
Sakalava	447	Madagascar
Samoan	235	Samoa
Sango	121	Chad
Sapwuafik	472	Micronesia
Sara	122	Indonesia
Saramaccan	419	Suriname
Satawalese	221	Micronesia
Sepedí	421	South Africa
Serer	124	Senegal, The Gambia
Sesotho	133	Lesotho
Setswana	260	Botswana, South Africa
Shona	125	Zimbabwe, Mozambique
Sibuyanon	340	Philippines
Silozi	452	Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe
Sindebele	126	Zimbabwe
Siswati	322	South Africa, Swaziland
Slovak	297	Romania, Ukraine
Somali	131	Kenya
Soninke	132	Mali, Mauritania
Sonrai	295	Mali
Sorsoganon	251	Philippines
Soussou	445	Guinea
Spanish	134	Bolivia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, El Salvador, Guatemala, Philippines, Morocco, Ecuador, Nicaragua
Sranan Tongo	420	Suriname
Surigaonon	278	Philippines
Susu	135	Guinea
Suthu	167	South Africa
Swahili (KiSwahili)	136	Tanzania, Zambia
Swati	168	Swaziland, Lesotho, Mozambique, South Africa
Tagalog	138	Philippines
Tajik	329	Uzbekistan, Kyrgyz Republic

Tamazight	458	Morocco
Tamil	139	Fiji, South Africa, Thailand
Tandroy	496	Madagascar
Tashlheet (Berber)	335	Morocco
Telugu	140	Fiji
Temne	141	Guinea
Tetun	485	East Timor
Thai	142	Thailand
Tongan	218	Zambia, Tonga
Trukese	215	Micronesia
TshiVenda	422	Zimbabwe
Tshwa	145	Zimbabwe, South Africa
Tsimihety	494	Madagascar
Tsong	146	South Africa
Tswana (Sitswana)	147	Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe
Tumbuka	174	Zambia
Turkish	148	Bulgaria, Macedonia
Turkmen	326	Turkmenistan
Tuvalu	262	Kiribati, Fiji
Tuwali	491	Philippines
Twi	442	Ghana
Ukrainian	325	Ukraine
Ulithian	220	Micronesia
Urdu	151	Bangladesh, Botswana, Fiji, Malawi, South Africa, Thailand, Zambia
Uzbek	328	Uzbekistán, Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistán
Venda	454	South Africa
Vezo	495	Madagascar
Visayan	155	Philippines
Waray (Samar-Leyte)	219	Philippines
Woleain (Woleai)	213	Micronesia
Wolof	158	Gambia, Senegal
Wounaan	415	Panama
Yao	480	Malawi
Yapese	232	Micronesia
Yom	428	Benin
Yoruba	160	Nigeria, Benin, Togo
Zarma	161	Benin, Níger
Zula	163	South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland

APPENDIX G

Other Forms of Evaluation

While the LPI is the final assessment form of pre-service training, facilitators should use other forms of periodical assessment. These can be done with a wide variety of forms, such as quizzes, exams, oral check-ups, self evaluations, rubrics, facilitated evaluations, check lists, games, etc. A questionnaire is also commonly used to assess knowledge prior to or after a learning activity.

At the End of a Lesson/Unit

While a repeated daily form of assessment can make assessment boring and useless, using a variety of tools can make it possible for both the learner and the facilitator to check how much was learned during the lesson. Quizzes, games, self tests, or check lists can function as a quick and informative way to get information about how much learners have learned. While these forms may take some time in preparation, they can be used repeatedly in different contexts.

After a Longer Period

While assessment of shorter periods can provide information about achievement of control over competencies, other forms can be used to check the overall progress in functional ability. For example, facilitators can estimate by what time learners should have reached the Novice Mid level and prepare an evaluation form where the learner can check how closely he or she is to the requirements of that sublevel.

Rubrics

Rubrics allow facilitators to define the elements of evaluation and describe the gradation of levels of control of the function. Rubrics can be used as a form of evaluation for presentations, activities, and more complex functions. By providing specific categories of evaluation and descriptors, the subjectivity of the evaluation is radically reduced. These descriptors, at the same time, provide a roadmap for learners about what they need to do to increase their proficiency. The evaluation of the certification tapes for the LPI training is a rubric (See Appendix I).

