The Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center’s DLPT-5

Hamid Mohammed Ahmed
Kieran McAuliffe
Aidee Wilke

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The Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center’s DLPT-5

Test Measure and Purpose

The Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT) is a language proficiency test administered by the Defense Language Institute (DLI) to assess the general proficiency in reading and listening of test-takers in a variety of languages. This proficiency assessment is based on the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) scales (these will be discussed in further detail in section 2 of this paper). The target audience of the DLPT is DLI students and any native English speakers who seek or hope to maintain a linguist position in the Federal government. The DLPT5 was released in 2006 and is the latest version of the DLPT test, which is revised every few years. (Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center, n.d. a & b)

The DLPT5 consists of 2 separate tests: a reading test and a listening test. Furthermore, most languages contain both a lower range and an upper range test. For the purposes of this analysis, the focus will be on the lower range test as this is the test used in DLI’s basic program. Also, depending on the language the test can be either in constructed response or multiple-choice format. (DLIFLC, n.d. a & b)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lower Range</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Listening</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Constructed response</td>
<td>Multiple-choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of items</td>
<td>60 questions</td>
<td>60 questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of passages</td>
<td>30 passages</td>
<td>36 passages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of passages</td>
<td>300 words maximum</td>
<td>400 words maximum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions per passage</td>
<td>Up to 3</td>
<td>Up to 4 (4 choices per question)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Limit</td>
<td>3 hours</td>
<td>3 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table-1

Note: Data from Table 1 was obtained from [http://www.dliflc.edu/archive/documents/Generic-Fam%20Guide-CRT-CBT.pdf](http://www.dliflc.edu/archive/documents/Generic-Fam%20Guide-CRT-CBT.pdf) and [http://www.dliflc.edu/archive/documents/Generic-Fam%20Guide-MC-CBT.pdf](http://www.dliflc.edu/archive/documents/Generic-Fam%20Guide-MC-CBT.pdf)

Test Content

As shown in Table-1, all lower range DLPT5s have 60 items and allot 3 hours for examinees to complete the test. The multiple choice tests have more passages than their constructed response counterparts, but all tests have a range of 30-40 passages.
The content of these passages covers a wide range of topics such as politics, society, culture, economics, geography, science and the military. The passages are all authentic, meaning they are not created for testing or education purposes— they are from real life sources such as TV, radio, the Internet, etc. The passages range from simple advertisements, signs, and announcements to complex news, reports, articles and commentary. This is essential since the DLPT5 does not test for language or content knowledge specific to any course of study, but general proficiency regardless of how it was acquired. The DLPT5 is now administered in more than 14 foreign languages.

In the format for the constructed response versions, there is a brief statement in English prior to the passage explaining the context from which the passage was taken. This is followed by passages of varying lengths in the language being tested (see Table-1 for maximum length). The passage is followed by test items written in English that are either in the form of a question or an incomplete statement. These items may ask about expressions used in a passage, information explicitly stated in the passage, or information inferred or implied from the passage. Below each test item is an answer box for students to type their answers to the test items. This is done in English. The multiple choice test follows the same format except that the test question is followed by 4 choices instead of an answer box. The examinee is to select the best answer from the 4 choices. (DLIFLC, n.d. a & b)

**Test Scoring**

The DLPT5 is a criterion-referenced test that evaluates examinees performance using the Interagency Language Roundtable scale (ILR). The Interagency Language Roundtable is a federal interagency organization responsible for coordination and sharing of information about language related activities at federal levels such as language learning, language use, and language testing. (Interagency Language Roundtable, 2009) The ILR specified a scoring rubric for rating language proficiency in reading, listening, writing, and speaking ranging from level 0 through 5, including plus ratings for each level (0, 0+, 1, 1+, 2, 2+, 3, 3+, 4, 4+, and 5). Appendix 1 includes a list of the ILR level descriptors for both reading and listening obtained from the ILR website for each level and the plus ratings.

