The report describes a federally funded study of the application of language proficiency concepts, developed for commonly taught languages, to less commonly taught languages. It summarizes the project's background and origins and the activities of the project, including four separate studies on the feasibility of proficiency-based instruction and testing in Arabic, Hindi, Indonesian, and African languages as a group. In each study, a workshop or demonstration of proficiency testing was held for language teachers and linguists and recommendations for further study and action were made. The report also describes the final project activity: publication and dissemination of a volume of working papers that includes the four language-specific study reports, the 1986 American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages' Proficiency Guidelines, and five papers on aspects of proficiency-based instruction and assessment. A mailing list for the project volume is appended. (MSE)
Design, Development, and Dissemination of Informational Materials and Instructional Sessions on "Proficiency" Concepts For the Less Commonly Taught Languages.

Final Report
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Charles W. Stansfield and David Hiple

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I. Project Overview

During the past decade a major theoretical and practical development in the field of foreign language teaching and assessment has taken place, namely, the development and application of a proficiency orientation to the testing of foreign language competence. From the foundation laid by the Foreign Service Institute Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI), the proficiency testing movement in the United States has extended beyond government and into academia. The primary movers behind this extension have been the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and the Educational Testing Service (ETS).

This movement has impacted greatly on the instruction and testing of commonly taught foreign languages in the United States (Spanish, French and German) as the guidelines for testing proficiency in those languages were developed and disseminated. However, as language specific proficiency testing guidelines began to be developed for less commonly taught languages (LCTLs), certain concerns in the movement arose. On the one hand, there seemed to be a great deal of misunderstanding among some teachers of LCTLs as to what the proficiency testing guidelines really were. On the other hand, there was a need for further discussion in academia of the issues raised in extending the proficiency guidelines to the LCTLs.

With these concerns in mind, ACTFL and the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) undertook a two-year familiarization
The project, supported by a grant from the Department of Education. The goal of the project was two-fold: 1) to familiarize teachers of the LCTLS as to what proficiency testing guidelines are and to clear up common misconceptions about them, and 2) to provide a forum for the issues involved in adapting proficiency testing guidelines already used in the commonly taught languages to the LCTLS. The project goals were achieved through the organization and sponsorship of special workshops during 1986 and 1987 for teachers of targeted LCTLS and through the publication and distribution of a special project volume of articles and working papers.

II. Project Activities

Under the direction of John L.D. Clark1 from CAL and David Hiple from ACTFL, the project co-directors, four LCTLS were targeted for inclusion in the project and a working group was formed. Arabic was chosen on the basis of preliminary work on the guidelines completed by Roger Allen of the University of Pennsylvania and Ernest McCarus of the University of Michigan. Hindi was chosen on the basis of preliminary work done at the University of Pennsylvania. The Hindi language contribution to the project was presented by Rosane Rocher and Vijay Gambhir. Indonesian was assigned to John Wolff of Cornell University.

1 In the course of the project, John L.D. Clark transferred to the Defense Language Institute. His responsibilities as project co-director from CAL were assigned to Charles W. Stansfield.
Although Swahili was originally targeted as the fourth LCTL, this category was expanded to African Languages in general and is represented by the work of Patrick Bennett and David Dwyer.

From December 7-9, 1985, a major three-day project planning meeting of representatives from ACTFL, CAL and the language groups mentioned above was held at the CAL offices in Washington. Members of the groups charged with revising the ACTFL guidelines for Chinese, Japanese, and Russian were also present for two days of the meetings. This highly productive planning and discussion session resulted in agreement on all of the original project goals. These included the agreement that 1) the top priority would be in clarifying what the movement was and dispelling a variety of misconceptions about proficiency testing guidelines; 2) priority would be given to presenting familiarization workshops at annual professional meetings for teachers of the LCTLS, particularly those represented in the project; and 3) speaking proficiency would receive preeminence at this time in the development of proficiency testing guidelines for the LCTLS. As to specific implementation of these goals, each of the language specialists undertook the responsibility of advertising and disseminating information about the project in their respective constituencies while ACTFL undertook to run the workshops and CAL assumed the role of coordinator and publisher of the proposed volume.

Based on the project meeting resolutions, the following activities took place. Descriptions are provided by language
Roger Allen and his associates at the University of Pennsylvania had previously developed a set of Arabic guidelines with a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. They addressed the diglossic situation in the Arabic speaking world which presents unusual problems to developing oral proficiency guidelines. There is no dominant form of spoken Arabic, nor is there a consensus as to which form of colloquial Arabic should be the model. The practical solution chosen by Allen and others was to use the model of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), which is the standard learned by Arab speakers in school and used widely in the media.

