

ORAL PROFICIENCY TESTING  
Method, Advice, Question Types

0262-1

Retain normal speaking pace and tone unless absolutely impossible. Avoid "caretaker" speech.

Don't take time for corrections and teaching.

Talk as little as possible.

Be patient -- wait through pauses: they are both painful and productive.

Be sure to obtain a ratable sample.

FOUR STAGES

Warm-up                      Level Check                      Probes                      Wind-down

SOME QUESTION TYPES (from ETS Manual)

TYPE	EXAMPLE	OPTIMAL LEVEL(S)
1. Yes/No	Do you live in _____?	0 - 0+ (Novice)
2. Choice	How did you get here, by car or bus?	0+ - 1 (Novice-Intermediate)
3. Polite request	Would you describe this room, please?	All
4. Information (4A with props -- maps, assumed roles, etc.)	Who was with you? Why . . . ?	0+ - 3 (Novice - Superior) 0+ - 1 (Novice/high - Int.)
5. Familiar situation	Please order a hotel room with a double bed and bath at the cheapest rate. NO SERIOUS COMPLICATION	0+ - 1+ (Novice/high - Int./high)
6. Candidate interviewer (6A Ask & Tell)	Please ask me some questions, such as where I live, etc. I have to leave for a minute. Would you please ask (partner) about X and then tell me when I get back?	0+ - 1 (Novice/high - Int.) I - 2 (Int.-Advanced)
7. Rephrasable question	Tell me about bicameral legislatures? Then: Tell me about legislatures with two houses.	not below 1+ (Int./high)
8. Hypothetical	If you . . .	3 - 4+ (Superior)
9. Unfamiliar	Directing tailor to make suit.	3 - 4+ (Superior)
10. Descriptive prelude	Set up complex idea and ask subject's analysis of own thoughts.	3 - 5 (Superior)
11. Conversational prelude	-- two testers set the stage by discussing X and then seek subject's opinion	3 - 5

ORAL EXAMS  
USEFUL SUGGESTIONS

Four stages: Warm-up, Level check, Probe, Wind-down. (list of material)  
Remain aware of interview phase: level & purpose of question.

(Function, Content & accuracy)  
Keep a relaxed atmosphere - avoid sensitive topics.

Candidate must do most of the talking. Watch for recycled vocab.

Use "minimal" encouragers. Indicate attentiveness and interest.

No "baby talk". Try to maintain a natural "focused" conversation.

Questions may be rephraseable: from elaborate to simple.

Avoid gestures which reveal meaning.

Avoid questions answerable "yes/no", unless purposeful leading quest.

Are you getting a rateable sample? Great variety with minimum content.

Recognize the merit of circumlocutions. (Unless a discrete point test)

Elicit forms other than the first person singular.

Pace and method may vary markedly from classroom. (Pauses are rateable).

Have them ask you questions also (designate tense).

- Possible grading criteria:
- use of material on your list
  - comprehension, accent, grammar, vocab., fluency
  - function, content, accuracy
  - overall impression (language production and communication)

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Immediate feed-back (evaluation sheet) -to take notes or not?

Have some props or situations ready.

Possibility of "dramatic" role playing.

Prepare your students for the oral exam "interview" (illustrate?)

Record some interviews: -self evaluation, accurate evaluation,  
student feed-back, "communication?"

Consider native speech patterns and cultural differences.

THEORY AND REALITY

It is best not to test your own students.

Length, conditions and scheduling of interview.

Objectivity of your exams at first vs. value.

Logistics.