As previously mentioned, the DLPT5 has both a lower and upper range test. The upper range test covers the range from ILR level 3 to ILR level 4. The lower range test which this analysis is focusing on covers the range from ILR level 0 to ILR level 3. The lower range possible scores are 0, 0+, 1, 1+, 2, 2+, and 3.

These scores are interpreted according to the ILR levels as indicated in Table-2. It is important to note that the scores are a measure of general language proficiency in listening and reading and are not indicators of an examinee’s ability to perform specific job related tasks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOWER RANGE DLPT5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Listening or</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score interpretation according to ILR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No proficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening or Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table-2**

In the constructed response format, examinees do not need to write essays. They usually write short answers ranging from a word or two, to a few sentences, depending on the information asked for. The quality of the writing, spelling, punctuation, etc. is not assessed. Only the correct information is in the examinee’s response is considered. Each question assess a particular ILR level (e.g. a question on the DLPT5 is a level 1, 2, or 3 question on the lower range test). An examinee must answer about 70% of the questions at a particular level correctly to be assigned that level. (DLIFLC, n.d. a) Raters are trained to follow a rigorous grading protocol and grade only for content. Each test is also independently rated by 2 separate testers. If there is disagreement, a third rater will then be called in to review the item. (DLIFLC, n.d. c)

The multiple choice format uses item response theory. The reason for the 2 different formats, rather than a single standardized form, is explained by the DLIFLC website as follows:

“Multiple-choice tests are preferable because they can be scored automatically; however, in order to generate the statistical information needed to calibrate these tests, we need a large number of people (at least 100, preferably 200 or more) to take the validation form of the tests. For languages for which we cannot get this many people to take a validation form, constructed-response tests are developed. Constructed-response tests do not require the large-scale statistical analysis; the disadvantage is that they must be scored by human raters and so take more time and personnel after the administration.”

Though there are 2 different test formats due to limited populations in certain languages, both tests go through a rigorous validation process and both produce reliable scores based on the ILR scale. To ensure high validity, DLPT5 is developed, continuously revised, and updated by team of experts from target languages and English native speakers whose job to carefully select passages and rate them in addition to develop questions and choices. Like many tests, DLPT5 has different forms that are usually validated before actually being administered. Item research questions are also used with each actual test for the sake of building reliability. According to
the DLIFLC website, “The Defense Language Testing Advisory Board, a group of nationally-renowned psychometricians and testing experts, has reviewed our procedures and declared that they are good.” (DLIFLC, n.d. c)

**Uses of DLPT5 Scores**

Student results on the DLPT5 are everything at DLI. They represent accountability for all parties involved. Their most direct impact is on the students. Students are expected to achieve a certain minimum score on the test in order to graduate from their language program at DLI, which is usually an ILR 2 in reading and an ILR 2 in listening (the minimum scores vary somewhat depending on the language studied). Repercussions for not achieving the required minimum score could mean discharge from the service in some cases, reassignment from a linguist to another job in the service, or further studies and remedial assistance. Meeting the minimum standards at DLI means graduation and assignment as a linguist (after further job specific training beyond language proficiency). Aside from DLI students, the DLPT5 is used to assess linguist competency and determine what is known as Foreign Language Proficiency Pay (FLPP). Essentially, there is a financial reward for linguists who perform well on their DLPT. Linguists who have graduated from DLI are required to take the DLPT5 annually to determine whether or not they are fit to remain in their positions as linguists. Those who perform well receive a pay bonus for each language in which they score well on the DLPT5. DLPT5 results also have a major impact on teachers and the larger organizations to which they belong at DLI. Teachers, their teaching teams, their departments, and ultimately the language school are evaluated by the percentage of students that achieve the minimum standard set for that language on the DLPT5 (essentially a “passing” grade). Target percentages are set (e.g. 80% of students must score a 2 in DLPT5 listening and a 2 in DLPT5 reading) and teams who produce classes where students meet these target percentages are directly rewarded with recognition and certificates. They are indirectly rewarded financially as good results usually lead to better annual appraisals and therefore greater annual salary increases. The reverse can be said for teachers whose classes do not meet the targeted percentages. Teachers, teams, departments, and language schools who produce poor results are under greater scrutiny and usually receive poorer annual appraisals if their results are consistently low. Continual poor results could result in a change in job assignment and even possibly loss of job (there would need to be extenuating circumstances for this to happen).