Examples of Rubrics

(Note: These rubrics included in these examples are not complete. They provide an idea of how they can be used.)

Rubric for functions of the Novice level.

The descriptors in the gradation in this case, are explained in such a way that the facilitator can see the level of control of the learner over the functions. This gradation goes from no control to full control, which could also be defined in gradations of frequency, from never to always. This rubric can be used by learners to self-evaluate their impressions of their abilities, or by the facilitator to provide feedback to learners on how their performance was perceived by the facilitator.

Where are you on your ability to perform the following functions?

Function	No control Never	Limited Control Sometimes	Partial control Most of the time	Full control Always
Greeting people politely	Always forgot to say hello	Sometimes said hello and addressed all people politely, but most of the time forgot	Said hello and addressed all people politely most of the time, but sometimes forgot	Always said hello and addressed all people politely
Saying thank you appropriately	Confused the pronunciation and did not make the appropriate gesture	Sometimes used the right phrase, but pronunciation was sometimes confusing	Used the right phrase, but sometimes forgot the appropriate gesture	Used the appropriate phrase with clear pronunciation and gesture

Rubric for self-assessment at the end of the lesson.

Learners were asked to mark the level of control they perceived they had over the competencies of the lesson on greetings.

In a scale from 1-5 where 1 is poorly and 5 is excellent, evaluate your ability to perform the following tasks:

	1	2	3	4	5
Introduce myself					
Ask questions to know others					
Welcome adequately in formal form					
Welcome adequately in informal form					

Rubric for performance of an activity.

(In this case, meeting the mayor in Togo.) The distinction between *vous* and *toi* marks the distinction between formal and informal.

Describe your performance of the following activities while meeting the mayor.

Function	1	2	3	4
Greetings with formal address	Never used <i>vous</i> and always used <i>toi</i>	Sometimes used <i>vous</i> and sometimes used <i>toi</i>	Used <i>vous</i> most of the time but sometimes used <i>toi</i>	Used <i>vous</i> all the time
Hand shake	Did not shake hand when offered	Offered hand first and held the mayor's hand too long	Offered hand first, but shook it only once and was polite	Waited until hand was offered and shook it lightly only once

Role-Plays and Other Games

Playing games to test knowledge is a traditional teaching technique also useful as an assessment form. Facilitators can be very creative in using games, dramas, dialogues, and role-plays to observe the level of control learners have over functions and general performance.

Examples:

Switching chairs.

All students except one are sitting in chairs behind their desks. Each student has a collection of drawings of clothing in different colors. The cards are placed in front of each student and they are given time to observe them. The goal of the leader is to find a seat. The person standing will order all the people with a certain item, or a certain color, to change chairs. When students stand, the previous person standing can find a chair. Another person will call the next color/clothing to switch chairs again. While students are playing, the facilitator can observe the students' level of control over the functions and decide on how much review these learners need. Facilitators can decide in advance what aspect of the performance they want to evaluate (function, pronunciation, sentence structure, command verbs, etc.).

Checklists.

Like the rubrics, checklists can be used as a form of performance evaluation or self-evaluation. Evaluators can generate a list of requirements for the performance of an activity or a function and checks will indicate whether this activity was done satisfactorily. The same form can be used with a yes or no. Appendix E is a sample of a checklist. For example:

Check the categories in which you can mention at least ten words:

Food	
Clothing	
Numbers	
Objects in the house	
Dates	

Test Forms

While many forms of assessment will not require the direct intervention of the facilitator in order to provide information to the learner, it is strongly recommended that attention be given to the information these forms provide, allowing the learner to be self-directed at the same time that he or she is well-supported. The information provided by these forms should inform and transform the learners' experience and the facilitator should adapt the work and practice to respond to the needs exposed by these evaluations. Ultimately, they should also be used to modify the training program in terms of activities, competencies, expectations, and organization of materials.

