ACTFL’s OPI
Classnote for CHIN825

林秀惠
Hsiu-huei Lin Domizio
Assistant Professor
Dept. of Foreign Language and Literature
San Francisco State University
ACTFL’s OPI: Strengths & Weaknesses

研究问题:

Is the OPI’s theoretical construct of L2 speakers’ socio-pragmatic competence consistent with the reality of IH (Intermediate-High) and A (Advanced) speaker’s performance during the roleplays?
Communicative Proficiency

听话人理解程度 = 语言正确性

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)
Values these aspects in teaching and in communication:

1. communicative functions
2. contextualization
3. “Language learning is learning to communicate.”
4. Trial & error: “The target linguistic system will be learned best through the process of struggling to communicate.”
5. Communicative competence is the desired goal
   (i.e., the ability to use the linguistic system *effectively* and *appropriately*.)
6. *Fluency* and *acceptable language* are the primary goals:
   *Accuracy* is judged not in the abstract but in context.
OPI Testing & Rating Procedure

- Conducted & rated by ACTFL certified OPI testers
- Each interview is tape recorded & rated by one or more certified OPI testers

- **Official ACTFL OPI ratings**: assigned to those OPIs conducted under the supervision of the ACTFL Testing Office.

- **Advisory OPI ratings**: assigned to those OPIs conducted within a tester’s own academic institution for internal purposes
OPI Testing & Rating Procedure

PROCEDURE

- Each interview is tape recorded & rated by one or more certified testers.

- Each official OPI is blindly rated by a 2nd certified tester.

- When a final rating assigned, an ACTFL OPI certificate is issued.
OPI Testing & Rating Procedure

**MONEY** to become a certified OPI tester/rater

- OPI tester training workshop (4 days):
  - $ 685.00 (ACTFL members); $ 850.00 (non-members)

- prerequisite, the participant must be at least an Advanced speaker in the L2

- MOPI: modified OPI tester training workshop (2/3 days)
  - $350.00 (members); $450.00 (non-members)

  -- qualified to apply for OPI testers w/ limited certification
## Cost of each workshop: OPI, IPA, MOPI

More Money, please…

- Writing Proficiency Guidelines Familiarization Workshop (1 day) - $875.00
- Integrated Performance Assessments (IPA)
  - (1 day) $875.00
  - $1650.00 (2 days); $2,200.00 (3 days)
- OPI Refresher Workshop (1 day) - $150
- Pro-chievement Testing Workshop (1 day) - $875.00
ACTFL: Helping Educators Meet Our Nation’s Language Needs

More Money, please…

- Developing Oral Proficiency: Crossing Major Borders (1 day) $ 875.00

-- Participants discuss the curricular implications of the proficiency scale and explore strategies and activities that enable students to cross proficiency level borders (i.e., Novice to Intermediate, Intermediate to Advanced, Advanced to Superior).
Cost of each OPI, SOPI, SAT, AP

More Money, please…

- CAL_SOPI: $100; COPI: $100
- ETS_SAT (ETS): $ 80.00
- AP (ETS): $ 80.00
- ACTFL_OPI: $129 + $50 more
- OPI (tester): $ 685/$850
- OPI (tester) Refresher: $ 350/$450
- MOPI (modified OPI): $150
- Developing Oral Proficiency: Crossing Major Borders (1 day)-- $875.00
ACTFL’s OPI: Borderline Phenomena

ADVANCED LEVEL:
Sustained performance of Advanced Level Global Tasks

IH: MAJOR BORDER TO AV

IH: considerable but un-sustained performance at the AV Level & extremely strong performance of Intermediate Level global tasks

INTERMEDIATE LEVEL: Sustained performance of intermediate level global tasks
ACTFL's OPI

ACTFL, Proficiency Scale, 10 Levels

1- Novice (-Low, -Mid, -High)
2- Intermediate (-Low, -Mid, -High)
3- Advanced (-Low, -Mid, -High)
4- Superior
ACTFL’s OPI: Strengths & Weaknesses

ILR Scale versus ACTFL OPI scale
### ACTFL’s OPI: L2 learners’ level ability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1- Novice –High</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-can carry out the tasks of the intermediate level but not consistently.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-can create with the language to convey personalized information more than half of the time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-can ask some questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-frequently speak in sentences, albeit very simple ones.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1- Novice –Mid &amp; -Low</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-speak primarily isolated words and memorized phrases</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-be understood, often with difficulty, primarily by persons accustomed to dealing with non-native speakers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-not yet deal with simple social or transactional tasks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Novice: subject areas