**Outcomes and Significance of DLPT5 Scores**

The DLPT5 is an extremely high stakes test that has major ramifications for students, teachers, the DLI, and in many ways for the United States and other allies who depend on the language training done at the DLI. The consequences teachers, students, and current linguists are discussed in section 3. They vary from graduation, promotion, and salary increase on the positive side to reprimands, job transfer, and loss of job on the negative side. The combined results of each teaching team and language school at DLI have a major impact on DLI as an organization. DLI is funded by the Department of Defense and that funding is done with expectations that certain results will be achieved. If DLI does not meet its targeted DLPT5
“pass” rates, then it, like individual teachers comes under great scrutiny. Funding may either be increased or withheld depending on these results. Also, changes in organizational structure, approach, and/or personnel may be made based on these results. DLI’s very existence is to some degree dependent on these results since they are one of the main ways of holding the organization accountable for the promises it makes of being able to train highly proficient linguists.

In the post 9/11 world of today, linguistic and cultural skills are of vital importance to national security and international relations. Looking from this broader perspective, it can be said that the DLPT5 has an impact on both of these since it is responsible for determining who can and cannot become a linguist. The test is designed to determine language proficiency, which is a necessary prerequisite for successful performance as a linguist. If the test is valid and successfully assesses what it purports to assess, then it has a positive impact on national security and international relations (or at least helps ensure that whatever decisions are made are made from a position of correct information rather than ignorance). If it is not valid or reliable, then it is compromising national security and jeopardizing international relations.

Test Validity and Reliability

The DLPT5 has been controversial since its implementation at DLI back in 2006. Questions regarding its validity and reliability were raised and there were critics from just about every corner of DLI as test scores were dropping dramatically compared to DLPT4 passing rates. It is easy to understand why it has been controversial since it is such a high stakes test and has a dramatic impact on persons and organizations.

Most of the data regarding the test’s validity and reliability is not available for public review. DLI has a division known as Evaluation and Standards (ES) that is responsible for the development and monitoring of the DLPT5, which closely guards information pertaining to the test. While this data is not available, many of the criticisms leveled against the DLPT5 can still be discussed.

The test was attacked from the start because teaching teams and schools that were used to extremely high passing rates with the DLPT4 were now unable to meet the standards and receiving the negative consequences that come from that failure. Students were also complaining that it was too difficult. Some possible reasons for this may be more related to the DLPT4 than the DLPT5. The DLPT4 had been around for over 10 years and both students and teachers had adapted to the test. Teachers were able to “teach to the test” and test takers were able to “game the test.”

Other possibilities are that the test reflected the government’s increased need for more highly qualified linguists in a post 9/11 world (DLIFLC, n.d. c). As DLI’s website states, “Every 10 to 15 years, as our understanding of the ILR, language testing, and the needs of the government change, the DLPTs have been updated” (DLIFLC, n.d. c). Changes in the DLPT5 reflected a more sophisticated understanding of proficiency levels and the importance of authentic materials (real samples of language from the target country or culture) (DLIFLC, n.d. c). While this shift may have created a drop in test scores, it certainly has increased the transfer and generalizibility of the test. The test’s emphasis on authentic materials that have not been
covered in the curriculum is a more accurate assessment of whether or not test takers can be considered proficient.