As an implementation of the project's goals, a workshop for familiarizing Arabic teachers with the ACTFL proficiency guidelines was held on April 22 and 23, 1987, the two days preceding the first annual Symposium on Arabic Linguistics and Literature, sponsored by the University of Utah in Salt Lake City.

At the workshop, the participants were primarily interested in teaching for proficiency in the four skill areas and in testing for proficiency. Roger Allen demonstrated the OPI in Arabic.

In the volume of working papers and articles for the project, concerns in applying the proficiency guidelines to Arabic are specifically represented in three works:


**Hindi**

Hindi presents a challenge to the development of proficiency guidelines in that while code-switching is in many languages an indication of low level ability, appropriate Hindi-English code switching is the mark of an educated native speaker. Given the multi-lingual speech community of India, the content and context of the code-switching must be elucidated in the guidelines at all proficiency levels. An approach to developing Hindi guidelines is to combine what is expected in terms of functions, content/context and accuracy at different levels based on the observations of experienced teachers and linguists with an analysis of data collected from a large number of Oral Proficiency Interviews conducted following the generic guidelines at different proficiency levels. The process of training Hindi raters is already underway.

Under the direction of this project, Rosane Rocher organized a demonstration of the OPI in Hindi at the 1986 Association of Asian Studies (AAS) meeting in Chicago on March 23. She also organized a demonstration of the OPI at the 1986 South Asian
Studies conference held at the University of Wisconsin at Madison on November 7-9.

In 1987, a major project activity was the well-attended two-day workshop at the AAS meeting in Boston, which was held on April 10th and 11th. The workshop included familiarization of oral proficiency testing through the demonstration of the OPI by Isabelle Kaplan of ACTFL and Vijay Gambhir. They also addressed general proficiency concepts as they relate to the four skill areas. The workshop provided a forum for an exchange of ideas with the participants on the transfer of guidelines from Western languages to Eastern languages.

The work in Hindi is represented in the final volume of working papers by the article entitled "Some Preliminary Thoughts About Proficiency Guidelines in Hindi" by Vijay Gambhir.

**Indonesian**

Testing oral proficiency in Indonesian, according to John Wolff, does not present any particular problems. However, special emphasis will need to be given to the candidate's ability to make use of appropriate style, register and sociolinguistic rules which are quite rigid in Indonesian. The guidelines for Indonesian will need to reflect these rules.

The major activity of this project for Indonesian proficiency guidelines development was the participation at the 1987 AAS meeting in Boston by John U. Wolff, who demonstrated the OPI in Indonesian at the same workshop session at which Hindi was
demonstrated.

The work to date in Indonesian is represented by Wolff's article "The Application of the ILR-ACTFL Test and Guidelines to Indonesian" in the volume of working papers compiled for this project.

African Languages

Although Swahili was originally proposed as the fourth LCTL, very early on in the project it was decided to concentrate on the problems confronting the African languages area as a whole, rather than to concentrate on a single language. The African languages present a difficult challenge for the drafting of language-specific proficiency guidelines. There are 1,500 to 2,000 African languages and the demand for instruction is quite low; furthermore, there are very limited resources for materials development in the African languages. Therefore, guidelines will be drafted for only a relatively small number of these languages.

Nevertheless, since 1980, the African linguists and language teachers at the Title VI African studies centers and other programs have undertaken a rationalization of the approach to these many languages as a first step toward proficiency-oriented instruction. Agreement has been reached on setting priorities among the languages. Twenty-three first priority (largely national) languages were identified; 30 second priority; 30 third priority; and all others fourth priority. This step provided a
rationale for developing materials more strategically. Second, a global search for African language materials was conducted and published, and guidelines for the evaluation of language teaching materials in light of teaching for proficiency have been discussed.

Work on language specific proficiency testing guidelines for African languages had already been undertaken by Roxana Ma Newman and her colleagues at Indiana University (Hausa, Lingala and Swahili), while Patrick Bennett (Wisconsin) and Ann Biersteker (Yale) established a project on proficiency profiling. Closer to the ACTFL model of proficiency guidelines is the ACTFL Team Testing model. Using this approach, the oral interview is conducted by two persons instead of one: a native speaker of the target language who is not a trained proficiency evaluator and an ACTFL-trained and certified evaluator who is not necessarily proficient in the target language.

The ACTFL Team Testing model was presented to the African language community through a workshop carried out by the project co-director, David Hiple, held at the University of Wisconsin on May 1-3, 1987, with financial support from Title VI African Studies Centers. It was agreed that such an approach was necessary in order to cope with the rich variety of African

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3 For further information see African Language Instruction in the United States: Directions and Priorities for the 1980s, Wiley and Dwyer, East Lansing: Michigan State University, 1980.

languages and the limited resources available to deal with them. In response to the workshop and related activities, a plan to expand and test various components of the team model has been agreed to.