APPENDIX H

Peace Corps Language Proficiency Interview Training and Certification Participants and Certified Testers Expectations and Rights Training

Expectations of LPI Training Participants

The LPI training is a five-day intensive training. Prior to the training period, participants should read the manual and listen to the recorded interviews provided as part of the training support material. Each day there will be an assignment for participants to complete in order to be prepared for the next day. At the end of the training, participants will provide the trainer with the recordings of two certification interviews. On the last day of the training, they will also complete the required testing to complete their certification. Certification will be granted by the Peace Corps after the trainer discusses participants' performance with the language testing specialist. Only official communication from the Center will provide legitimate certification.

Description of Peace Corps LPI Testers

Peace Corps LPI-certified testers are specialized language professionals who have completed a rigorous training process and have met the established criteria for certification by the Peace Corps as described in the *LPI Manual for Testers*. They represent a critical resource to the agency and to the local Peace Corps language program. The Peace Corps LPI tester certification is a highly valued credential, which can serve as a professional reference.

The awarding of certification as a Peace Corps LPI tester is validation of the testers' understanding of the principles and concepts of oral proficiency testing and of their ability to apply theory to practice. Certification as a Peace Corps LPI tester acknowledges a tester's ability to elicit and rate oral proficiency interviews with a high degree of reliability.

This certification, while a positive reference, can only be used for Peace Corps testing in local languages.

Rights and Responsibilities of Peace Corps LPI Testers

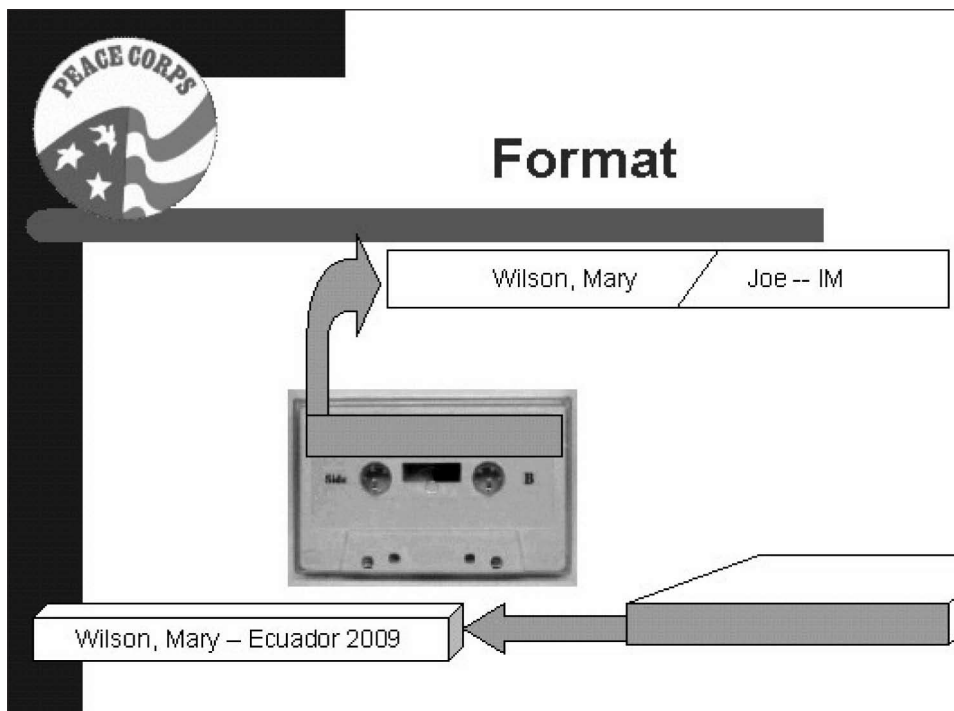
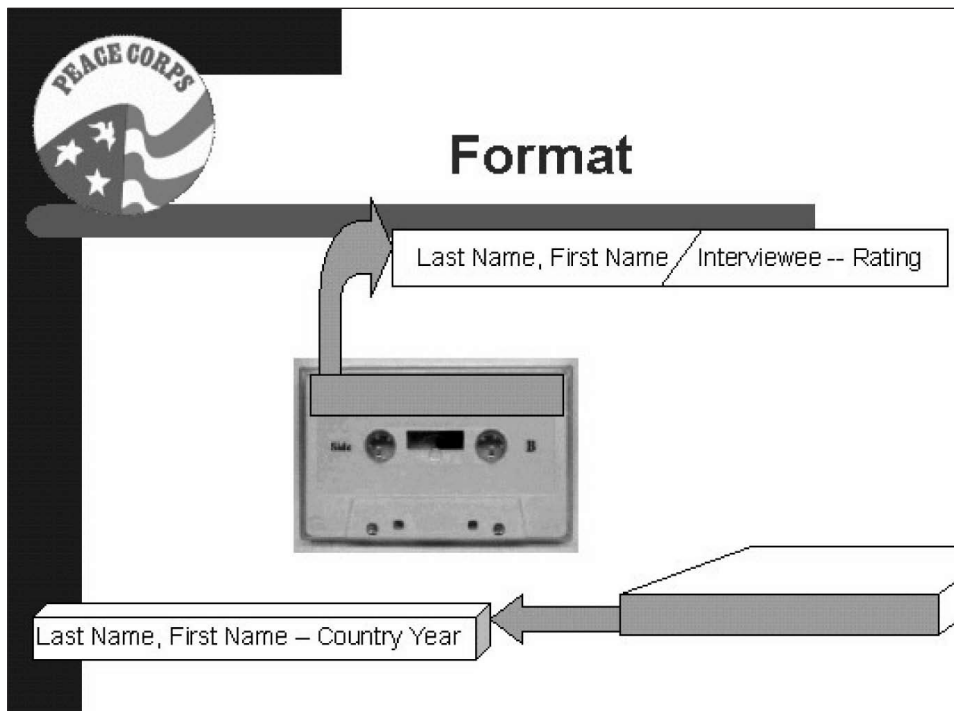
Peace Corps LPI certified testers are authorized to conduct LPIs and to assign ratings in their own local languages. Peace Corps LPI certified testers are only authorized to conduct testing for the Peace Corps language program in the languages in which the testers have been certified. They may not perform Peace Corps LPIs outside Peace Corps' language programs without the expressed written permission of the Peace Corps. Peace Corps LPI-certified testers are not authorized to conduct Peace Corps LPI certification training.