While our group generally believes the test is a more accurate level of language proficiency than past versions (unfortunately, we can only assume this because public information is not available), we have 2 major concerns: public availability of information regarding validity and reliability and cost. Regarding the validity and reliability, the DLI website assures readers that a group of highly qualified experts in the field of language testing are responsible for the development and monitoring of the DLPT5. However, when a test has such major implications both financially and personally for individuals and organizations, one has to question such statements. It is understood that due to the nature of DLI and its connection to intelligence activities that most information about the institute must be kept confidential, but a test of such high stakes might require more public scrutiny.

Cost is also a major issue. The development costs of such a test must be astronomical, especially when weighed against the fact that this test is developed for such a small population. There are also the costs to consider if the test is invalid or unreliable. If a proficient linguist is found to be below the standard and is disqualified from his or her job or sent to receive further training, the high costs of providing language training to individuals would be wasted. While we identify these high costs as a major issue, it is difficult to evaluate whether the costs are worth it or not since we do not know the exact costs involved or how much value the Department of Defense places on having highly qualified linguists.

Appendix

ILR Reading Scale

**R-0: Reading 0 (No Proficiency)** No practical ability to read the language. Consistently misunderstands or cannot comprehend at all.

**R-0+: Reading 0+ (Memorized Proficiency)** Can recognize all the letters in the printed version of an alphabetic system and high-frequency elements of a syllabary or a character system. Able to read some or all of the following: numbers, isolated words and phrases, personal and place names, street signs, office and shop designations. The above often interpreted inaccurately. Unable to read connected prose.

**R-1: Reading 1 (Elementary Proficiency)** Sufficient comprehension to read very simple connected written material in a form equivalent to usual printing or typescript. Can read either representations of familiar formulaic verbal exchanges or simple language containing only the highest frequency structural patterns and vocabulary, including shared international vocabulary items and cognates (when appropriate). Able to read and understand known language elements that have been recombined in new ways to achieve different meanings at a similar level of simplicity. Texts may include descriptions of persons, places or things: and explanations of geography and government such as those simplified for tourists. Some misunderstandings
possible on simple texts. Can get some main ideas and locate prominent items of professional significance in more complex texts. Can identify general subject matter in some authentic texts.

**R-1+: Reading 1+ (Elementary Proficiency, Plus)** Sufficient comprehension to understand simple discourse in printed form for informative social purposes. Can read material such as announcements of public events, simple prose containing biographical information or narration of events, and straightforward newspaper headlines. Can guess at unfamiliar vocabulary if highly contextualized, but with difficulty in unfamiliar contexts. Can get some main ideas and locate routine information of professional significance in more complex texts. Can follow essential points of written discussion at an elementary level on topics in his/her special professional field. In commonly taught languages, the individual may not control the structure well. For example, basic grammatical relations are often misinterpreted, and temporal reference may rely primarily on lexical items as time indicators. Has some difficulty with the cohesive factors in discourse, such as matching pronouns with referents. May have to read materials several times for understanding.

**R-2: Reading 2 (Limited Working Proficiency)** Sufficient comprehension to read simple, authentic written material in a form equivalent to usual printing or typescript on subjects within a familiar context. Able to read with some misunderstandings straightforward, familiar, factual material, but in general insufficiently experienced with the language to draw inferences directly from the linguistic aspects of the text. Can locate and understand the main ideas and details in material written for the general reader. However, persons who have professional knowledge of a subject may be able to summarize or perform sorting and locating tasks with written texts that are well beyond their general proficiency level. The individual can read uncomplicated, but authentic prose on familiar subjects that are normally presented in a predictable sequence which aids the reader in understanding. Texts may include descriptions and narrations in contexts such as news items describing frequently occurring events, simple biographical information, social notices, formulaic business letters, and simple technical material written for the general reader. Generally the prose that can be read by the individual is predominantly in straightforward/high-frequency sentence patterns. The individual does not have a broad active vocabulary (that is, which he/she recognizes immediately on sight), but is able to use contextual and real-world cues to understand the text. Characteristically, however, the individual is quite slow in performing such a process. Is typically able to answer factual questions about authentic texts of the types described above.

