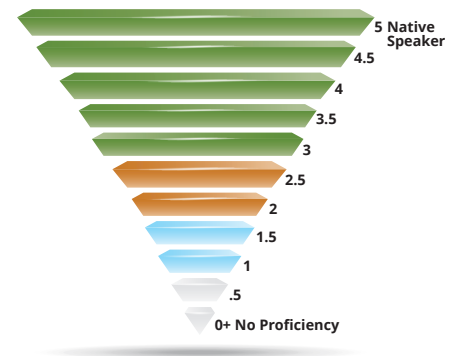


The ILR Scales

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What are the ILR Scales?

The ILR Scales ('Interagency Language Roundtables Scales') are the world's most widely-accepted language proficiency scales. They are **recognized and used by the United Nations, NATO and the U.S. Government**. The ILR scales offer users the security of knowing that the assessment parameters have a long-standing, solid reputation, **developed under renowned Harvard University linguistic expert John B. Carroll**. The ILR Scales are the result of more than 50 years of comprehensive research and cooperative development of real-world language measurement instruments. The ILR Scales have a high degree of predictive validity as has been proven by extensive formal studies; they simply have no peer in the global language testing domain.



Why were the ILR Scales developed?

In the early 1950s, as the United States government expanded its global engagements, identifying language proficiency levels for key assignments took on a heightened urgency. In 1952, the Civil Service Commission was directed to assess the foreign language competency of all government employees and yet at that time, it had no way of accomplishing this critical assessment. It was decided that the US Government needed to develop an objective measurement system applicable to all languages, which could also be tailored to various job levels, from security guard to the highest paying overseas positions. The US Foreign Service Institute took on the challenge of creating such a test, under the leadership of Dr. Henry Lee Smith. The result was the very first ILR testing scale, which objectively rated language proficiency. In 1956, it was determined that based on this new ILR test only 25% of entering Foreign Service officers tested at a "useful" level of proficiency in any foreign language.

In 1958, language proficiency tests became mandatory for all Foreign Service Officers. Under the leadership of renowned linguist and Harvard Professor John B. Carroll, the ILR scales were eventually standardized to five base levels, ranging from 0 (= no functional ability) to 5 (= native speaker). The scales cover these for skill areas reading, listening, speaking and writing skills. The ILR scales soon gained global recognition, and many other Government agencies, including the Peace Corps, adopted the scales for the testing of all overseas volunteers. By 1985, the ILR Scales had been revised under the auspices of the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR). Currently, while specific testing tasks and procedures differ somewhat from one agency to another for operational reasons, all U.S. Government agencies now adhere to the ILR Scales as the gold standard for measuring global language proficiency. The ILR scales have recently been updated by the US Government to also include essential interpreter and translator scales.



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This document is based on the work of Dr. Martha Herzog as seen at www.govtilr.org/skills

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