Peace Corps LPI certified testers agree to conduct Peace Corps LPIs in accordance with the policies, procedures, and protocol established by the Peace Corps LPI. The Peace Corps rely on their assessment for decisions regarding the trainees' linguistic performance. This information is crucial to the well-being of the trainee and to the success of the Peace Corps program. For these reasons, Peace Corps LPI-certified testers agree to maintain the highest level of quality and precision in testing and rating during their certification period. They also agree to attend refresher meetings on procedures, and uphold the highest professional and ethical standards in test administration and rating. Rating must be impartial, based on the speaker's performance at the time of the interview and not on previous knowledge or assumptions about the speaker's ability.

Peace Corps LPI tester certification is valid for a maximum of five years, at the end of which all testers must recertify to maintain certification. The procedures and recommendation for recertification training depend upon the performance as a tester during the previous five years of certification.

APPENDIX I

Certification Tape Presentation Format



APPENDIX J

Evaluation Criteria

1. Elicitation Manner

Poor (0 points)

Manner frequently impedes making an accurate evaluation of candidate's performance. Common problems include: overly familiar manner (rapid pace, filling pauses); intimidating or condescending attitude (answering own questions, finishing candidate's sentences or interrupting); timid or nervous tone (frequent long pauses, artificially slow pace); excessive helpfulness (teaching the target language, supplying vocabulary, speaking candidate's native language, making evaluative comments).

Unsatisfactory (1 point)

Manner sometimes impedes making an accurate evaluation of candidate's performance. Tester may favor some topics and not have enough breadth of topic, regardless of candidate's interests, inserting purposeless sections, not giving sufficient stimulus and changing topics abruptly. Common problems include: rephrasing; summarizing; echoing the candidate's utterances; or jumping levels in probing.