**R-2+: Reading 2+ (Limited Working Proficiency, Plus)** Sufficient comprehension to understand most factual material in non-technical prose as well as some discussions on concrete topics related to special professional interests. Is markedly more proficient at reading materials on a familiar topic. Is able to separate the main ideas and details from lesser ones and uses that distinction to advance understanding. The individual is able to use linguistic context and real-world knowledge to make sensible guesses about unfamiliar material. Has a broad active reading vocabulary. The individual is able to get the gist of main and subsidiary ideas in texts which could only be read thoroughly by persons with much higher proficiencies. Weaknesses
include slowness, uncertainty, inability to discern nuance and/or intentionally disguised meaning.

**R-3: Reading 3 (General Professional Proficiency)** Able to read within a normal range of speed and with almost complete comprehension a variety of authentic prose material on unfamiliar subjects. Reading ability is not dependent on subject matter knowledge, although it is not expected that the individual can comprehend thoroughly subject matter which is highly dependent on cultural knowledge or which is outside his/her general experience and not accompanied by explanation. Text-types include news stories similar to wire service reports or international news items in major periodicals, routine correspondence, general reports, and technical material in his/her professional field; all of these may include hypothesis, argumentation and supported opinions. Misreading rare. Almost always able to interpret material correctly, relate ideas and "read between the lines," (that is, understand the writers' implicit intents in text of the above types). Can get the gist of more sophisticated texts, but may be unable to detect or understand subtlety and nuance. Rarely has to pause over or reread general vocabulary. However, may experience some difficulty with unusually complex structure and low frequency idioms.

**R-3+: Reading 3+ (General Professional Proficiency, Plus)** Can comprehend a variety of styles and forms pertinent to professional needs. Rarely misinterprets such texts or rarely experiences difficulty relating ideas or making inferences. Able to comprehend many sociolinguistic and cultural references. However, may miss some nuances and subtleties. Able to comprehend a considerable range of intentionally complex structures, low frequency idioms, and uncommon connotative intentions, however, accuracy is not complete. The individual is typically able to read with facility, understand, and appreciate contemporary expository, technical or literary texts which do not rely heavily on slang and unusual items.

**R-4: Reading 4 (Advanced Professional Proficiency)** Able to read fluently and accurately all styles and forms of the language pertinent to professional needs. The individual's experience with the written language is extensive enough that he/she is able to relate inferences in the text to real-world knowledge and understand almost all sociolinguistic and cultural references. Able to "read beyond the lines" (that is, to understand the full ramifications of texts as they are situated in the wider cultural, political, or social environment). Able to read and understand the intent of writers' use of nuance and subtlety. The individual can discern relationships among sophisticated written materials in the context of broad experience. Can follow unpredictable turns of thought readily in, for example, editorial, conjectural, and literary texts in any subject matter area directed to the general reader. Can read essentially all materials in his/her special field, including official and professional documents and correspondence. Recognizes all professionally relevant vocabulary known to the educated non-professional native, although may have some difficulty with slang. Can read reasonably legible handwriting without difficulty. Accuracy is often nearly that of a well-educated native reader.
R-4+: Reading 4+ (Advanced Professional Proficiency, Plus) Nearly native ability to read and understand extremely difficult or abstract prose, a very wide variety of vocabulary, idioms, colloquialisms and slang. Strong sensitivity to and understanding of sociolinguistic and cultural references. Little difficulty in reading less than fully legible handwriting. Broad ability to "read beyond the lines" (that is, to understand the full ramifications of texts as they are situated in the wider cultural, political, or social environment) is nearly that of a well-read or well-educated native reader. Accuracy is close to that of the well-educated native reader, but not equivalent.