The issues in proficiency testing in the African Languages are represented in the final volume of working papers by the article "African Language Teaching and ACTFL Team Testing," by David Dwyer and David Hiple.

**Volume of Working Papers and Articles**

The final task of the project was the publication of the volume of working papers. In addition to the language specific articles mentioned above, the following works were added to the final publication:

1. The 1986 ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines
4. Adapting the ACTFL/ETS Proficiency Guidelines to the Less Commonly Taught Languages", by Irene Thompson, Richard T. Thompson, and David Hiple

These articles were chosen or commissioned by the project
co-directors with the purpose of providing a state-of-the-art volume. Original manuscripts were edited by Charles Stansfield. The volume serves as a survey of materials and current thinking in the proficiency movement. Both introductory articles for those who are new to proficiency testing, as well as articles for those currently involved in the drafting of guidelines for LCTLs have been included. The bibliography stands as a valuable resource of information on the development of the guidelines and their application to classroom instruction and testing, proficiency concepts, and the issue of accuracy. The entire volume is attached to this report. *

More than 200 copies of the volume were distributed to all participants of the workshops, relevant Title VI center directors, relevant department chiefs in the various agencies in the U.S. Government's Interagency Language Roundtable, and various leaders in the proficiency movement, or persons able to disseminate information on the proficiency movement (see Appendix A). The volume was also submitted to the ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics for inclusion in the ERIC database. A brief article reporting on the project has been prepared for submission to the Modern Language Journal.

[*Not attached to copy received by ERIC. For this volume, see ED 289 345.]
Appendix A

"ACTFL PROFICIENCY GUIDELINES FOR THE LESS COMMONLY TAUGHT LANGUAGES"

Mailing List for Project Volume

Dr. James E. Alatis  
Dean, School of Languages & Linguistics  
Georgetown University  
Washington, D.C.  20057

J. Charles Alderson  
Director (IELE)  
Institute for English Language Education  
University of Lancaster  
Bowland college  
Lancaster, England  
LA1 4YT

Roger Allen  
Dept. Near East Studies  
University of Pennsylvania  
Philadelphia, PA  
19104

Adel Allouche  
University of Pennsylvania  
Department of Oriental Studies  
Philadelphia, PA  
19104

Mahdi Alosh  
Linguistics Department  
The Ohio State University  
Columbus, OH  
43210

American-Arab Affairs Council  
1730 K St., N.W.  
Washington, DC  
20036

Benedict Anderson, Director  
Dept. Modern Languages & Linguistics  
Cornell University  
Ithaca, NY  
14853
Jere Bacharach, Director  
Dept. Near East Studies  
University of Washington  
Seattle, WA  
98195

Lee Bean, Director  
Dept. Near East Studies  
University of Utah  
Salt Lake City, UT  
84112

Tej K. Bhatia  
Department of Linguistics  
317 HBC  
Syracuse University  
Syracuse, NY  
13210

Susham Bedi  
Dept. Mid East Languages  
607 Kent Hall  
New York, NY  
10027

Lyle Bachman  
Division of ESL  
3070 Foreign Languages Building  
University of Illinois  
Urbana, IL  
61801

John Baugh  
Department of Linguistics  
University of Texas at Austin  
Austin, TX  
78712

Patrick Bennett  
Dept. African Languages and Literatures  
University of Wisconsin  
886 Van Hise Hall  
Madison, WI  
53706

Dr. David P. Benseler  
Editor-in-Chief, Modern Language Journal  
Ohio State University  
Department of German  
Columbus, Ohio  
43210
Frederick Cadora
Dept. of Judaic and Near East Studies
256 Kunz Hall
The Ohio State University
Columbus, OH
43210-1229

Qizhen Cao
10-A Winter St.
Watertown, MA
02172

Vicki Carstens
Linguistics Department
Yale University
Yale Station
New Haven, CT
06520

Hazel Carter
Linguistics Department
1168 Van Hise Hall
U. of Wisconsin-Madison
Madison, WI
53706

Chairman, Dept. of Arabic
Central Security Service
E-303
Fort Meade, MD
20755

Jim Child
Central Security Service
E-303
Fort Meade, MD
20755

G. Tucker Childs
Linguistics Department
U.C. Berkeley
Berkeley, CA
94720

Ms. Linda Cabral
Bilingual Kindergarten Teacher
McKinley Elementary School
723 East Cota Street
Santa Barbara, CA
93103
Chairman,
Dept. of Arabic
Defense Language Institute
ATFL-DES
Presidio of Monterey, CA
93944-5000

Dr. Cheryl Demharter
Director, Foreign Language Programs
Modern Language Association
10 Astor Place
New York, NY 10003

Ab 'lam Demoz
Linguistics Department
2016 Sheridan Rd.
Northwestern University
Evanston, IL 60201