Satisfactory (2 points)

Manner is generally friendly with no distracting behaviors exhibited, even though tester may be somewhat inefficient, allowing candidate to ramble or to focus occasionally on a "hothouse special" or topic of primary interest. Warm-up and/or wind-down will still be ineffective, and interviews may be either too long or too short. There may also be a tendency to be too formal or informal and/or too helpful or too demanding. However, ratable samples are obtained.

Excellent (3 points)

Manner facilitates elicitation of candidate's best performance and awarding of accurate rating by balancing friendliness with neutrality and interview format with natural conversation.

2. Interview Structure

Poor (0 points)

The interview lacks structure: warm-up frequently short or non-existent; role-play situation and/or questions by candidate omitted from Intermediate level interviews; line of questioning either random or discrete-point. Most interview time is spent at an inappropriate level.

Unsatisfactory (1 point)

Interview exhibits some structure but does not usually elicit candidate's best performance. Common problems include: standardized and/or short warm-up and wind-down; ineffective or inappropriate role-play situation; insufficient testing of functions and/or topics; failure to alternate level checks with probes.

Satisfactory (2 points)

Structure of interview generally elicits candidate's best performance, although warm-up, role-play situation and wind-down may not always be used to advantage. Probes may not always be alternated with level checks, and too much time may still be spent on either level checks or probes. However, structure is usually conducive to obtaining a ratable sample.

Outstanding (3 points)

Structure of interview consistently elicits a clearly ratable sample. Warm-up is effective and level checks and probes bring out the candidate's best performance, even in borderline cases. Role-play situation is used fruitfully, integrated into the interview appropriately as either a level check or probe. Wind-down is included.

APPENDIX K

Peace Corps Language Proficiency Tester's Certification Workshop Workshop Evaluation Form

Country: _____

Please circle the number that most closely corresponds to your opinion.
Respond to the remaining questions to the best of your ability.
Your comments will assist the program in future presentations.

- | | | | | | | |
|----|--|----------|-------|---|----|-----------|
| 1. | The sessions were well organized. | Disagree | | | | Agree |
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. | The workshop's goals and objectives were clear. | Disagree | | | | Agree |
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. | The workshop fully met the stated goals and objectives. | Disagree | | | | Agree |
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. | The workshop materials/sessions/ activities were helpful and relevant to my work. | Disagree | | | | Agree |
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. | The trainer demonstrated competence in the topic areas presented. | Disagree | | | | Agree |
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. | Overall I consider the workshop ... | Poor | | | | Excellent |
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. | Do you feel a need for additional training and/or support in the areas covered by this workshop? If yes, what? | Yes | _____ | | No | _____ |

APPENDIX L

Peace Corps Language Tester Training Testing Tape Rating Form

Name: Mr. _____ (first) _____ (middle) _____ (last)
Ms. _____
Miss _____
Mrs. _____
(Circle one)

Previous Tester Code Number (if applicable) _____

Date of Testing: _____

Tape Number	Rating
1	_____
2	_____
3	_____
4	_____
5	_____

Language(s) for Certification: _____
(the language(s) you can test) _____

Site of testing: _____

APPENDIX M

Peace Corps Language Tester Training Workshop Agenda

Objectives—Day 1

- *Understand importance of LPI to Peace Corps*
- *Understand background of oral proficiency testing*
- *Understand expectations of five-day workshop*
- *Understand concepts of reliability and validity*
- *Learn the Peace Corps LPI rating scale*
- *Understand the four phases of the interview*
- *Discuss pre-recorded interviews*

Agenda

9:00 am	Welcome and Introductions. Workshop overview and certification process. Framework presentation. Background of oral proficiency interviewing and importance to Peace Corps. The rating scale. Structure of the interview. What is a ratable sample? Questions.
10:30-11:15 am	Live English demonstration interview
11:15-11:30 am	Break
11:30-12:30 pm	Listen and critique videotaped interviews
12:30-1:30 pm	Lunch
1:30-2:15 pm	Live English interview and peer critique.
2:15-3:00 pm	Live English interview and peer critique.
3:00-3:15 pm	Break.
3:15-5:30 pm	Listen and critique videotaped interviews.
5:30 pm	Dismissal.
Homework:	Write two Intermediate role plays. Review training manual. Prepare a list of contents and contexts appropriate for local Volunteers.