R-5: Reading 5 (Functionally Native Proficiency) Reading proficiency is functionally equivalent to that of the well-educated native reader. Can read extremely difficult and abstract prose; for example, general legal and technical as well as highly colloquial writings. Able to read literary texts, typically including contemporary avant-garde prose, poetry and theatrical writing. Can read classical/archaic forms of literature with the same degree of facility as the well-educated, but non-specialist native. Reads and understands a wide variety of vocabulary and idioms, colloquialisms, slang, and pertinent cultural references. With varying degrees of difficulty, can read all kinds of handwritten documents. Accuracy of comprehension is equivalent to that of a well-educated native reader.

ILR Scale Listening
Listening 0 (No Proficiency) No practical understanding of the spoken language. Understanding is limited to occasional isolated words with essentially no ability to comprehend communication. (Has been coded L-0 in some nonautomated applications. [Data Code 00]

Listening 0+ (Memorized Proficiency) Sufficient comprehension to understand a number of memorized utterances in areas of immediate needs. Slight increase in utterance length understood but requires frequent long pauses between understood phrases and repeated requests on the listener's part for repetition. Understands with reasonable accuracy only when this involves short memorized utterances or formulae. Utterances understood are relatively short in length. Misunderstandings arise due to ignoring or inaccurately hearing sounds or word endings (both inflectional and non-inflectional), distorting the original meaning. Can understand only with difficulty even such people as teachers who are used to speaking with non-native speakers. Can understand best those statements where context strongly supports the utterance's meaning. Gets some main ideas. (Has been coded L-0+ in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 06]

Listening 1 (Elementary Proficiency) Sufficient comprehension to understand utterances about basic survival needs and minimum courtesy and travel requirements in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics, can understand simple questions and answers, simple statements and very simple face-to-face conversations in a standard dialect. These must often be delivered more clearly than normal at a rate slower than normal with frequent repetitions or paraphrase (that is, by a native used to dealing with foreigners). Once learned, these sentences can be varied for similar level vocabulary and grammar and still be understood. In the majority of utterances, misunderstandings arise due to overlooked or misunderstood syntax and other grammatical clues. Comprehension vocabulary inadequate to understand anything but the
most elementary needs. Strong interference from the candidate's native language occurs. Little precision in the information understood owing to the tentative state of passive grammar and lack of vocabulary. Comprehension areas include basic needs such as: meals, lodging, transportation, time and simple directions (including both route instructions and orders from customs officials, policemen, etc.). Understands main ideas. (Has been coded L-1 in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 10]

**Listening 1+ (Elementary Proficiency, Plus)** Sufficient comprehension to understand short conversations about all survival needs and limited social demands. Developing flexibility evident in understanding a range of circumstances beyond immediate survival needs. Shows spontaneity in understanding by speed, although consistency of understanding is uneven. Limited vocabulary range necessitates repetition for understanding. Understands more common time forms and most question forms, some word order patterns, but miscommunication still occurs with more complex patterns. Cannot sustain understanding of coherent structures in longer utterances or in unfamiliar situations. Understanding of descriptions and the giving of precise information is limited. Aware of basic cohesive features (e.g., pronouns, verb inflections) but many are unreliably understood, especially if less immediate in reference. Understanding is largely limited to a series of short, discrete utterances. Still has to ask for utterances to be repeated. Some ability to understand facts. (Has been coded L-1+ in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 16]

**Listening 2 (Limited Working Proficiency)** Sufficient comprehension to understand conversations on routine social demands and limited job requirements. Able to understand face-to-face speech in a standard dialect, delivered at a normal rate with some repetition and rewording, by a native speaker not used to dealing with foreigners, about everyday topics, common personal and family news, well-known current events and routine office matters through descriptions and narration about current, past and future events; can follow essential points of discussion or speech at an elementary level on topics in his/her special professional field. Only understands occasional words and phrases of statements made in unfavorable conditions, for example through loudspeakers outdoors. Understands factual content. Native language causes less interference in listening comprehension. Able to understand facts; i.e., the lines but not between or beyond the lines. (Has been coded L-2 in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 20]

