

## Evaluating your Oral Proficiency Level:

### The Japanese Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview

#### Detailed Information

##### Why is evaluation important?

One of the keys to making progress in language learning at any stage is to first understand where you are by some means of proficiency testing. A face-to-face interview is the best way of doing so but it is often impractical outside of a school situation. For this reason OMF has prepared a tool that can be administered at low cost anywhere and at any time. The OMF SOPI is adapted from the Japanese Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview (SOPI) produced by the Centre for Applied Linguistics, Washington DC. It is evaluated by Japanese staff at the OMF Language Centre in Sapporo, all of whom have received official certification by CAL to carry out such evaluations. The speaking tasks are designed especially for missionaries living in Japan and are recommended for intermediate speakers and above.

##### How is the evaluation done?

The Interview is just over 43 minutes long and can be ordered from the OMF Language Advisor at [la@omf.or.jp](mailto:la@omf.or.jp). You will be sent a 45 minute CD together with a copy of the test booklet (in English) to be used together with the instructions you will hear on your CD. The interview requires equipment suitable for playing the CD and also something on which to record your replies. You may record on to a tape, into a digital voice recorder or directly through a mike into your computer. Your completed SOPI can be sent on CD through the post or by e mail as MP3 files (or similar digital audio files) to OMF Language Advisor at [la@omf.or.jp](mailto:la@omf.or.jp). An easy way to send large files over the internet for free is the Sendthisfile home page at <http://www3.sendthisfile.com/index.jsp>. You will need to register for this service however.

The **postal address** is:

Language Advisor, OMF Japanese Language Centre, 1-35 Higashi 17, Kita 36, Higashi Ku, Sapporo 007-0836

007-0836 札幌市東区北36条東17丁目1-35、  
OMF日本語センター、OMF日本語学習アドバイザー

**The cost of evaluation and administration** of one SOPI is **6,500 yen**. This includes the initial mailing costs. Payment is by means of postal furikae. Please pay as soon as your order reaches you with the enclosed form. Should you misplace the form, payment should be made by means of postal furikae as follows:

OMF International Post Office account (yubin furikae):

Account number: 00150-7-776571

Account name: 国際福音宣教会 (こくさいふくいんせんきょうかい)  
Kokusai Fukuin Senkyokai.

When making the payment please ensure that you write on the form that this is a payment for the Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview.

### **What is the format of the interview?**

There is a warming up section where you will respond to questions about yourself. This is not evaluated. This is followed by 14 tasks. 4 of these are based on a series of pictures you will find in the test booklet. A second set of tasks are based on topics and the final set of 5 are situation based. In the case of the second and third sets the topics and situations are written out in English in the test booklet and you will also hear the description read in English on the CD. The tasks vary in level from Intermediate through to Superior level so some tasks you will find much easier than others.

The instructions on the CD will tell you that you have a certain number of seconds (e.g. 30 seconds) to think about your answer and then will instruct you how much time you have to speak (between 45 seconds to 1 minute and 45 seconds) after you hear a question in Japanese. **You may like to practice timing some of these periods with the second hand of your watch before you start your SOPI so that you have some idea of what length of time is being allowed for preparation or for speaking.**

### **But how can I talk into a machine?**

The testee is at a greater disadvantage in this kind of mechanical assessment than when face to face with a native speaker. However, it is a low cost way to evaluate oral ability when distance prevents face to face interviews. It is not easy to speak into a faceless machine. You may find it helps to practice speaking into a tape recorder or recording yourself on your computer so that you get used to this before you embark on the SOPI. You may still feel uncomfortable and strange but be assured that your evaluators will take this into account

and the recorded material will be sufficiently broad in compass to give us a fair assessment of your ability. In any case, the result of your SOPI evaluation should only be one of a variety of methods of assessment of language ability.

### How is the interview graded?

The interviews are graded according to the following levels set by the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages with Superior (Distinguished) as the highest level.

ACTFL Scale	ILR Scale	Definition
Superior	3	Able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations
Advanced Plus	2+	Able to satisfy most work requirements and show some ability to communicate on concrete topics
Advanced	2	Able to satisfy routine social demands and limited work requirements
Intermediate - High	1+	Able to satisfy most survival needs and limited social demands
Intermediate - Mid	1	Able to satisfy some survival needs and some limited social demands
Intermediate - Low		Able to satisfy basic survival needs and minimum courtesy requirements
Novice - High	0+	Able to satisfy immediate needs with learned utterances
Novice - Mid	0	Able to operate in only a very limited capacity
Novice - Low	0	Unable to function in the spoken language