Overview

- What is the ILR?
- Background
  - 1950’s: Genesis
    - 1952: Civil Service Commission
    - FSI Descriptions/Scale
  - 1960’s – 1970’s
    - Agency Representatives meet informally
    - 1972: institutionalization begins
    - Proficiency Skill Level Descriptions (SLDs) developed
  - 1980’s–1990’s
    - 1985: OPM establishes SLDs as the standards for the USG
    - Test Development
  - 21st Century:
    - From Proficiency to Performance
    - 4 new sets of Skill Level Descriptions (SLDs)
Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) What is it?

- Organization of representatives from Federal government agencies, academia, and industry
- Regular monthly meetings from Sept. to June
- Goals
  - Standardization of assessment criteria
  - Collaboration of language training, language testing, and translation methodology between agencies
  - Dissemination of new language information and practices from both inside and outside the government community
Background

- Teaching languages in the US
- World War II: USG language requirements
- Post–WW II: expansion of training centers
  - Department of State (DOS)
    - 1945: Division of Training Services
    - 1947: Foreign Service Institute (FSI)
  - Department of Defense (DOD)
    - 1941: Military Intelligence Language School (MILS)
    - 1946: Army Language School replaces MILS
    - 1963: Defense Language Institute (DLIFLC)
1950’s

- 1952: Civil Service Commission (CSC) calls for a system to replace academic grades and self-reports with uniform language standards to hire and evaluate employees.
- FSI takes the challenge
  - Dr. Frank Rice
  - Dr. Claudia Wilds
  - Professor John B. Carroll (Harvard)
  - Osgood’s Semantic Differential
- Result:
  - Speaking Proficiency Descriptions
    - Numerical scale 0 to 6
    - 0 to 6 modified to 0 to 5 with pluses
  - Criterion-referenced Speaking Test
  - Testing instrument: face-to-face interview
Membership increases:
- DLI, NSA, CIA start regular meetings with FSI
- Purpose:
  - Widen applicability of FSI Descriptions
  - Apply descriptions/scale to additional skills
  - Coordinate testing research and development
- 1968 meeting with CSC
  - Standardization of language scores discussed
1960’s – 1970’s (b)

1972: General Accounting Office recommends a more formal organization
   ◦ Group complies:
     • Adopts the name “Interagency Language Roundtable”
     • Agrees to operate by consensus
     • Resolves not to accept funding from any one agency
   ◦ Two Committees established:
     • Testing
     • Training

   ◦ Includes USG agencies and academicians
1980’s – 1990’s

- Membership continues to expand
- 1980: Pardee Lowe, Jr. develops Manual for Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI)
  - FSI test gives way to OPI
- 1985: Office of Personnel Management declares the ILR SLDs as the official standard for measuring language proficiency in the USG
- DLI realigns scores with the ILR
- CIA language school becomes the Intelligence Language Institute
- NSA establishes the Language Center in the National Cryptological School
- 1995: Center for the Advancement of Language Learning (CALL)
  - Re-norming of CIA, DLI, FBI, FSI Testing
  - New Protocol: Speaking Proficiency Test (SPT)
1980’s – 1990’s

- Interest in translation and interpretation begins
  - James Child:
    - The “combined skills” merit separate consideration
    - Is a reading test enough to assess translation skills?
    - Is a speaking test enough to assess interpretation skills?
    - “ILR SLDs for Translation”
      - “Congruity judgment”: skill unique to translation
      - Text typology (same as used for Reading Tests)
  - FBI follows suit
    - Needs assessments for hiring translators
      - Does not have a language school
      - Must test applicants whose native language is not English
    - “Provisional” ILR SLDs for Translation
  - FBI/DLI/NCS “Translation Notes” Meetings
  - ILR establishes Special Interest Group (SIG)for Translation
Crisis: 9/11
- USG new focus: Translation and Interpretation
- ILR SIG becomes the Translation and Interpretation (T&I) Committee

From proficiency to performance
- 2005: SLDs for Translation Performance
- 2007: SLDs for Interpretation Performance
- 2011: SLDs for Audio Translation Performance

FBI develops ILR–based Translation/Audio Translation/Interpretation Tests
Military Deployments
  ◦ DOD needs Cultural Competence training and assessment
  ◦ ILR Special Culture Sub-Committee established
    • 2012: Intercultural Communication SLDs approved

Newest interest:
  ◦ English as a second language
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