Peace Corps Language Tester Training Workshop Agenda

Objectives—Day 2

- *Practice using the rating scale*
- *Learn assessment criteria at each level of the rating scale*
- *Understand elicitation techniques and the concept of a ratable sample*
- *Conduct interviews in the language of training*

Agenda

9:00-10:00 am	Framework presentation Share Intermediate level role plays Assessment criteria Elicitation techniques: open-ended questions, spiraling, moving from level-check to probe to level-check
10:00-10:30 am	Live English interview and peer critique.
10:30-10:45 am	Break.
10:45-11:15 am	Live English interview and peer critique.
11:15–12:30 pm	Listen and critique videotaped interviews.
12:30-1:30 pm	Lunch.
1:30-3:15 pm	Group brainstorming on stages of the interview and samples of effective questions for each level.
3:15-3:30 pm	Break.
3:30-4:15 pm	Live English interview and peer critique.
4:15-5:00 pm	Group discussion of live interviews.
5:00-5:30 pm	(Optional) Listen to and critique pre-recorded interviews.
5:30 pm	Dismissal.
Homework:	Read and review “The Interview Structure” and “The Assessment Criteria.” Write two Advanced level role-plays. Brainstorm: How should the principles of the LPI should impact the Volunteer’s learning experience?

Peace Corps Language Tester Training Workshop Agenda

Objectives—Day 3

- *Become familiar with question types*
- *Practice elicitation techniques for the Advanced and Superior levels*
- *Develop ideas for the discussion on teaching implications of LPI*
- *Conduct interviews in local language (using trainees, Volunteers, close of service).*
- *Contribute to discussion on cross-language applications*

Agenda

9:00-10:30 am	Framework presentation. Share Advanced level role plays. Review elicitation techniques for Advanced and Superior. Procedures for conducting certification interviews and rating testing tapes
10:30-10:45 am	Break
10:45-11:30 am	Live local language interview and peer critique.
11:30-12:15 pm	Live local language interview and peer critique.
12:15-12:30 pm	Discussion of live interviews.
12:30-1:30 pm	Lunch.
1:30-2:30 pm	Discussion of cross language applications Teaching implications discussion.
2:30-3:00 pm	Live local language interviews and peer critique.
3:00-3:15 pm	Break.
3:15-4:00 pm	Live Local language interviews and peer critique.
4:00-4:30 pm	Live Local language interview and peer critique.
4:30 pm-5:30 pm	Group discussion of live interviews.
5:30 pm	Dismissal.
Homework:	Select a topic and spiral it for each level. Practice conducting interviews.

Peace Corps Language Tester Training Workshop Agenda

Objectives—Day 4

- *Become familiar with post-workshop activities: second rating, work as certified tester, etc.*
- *Conduct interviews in the language of training in pairs and individually*
- *Prepare Certification Interviews*

Agenda

9:00-9:45 am	Framework Presentation. Discuss topic spiraling (homework). Review for certification exam. Questions and answers.
9:45-10:30 am	Demonstration interview at advanced level.
10:30-10:45 am	Break.
10:45-11:30 am	Live interviews in local language and peer critique. Participants form pairs to conduct interviews as preparation for certification tapes.
11:30-12:15 pm	Live interviews in English and peer critique. Participants form pairs to conduct interviews as preparation for certification tapes.
12:15-12:30 pm	General discussion.
12:30-1:30 pm	Lunch.
1:30-5:30 pm	Live interviews in English for certification tapes. Trainer will be available for individual questions.
5:30 pm	Dismissal.
Homework:	Review the Certification interviews for quality of recording, structure and rating. Review training manual and training tapes in preparation for certification test.

Peace Corps Language Tester Training Workshop Agenda

Objectives—Day 5

- *Complete interviews for certification round as needed*
- *Rate pre-recorded testing tapes in the language of training*
- *Complete written exam*

Agenda

- | | |
|----------|--|
| 9:00 am | Participants complete written exam, listen to, and rate testing tapes.
Trainer available to answer questions about certification. |
| 12:00 pm | Participants submit certification tapes to trainer. |
| 4:00 pm | Participants complete workshop evaluation forms. |

