GLOSSARY OF LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND LANGUAGE TESTING TERMS

Please note that this glossary is provisional as it will be reviewed during the revision of the *Manual on the Implementation of ICAO Language Proficiency Requirements* – Doc 9835.

Term	Definition
accent	*A distinctive pronunciation of a language which is usually associated with a geographical region (for first-language speakers) or with the phonological influence of another mother tongue (for second or foreign language speakers). All speakers of all languages have an accent.*
administration	*The actions involved in the delivery of a test to a group of test takers under specified conditions.*
cue	*The spoken input from an audio-recording or a live interlocutor which requires the test taker to provide a spoken response.*
	Prompt is synonymous with cue.
descriptor	*A brief description accompanying a band on a rating scale, which summarises the degree of proficiency or type of performance expected of a test taker to achieve that particular level. The band may contain several descriptors.*
dialect	*A distinctive variety of a language, usually associated with social or geographical distinctions, which is characterised by differences in accent, vocabulary and grammar with regard to other varieties of the same language.*
face validity	*The extent to which a test appears to test takers, or those choosing it on their behalf, to be an acceptable measure of the ability they wish to measure.*
formulaic speech	*A restricted or coded use of language comprising fixed standard phrases or lexical and syntactical routines, developed either by consensus for highly repetitive communications (e.g. everyday exchanges of greetings) or formally prescribed for special or professional purposes. (ICAO standardized phraseology is an example of formally prescribed formulaic speech.)*
interlocutor	*A suitably qualified and trained person with whom a test taker interacts during a test in order to complete a speaking task.*
invigilator	*A person ensuring that the specified test conditions are maintained while a test is being conducted.*
	Proctor is synonymous with invigilator.
language proficiency skills	*The knowledge and abilities which impact on the capacity of a given individual to communicate spontaneously, accurately, intelligibly, meaningfully and appropriately in a given language.*
	NOTE: *Six individual language proficiency skills are identified in the ICAO Rating Scale i.e. Pronunciation, Structure, Vocabulary, Fluency, Comprehension and Interactions.*
linguistic rater	*A rater whose assessment will focus on the linguistic features of a test taker's performance in a test (compare with "operational rater").*

Term	Definition
needs analysis	*A detailed study by means of questionnaires submitted to the target population and descriptions of samples of language as it is actually used. The results of such studies provide data for establishing language test objectives.*
operational rater	*A rater with working knowledge of professional standards and procedures of radiotelephony communications whose assessment will focus on the appropriateness of a test taker's performance with regard to the holistic descriptors (compare with "linguistic rater").* *NOTE:* *Knowledge of operational procedures is not tested in language tests.*
plain language	*The spontaneous, creative and non-coded use of the resources of a given natural language, as constrained by the functions and topics that are required to conduct radiotelephony communications and to meet safety-critical requirements for intelligibility, directness, appropriateness, non-ambiguity and concision.*
rate	*To assign a level of language proficiency to a test taker's performance.*
rater	*A suitably qualified and trained person who assigns a rating to a test taker's performance in a test based on a judgement usually involving the matching of features of the performance to descriptors on a rating scale.*
rating scale	*A scale consisting of several ranked categories (i.e. the six language proficiency skills of the ICAO Rating Scale) used for making judgements of performance. They are typically accompanied by band descriptors which make their interpretation clear.*
register	*A style of speech (involving distinctive vocabulary, syntax, speech rate, etc.) that is adopted by the speaker to be appropriate for a given situation or activity.*
reliability	*The consistency or stability of the measures from a test.*
rubric	*The instructions given to test takers to guide their responses to a particular test task.*
test construct	*A hypothesised mental ability which cannot be directly observed or measured in language testing, for example listening ability. Language tests attempt to measure the different constructs which underlie language ability.*
test item	*Each testing point in a test which elicits a response from the test taker and which serves to gather evidence.*
test maintenance	*The activities of a testing organization intended to preserve the reliability, validity and security of the test over time. These activities include monitoring test results and rater reliability, designing and trialling new test items, issuing new versions of the test, reviewing instructions for test administrators, etc.*
test objective	*The language behaviours for which a test requires test takers to demonstrate their ability.*
test package	*All documentation and other materials required for the administration of a test. This may also include provision of the logistical and human resources of a testing service.*

Term	Definition
test taker	*The person who is tested.*
	Candidate is synonymous with test taker.
test task	*The combination of a single rubric and the associated test items.*
test user	*The person or institution making use of a test and to whom test results are made available in order to inform choices or actions.*
testing system	*A combination of all provisions for administrating a given test, including the test materials, but also the organisation of test maintenance, test delivery and rating.*
trial, trialling	*A stage in the development of test tasks where tasks are administered to a representative sample of the target population to ascertain whether the test functions as expected.*
validate	*To undertake actions during test development and test maintenance that demonstrate the validity of a test.*
validity	*The extent to which test results enable inferences to be made about language proficiency which are appropriate, meaningful and useful given the purpose of the test.*
variety	*The effects on spoken language of dialect or register.*