

The Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR)

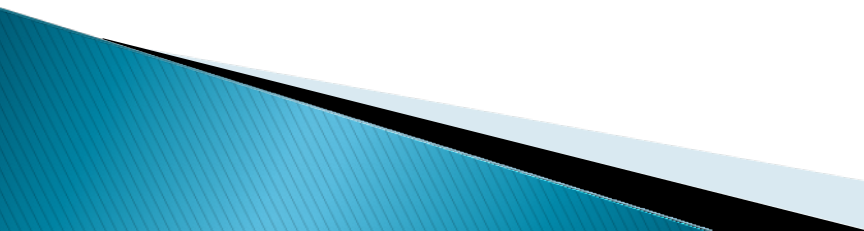
Historical Survey
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LEARN Conference
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Overview

- ▶ 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
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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

1960's – 1970's (a)

- ▶ 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
- ▶ 1974: The Washington Language Testing Symposium
 - 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

21st Century (a)

- ▶ 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

21st Century (b)

- ▶ **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

ILR Contacts

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