QUESTION TYPES IN RELATION TO CANDIDATE PERFORMANCE  
(CAPSULE CHARACTERIZATION)

0263-3

<u>ACTFL/ETS LEVEL</u>	<u>ILR LEVEL</u>	<u>CANDIDATE</u>	<u>TECHNIQUE</u>
NOVICE	0 - 0+	SINGLE WORDS MEMORIZED MATERIAL RECYCLES MATERIAL FROM TESTERS BAREST COMMUNICATION	*PROPS *YES/NO QUESTIONS *CHOICE QUESTIONS
INTERMEDIATE	1 - 1+	QUESTIONS & ANSWERS PAINFUL PAUSES	PROPS *POLITE REQUEST *INFORMATION QUESTIONS *S-I SITUATIONS *CANDIDATE INTERVIEWS TESTERS *ASK & TELL
ADVANCED	2 - 2+	QUESTIONS & ANSWERS SOME DESCRIPTION SOME NARRATION PRODUCTIVE PAUSES SOME POLITE GAP FILLERS	INFORMATION QUESTIONS S-I SITUATIONS WITH COMPLICATIONS *REPHRASABLE QUESTIONS *(HYPOTHETICAL QUESTIONS)
SUPERIOR	3	QUESTIONS & ANSWERS FULL DESCRIPTION FULL NARRATION CORE GRAMMAR BASICALLY CORRECT SOME CIRCUMLOCUTION IN VOCABULARY SOME SUPPORTED OPINION	INFORMATION QUESTIONS REPHRASABLE QUESTIONS *UNFAMILIAR SITUATIONS *HYPOTHETICAL QUESTIONS *DESCRIPTIVE PRELUDE QUESTIONS INFO PASS
	4	QUESTIONS & ANSWERS EXTENSIVE DESCRIPTION EXTENSIVE NARRATION PRECISE VOCABULARY & IDIOMS FULL SUPPORTED OPINION	INFORMATION QUESTIONS REPHRASABLE QUESTIONS UNFAMILIAR SITUATIONS CALLING FOR TAILORING LANGUAGE HYPOTHETICAL QUESTIONS DESCRIPTIVE PRELUDE QUESTIONS *CONVERSATIONAL PRELUDE QUESTIONS

\*SIGNIFIES A TYPE WHICH MAY APPLY TO A GIVEN LEVEL DEPENDING ON THE LANGUAGE

\*SIGNIFIES NEW QUESTION TYPE

TESTING KIT

Suggested Topics For An Oral Test

Introductions and Greetings

- Sample Opening Questions:
- Have you been waiting long?
  - How did you get to FSI?
  - Have you been in this building before?
  - Did you have difficulty finding this office?

Topics useful for all levels:

- Training and experience with the language
- Most recent assignment abroad

- Type of work and responsibilities
- Problems on the job
- Problems of the country, its government, economy, etc.
- Living conditions, travel, recreation
- Earlier assignments (as above)
- Next assignment
- People and events in the news (descriptions, not opinions)

Topics for S-0+ to S-2+

- Family and House
- Date and Time
- Weather
- Giving Directions
- Situations:
  - Getting a hotel room
  - Buying a train ticket
  - Changing money
  - Taking a taxi

Topics for S-2 to S-4

- Explanation of American terms and culture (e.g. "red tape," "Buy American" act, U.S. system of education)
- Reasons for career choice
- Visa interview or other job situations

Topics for S-3+ to S-5

- International politics
- Cultural differences
- Dictation of letter on assigned topic
- Translation from English

# Novice

# Intermediate

# Advanced

try conversation  
(when, where, what)  
10 questions  
+ clothing  
+ basic objects  
+ colors  
+ family  
+ weather  
+ time  
+ date  
+ days  
+ months  
+ years

conversation topics:  
+ describe house  
+ describe family  
+ daily routine  
+ interests  
    books  
    tv  
    sports  
    school  
+ tell me about....  
**Have candidate ask questions**  
situation

narrate  
describe  
Use **past**  
**present**  
**future**  
yesterday  
during vacation  
last year  
**situation**

# Speak louder

# Superior

have candidate  
+ ask questions  
+ speak louder  
+ let candidate talk

**support opinion**  
politics,  
current events  
women's issues  
**hypothesis**  
**situation**

**drop level**  
change topic  
**situation now!**  
wind down

- Uses speech limited to a few words/phrases**
- Communicates using memorized phrases**
- Displays emerging ability to communicate personal information/needs/desires**
- Shows sustained ability to communicate personal info/needs/desires**
- Demonstrates strong ability to communicate personal information/needs/desires**

### **Text type**

- words/memorized phrases**
- sentences**
- string of sentences**
- paragraph length**