**Listening 2+ (Limited Working Proficiency, Plus)** Sufficient comprehension to understand most routine social demands and most conversations on work requirements as well as some discussions on concrete topics related to particular interests and special fields of competence. Often shows remarkable ability and ease of understanding, but under tension or pressure may break down. Candidate may display weakness or deficiency due to inadequate vocabulary base or less than secure knowledge of grammar and syntax. Normally understands general vocabulary with some hesitant understanding of everyday vocabulary still evident. Can sometimes detect emotional overtones. Some ability to understand implications. (Has been Coded L-2+ in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 26]
**Listening 3 (General Professional Proficiency)** Able to understand the essentials of all speech in a standard dialect including technical discussions within a special field. Has effective understanding of face-to-face speech, delivered with normal clarity and speed in a standard dialect on general topics and areas of special interest; understands hypothesizing and supported opinions. Has broad enough vocabulary that rarely has to ask for paraphrasing or explanation. Can follow accurately the essentials of conversations between educated native speakers, reasonably clear telephone calls, radio broadcasts, news stories similar to wire service reports, oral reports, some oral technical reports and public addresses on non-technical subjects; can understand without difficulty all forms of standard speech concerning a special professional field. Does not understand native speakers if they speak very quickly or use some slang or dialect. Can often detect emotional overtones. Can understand implications. (Has been coded L-3 in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 30]

**Listening 3+ (General Professional Proficiency, Plus)** Comprehends most of the content and intent of a variety of forms and styles of speech pertinent to professional needs, as well as general topics and social conversation. Ability to comprehend many sociolinguistic and cultural references. However, may miss some subtleties and nuances. Increased ability to comprehend unusually complex structures in lengthy utterances and to comprehend many distinctions in language tailored for different audiences. Increased ability to understand native speakers talking quickly, using nonstandard dialect or slang; however, comprehension is not complete. Can discern some relationships among sophisticated listening materials in the context of broad experience. Can follow some unpredictable turns of thought readily, for example, in informal and formal speeches covering editorial, conjectural and literary material in subject matter areas directed to the general listener. (Has been coded L-3+ in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 36]

**Listening 4 (Advanced Professional Proficiency)** Able to understand all forms and styles of speech pertinent to professional needs. Able to understand fully all speech with extensive and precise vocabulary, subtleties and nuances in all standard dialects on any subject relevant to professional needs within the range of his/her experience, including social conversations; all intelligible broadcasts and telephone calls; and many kinds of technical discussions and discourse. Understands language specifically tailored (including persuasion, representation, counseling and negotiating) to different audiences. Able to understand the essentials of speech in some non-standard dialects. Has difficulty in understanding extreme dialect and slang, also in understanding speech in unfavorable conditions, for example through bad loudspeakers outdoors. Can discern relationships among sophisticated listening materials in the context of broad experience. Can follow unpredictable turns of thought readily, for example, in informal and formal speeches covering editorial, conjectural and literary material in any subject matter directed to the general listener. (Has been coded L-4 in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 40]

**Listening 4+ (Advanced Professional Proficiency, Plus)** Increased ability to understand extremely difficult and abstract speech as well as ability to understand all forms and styles of speech pertinent to professional needs, including social conversations. Increased ability to
comprehend native speakers using extreme nonstandard dialects and slang, as well as to understand speech in unfavorable conditions. Strong sensitivity to sociolinguistic and cultural references. Accuracy is close to that of the well-educated native listener but still not equivalent. (Has been coded L-4+ in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 46]

**Listening 5 (Functionally Native Proficiency)** Comprehension equivalent to that of the well-educated native listener. Able to understand fully all forms and styles of speech intelligible to the well-educated native listener, including a number of regional and illiterate dialects, highly colloquial speech and conversations and discourse distorted by marked interference from other noise. Able to understand how natives think as they create discourse. Able to understand extremely difficult and abstract speech. (Has been coded L-5 in some nonautomated applications.) [Data Code 46]

Note: Appendix data is obtained from [http://www.govtir.org/](http://www.govtir.org/)

References