- basic object terms
- body parts
- colors
- clothing
- weather
- family members
- foods
- time, date, weekdays, year, months, numbers
## ACTFL’s OPI: L2 learners’ level ability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2- Intermediate-High   | - function at the advanced level more than half the time, but not consistently.  
                          | - fully meet the requirements of the intermediate level                      |
| Intermediate-Mid &     | - can create with the language, combining &                                   |
| Intermediate-Low       |   recombining learned material to provide personal information; can ask questions |
|                        | - can speak in sentences on a variety of familiar topics                      |
|                        | - can initiate, sustain, and conclude a simple social transactional task.     |
|                        | - can be generally understood, with some repetition by those                  |
|                        |   accustomed to dealing with non-native speakers.                            |
ACTFL’s OPI: L2 learners’ level ability

3- Advanced-High
- can function at the superior level more than half of the time, but not consistently.
- can fully meet the requirements of the advanced level

Advanced-Low & Advanced-Mid
- can satisfy the requirements of school and/or work situations.
- can narrate & describe in time/aspect frames
- sustain a paragraph-length discourse
- can talk about a variety of topics, including work & current events
- can initiate, sustain & conclude a social interaction or a conversation involving a transactional situation with a complication
- can participate as a full conversational partner initiating exchanges as well as responding
- be understood by those unaccustomed to dealing with non-native speakers
ACTFL’s OPI: L2 learners’ level ability

Superior Level
- can support opinions, hypothesize, discuss abstract topics, handle linguistically unfamiliar situations

DESCRIPTION
- can participate in formal, informal & professional conversations
- can support opinions & hypothesize
- can sustain extended discourse without patterned errors
- can speak with a high level of accuracy in basic & low-frequency structures
- can deal with concrete & abstract topics
- handle an unfamiliar situation
- can speak with accuracy sufficient to not mis-communicate, disturb a native speaker
ACTFL’s OPI (1989; 1999 Guidelines)

Assessment Criteria: Communicating Foreign Language Proficiency

The Common Yardstick:

1. **Global Tasks/Functions** (語用表現功能)
   - narrate, contrast, instruction, argument, hypothesize

2. **Context** (情況語境)
   - from mostly informal to mostly formal

3. **Content** (主題內容範圍)
   - from autobiographical, personal interests to hypothetical situations

4. **Accuracy** (準確接受程度)
   - acceptability, quality, precision of the message conveyed

5. **Text Type** (語用體材篇幅/意象)
   - from phrases, sentence to extended discourse
OUTCOME OF A GOOD TESTING
1. Ratable sample
2. OPI structure followed
3. Elicitation-response chain observed

TESTER’S PRINCIPLES
1. Speak naturally
2. Put the examinee at ease
3. Encourage the examinee verbally & non-verbally
4. Be patient
5. *Listen to responses with interest*
6. *Tolerate short periods of silence*
7. *Build on the examinee’s interests*
8. Offer opportunities for the examinee to show his/her best performance
9. Avoid teacher behavior
ACTFL’s OPI

GOOD OPI EXPERIENCE

- Creates a conducive atmosphere which allows the best possible performance from the examinees

- Elicits a broad range of examinees speech commensurate with his/her interests and experience

- Challenges the examinee linguistically, in order to establish his/her upper limits

- Yields a sample of language that can be mapped on to a standard scale
TYPES OF EXAMINEES

1. Ideal examinees
2. Extremely nervous
3. Shy, reluctant
4. Reticent, even in native language
5. Overbearing
6. Test-wise
7. Overly concerned about form
8. Uncooperative
9. Charmer
10. Just difficult all about
ACTFL’s OPI

ELICITATION TYPES

- Yes/no questions
- Choice questions
- Information questions
- Information with props questions
- Preludes
- Intonation questions
- Rephrased questions
- Remarks/ reactions
- Question Tag
- Polite requests
- Supported opinion questions
- Hypothetical questions
- **Roleplay Situations**
- Examinee Elicits Information
# ACTFL’s OPI: planes & structures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEQUENCE---&gt;</th>
<th>Warm Up</th>
<th>Level Checks</th>
<th>Probes</th>
<th>Wind Down</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PSYCHOLOGICAL PLANE</strong></td>
<td>热身/起步交谈</td>
<td>水平检视</td>
<td>投设高障碍</td>
<td>缓行下坡</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-表层寒暄</td>
<td>-深广度试探</td>
<td>-找天花板</td>
<td>-暗示结束</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>LINGUISTIC PLANE</strong></td>
<td>Identify the functions &amp; content areas that the speaker can handle w/ greatest ease, accuracy &amp; fluency till a linguistic breakdown surface</td>
<td>语言内容, 功能,流畅性, 可理解程度</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>EVALUATIVE PLANE</strong></td>
<td>初步检视口语水平程度</td>
<td>丈量语言表现的基准线</td>
<td>指认测量能力表现上限</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-highest level of sustained performance (floor)</td>
<td>-Lowest level at which one can no longer sustain (ceiling)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACTFL’s OPI : Structures of questions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Global tasks done before roleplay confirmation check**

- Narration- 叙事，叙述
- Description- 描述，形容
- Comparison/contrast- 比较，对比
- Direction/instruction- 方向，指导步骤
- Supporting ideas- 支持论证
- Hypothetical- 假设，推理，臆测
Roleplay as a confirmation for rating: OPI required
(Novice-High through Advanced-Mid)

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10/15 to 20/25 minutes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

角色扮演在OPI的功能/作用:

• 填补可能尚未收集的语料:
前期过程无法完成的语言功能表现

(to elicit a more complete speech sample and checking to see if the interviewee can carry out linguistic functions not normally elicited in the conversational portion of the exam.)
OPI’s Problem: illocutionary competence has yet to be recognized & identified

Backman’s description of Language Competence:
--The nature of language and language use --

1- **Organizational Competence**: 框架, 篇章建构(经纬幅度结构)
   - Grammatical Competence- controlling formal structure
   - Textual Competence- knowing how to construct discourse
   → 语言结构(形式,语意, 段落篇章)

2- **Illocutionary Competence**: 情境主导, 协商沟通运作
   - Pragmatic Competence- functional use of language
   - Sociolinguistic Competence- knowledge of its appropriateness to the context in which it is used.
   → 任务沟通功能: 沟通运作, 社交, 协商, 交涉, 谈判, 主导/调节情况情势
Problematic definition in OPI criteria: Pragmatic Competence

Backman’s (1990) **Components of Sociopragmatic Competence**: 协商主导沟通能力
Knowledge & skills in performing acceptable illocutionary acts such as Compliment, apology, request, refusal, command, complaint, invitation, etc. ⇒ CCSARP’s research

1- **Ideational Functions** (ability to express ideas & emotions)- 意念情绪.控制/释放
2- **Manipulative Functions** (get things done)- 协商谈判主导能力
3- **Heuristic Functions** (solve problems)- 调解/协调能力
4- **Imaginative Functions** (be creative)- 创意想象力/催化剂

**OPI Guidelines’ (1989, 1999) Skill Level Description:**
Pragmatic Competence = Strategic Competence = ability in using Communication Strategies 空隙填补沟通能力

“Use of various devices to get meaning across and to compensate for remaining gaps in/limited control of the language” (Proficiency Guidelines, 1989, p III-10)

• “the use of verbal & non-verbal communication strategies to compensate for gaps in the language user’s knowledge of the code or for breakdown in communication because of performance factors. (e.g., paraphrase, circumlocution, drawers, false starts, fillers, gestures, etc) (Canale & Swain 1983)
Research Focus: *Interface* between OPI Roleplay & Request Speech Act

OPI- required

A situation in OPI roleplay card

Roleplay
角色扮演
情境对话

Speech Act
意指功能/语言文化行为:
请求模式

*illocutionary + organizational competence:*
协商主导沟通能力+ 语言结构控制
• 情况一：
在八月份的一个下午，你踩着自行车到了西单附近，一跳下车，你顺手把自行车搁在西单购物中心外头，就进了商场买东西去了。四十分钟后你提着东西走了出来，却怎么找也找不到你的自行车。问了以后，才知道你的车因为阻碍交通，被交通警察给拿走了。现在你到了交警派出所了，请跟警察交涉，设法把你的自行车取回。

• 情况二：
今天是你在北京大学期末考的最后一天。你考完了，出了考场就上学校附近福贵楼去好好吃顿饭；想给自己庆祝庆祝，就顺便叫了瓶啤酒给自个儿轻松一下。酒足饭饱之后，竟发现你自个儿身上一分钱也没带，现在
Roleplay Performance w/ reference to Proficiency Level

角色扮演情境对话: 之前学者研究发现

- The IH speakers used *wordier* request realizations > Intermediate-Low, Advanced speakers (Blum-kulka and Olshtain (1986) [L2 中-高级语言水平者有多话现象]-(*loosely connected*)
  → IH speakers’ verbosity phenomenon: *playing-it-safe* strategy
    violation of *conversational principle* proposed by Grice (1975)

- A List of Universal Truths in Cross-cultural Request Behaviors (Blum-Kulka & House, 1989)
  1--The more direct, the more illocutionarily (intentionally) transparent, the shorter the inferential path. [直接请求, 意指状态不可能深邃.]
  2-- The greater the speaker’s power position/dominance relative to the hearer, the lower the use of indirectness. [位高, 权重者, 间接语言行为少.]
  3-- The more difficult the request, the more indirect it will be. [实现程度越难, 请求越间接]
  4-- Rights and obligations do not always match. [权利 不等於 义务]

- Result:
  1- Unsuccessful in the interpersonal aspect, though reached intended communicative goals.
  2- Politeness patterns found were neither L1 nor L2.
  3- NNS failed to mark the relational dimension and to mitigate face-saving acts.

  (audiotaped 48 roleplays by Intermediate & Advanced German L2 of English, Kasper, 1984)
The need to be polite in communicative interaction activates indirect language use. The more indirect a request, the more polite it seems. (Searle, 1975; Leech, 1983; Brown & Levinson, 1987; Sadock, 1975; Blum-Kulka, 1989).

• Zhang, 1995, 中国人
  (1) Level of Directness in Request Statements
  公认间接 (59.2%) → 直接 (26.2%) → 暗示 (9.5%)

(2) 语言意构修饰> 形构修饰
  • External Modification (平均 A-8.5; IH 8.11)
    > Internal Modification (平均 A_11.09; IH 12.52)
    -- grounder (36.1%) → 34.2% (A1), 26.9% (IH1)
    -- apologies (8.3%) → 10.0% (A1), 19.2% (IH1)
    -- sweeteners (6.1%) → 0% (A1), 0% (IH1)

• (3) 关系定位先视情况做请求. Indirectness is not issued w/o preceding external modifications/groundwork. (after face work, negotiation of the relationship).
“Merely acquiring the rules of grammar would be useless w/o knowing the rules of language use by an L2 Learner.” (Hymes, 1972)

- It may not be appropriate for a foreigner to speak a Chinese way Chinese speak to each other, because they themselves expect certain behaviors of foreigners… (Ron Walton, 1987)

- “You cannot go beyond your face but having ways of talking makes social relationships go smoothly.” (Kasper & Zhang, 1995, pp. 13-14)

HOW WOULD CHINESE HANDLE THIS SITUATION?-----发现-----

- 2 IH interviewees: “I have no idea.” The 3rd IH answered: “I think they would be more wheedling and get around the fine.” (去过中国)

- 3 A speakers: ---They get very angry, yelling & screaming.
  - ---- Try to schmooze w/ the police officer & see if he can wiggle out of it somehow.
  - ----American would resort to legal solutions. Chinese might use 关系, say maybe I’ll talk to my friend who is a good friend of the police officer. Use the kind of personal connections.
Research Results (based on the 1,157 SPS)

1. Both IH and A can handle *uncomplicated situations*, though the IH speakers errors are obvious.
2. The IH cannot perform as well in more complicated social interactions.
3. The A speakers demonstrated their stronger socio-pragmatic knowledge and skills.
4. The A speakers can handle complicated transactions with sensitivity to sociocultural concerns.
5. Thus, the study found that the OPI’s theoretical construct of L2 speakers’ sociopragmatic competence is consistent with the reality of IH and A speaker’s performance during the roleplays—by evaluating roleplay utterances/the give-and-take negotiation situations.
谢谢！

参考文献:


ACTFL Official Website: http://www.actfl.org