Katherine Demuth
African Studies Center
270 Bay State Road
Boston University
Boston, MA 02215

Ivan Dihoff
University Center for International Studies
Ohio State University
308 Dilles Hall
230 W. 17th Avenue
Columbus, OH 443210-1311

Mallafe Drame
Linguistics Department
707 S. Mathews St.
University of Illinois
Urbana, IL 61801

David Dwyer
African Studies Center
Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI 48824
Magdalena Hauner
Linguistics Department
1168 Van Hise Hall
U. of Wisconsin-Madison
Madison, WI
53706

Shirley Brice Heath
Stanford Humanities Center
Mariposa House
Stanford University
Stanford, CA
94305

Theodore Higgs
6255 Rose Lake Ave.
San Diego, CA
92119

David Hiple
ACTFL
P.O. Box 408
Hastings-on-Hudson, NY
10706

Allan Hoban, Director
African Studies Center
Boston University
236 Bay State Road
Boston, MA
02215

Jeffrey Hopkins, Director
Div. Oriental Languages
U. of Virginia
Charlottesville, VA
22903

Dr. Vivian Horner
32 Morton Street
New York, NY
10014

Robert A. Hueckstept
Box E
Brown University
Providence, RI
02912
Nancy Huabach  
President, American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese  
Finneytown High School  
8916 Fontainebleau Terrace  
Cincinnati, Ohio  
45231

John Hutchison  
African Studies Center  
Boston University  
236 Bay State Road  
Boston, MA  
02215

Karl Butterer, Director  
Department of Southeast Asian Languages  
University of Michigan  
Ann Arbor, MI  
48109

Muhammad H. Ibrahim  
2300 Pimmit Drive, #1216  
Falls Church, VA  
22043

Gordon Jackson  
Defense Language Institute  
ATFL-DES  
Presidio of Monterey, CA  
93944-5000

Gilbert Jarvis  
Professor of Foreign Language Education  
Ohio State University  
1945 N. High St.  
227 D Arps Hall  
Columbus, Ohio  
43210

Mohammed Ali Jazayery, Director  
Department of Oriental and African Languages  
U. Texas at Austin  
Austin, TX  
78712-1196
Mohammed Jiyad  
University of Pennsylvania  
Department of Oriental Studies  
Philadelphia, PA  
19104

Randall Jones  
German Department  
Brigham Young University  
Provo, UT 84601

Eleanor Jordon  
Foreign Language Resource Center  
1619 Mass. Ave. N.W.  
Washington, D.C.  
20036

Isabelle Kaplan  
ACTFL  
579 Broadway  
Hastings-on-Hudson, NY  
10706

Edward Keenan, Director  
Department Near East Languages & Literatures  
Harvard University  
Cambridge, MA  
02138

Gerald B. Kelley  
Division of Modern Languages  
Morrill Hall  
Cornell University  
Ithaca, NY  
14850

Carolyn Killean  
Dept. of Near East Languages & Civilization  
University of Chicago  
Chicago, IL  
60637

Gail King  
1066 HBLL  
Brigham Young University  
Provo, UT  
84602
Carol Klee  
Department of Spanish & Portuguese  
University of Minnesota  
at Minneapolis  
Minneapolis, MN  
55455

Patricia Kuntz  
Linguistics Dept.  
U. of Wisconsin-Madison  
Madison, WI  
53706

Richard Lambert  
NFLC  
1619 Mass. Ave. N.W.  
Washington, D.C.  
20036

Jiang Lan  
547-E 600 N  
Brigham Young University  
Provo, UT  
84601

Dale Lange  
University of Minnesota  
130-B Peik Hall  
159 Pillsbury Drive SE  
Minneapolis, MN  
55455

Dr. Terance Langendoen  
IBM Corporation  
T.J. Watson Research Center  
P.O. Box 704  
Yorktown Heights, NY 10598

Chairman,  
Dept. of Arabic  
Language Training Division  
Language School  
Washington, D.C.  
20505

Language Training Mission  
Brigham Young University  
Provo, UT 84602
Ira Lapidus, Director
Dept. Near East Studies
U.C. Berkeley
Berkeley, CA
94720

Richard Lariviere, Director
Dept. Oriental & African Languages
U. of Texas at Austin
Austin, TX
78712-1196

Dr. Diane Larsen-Freeman
School for International Training
Experiment in International Living
Kipling Road
Brattleboro, VT
05301

Will Leben
Linguistics Department
Stanford University
Stanford, CA
94305

Tsaifeng Lee
4064 JKB
Brigham Young University
Provo, UT
84602

David Leonard, Director
African Studies Center
University of California - Berkeley
Berkeley, CA
94720

Richard Lepine
Linguistics Department
2016 Sheridan Road
Northwestern University
Evanston, IL
60201

John Lett
Defense Language Institute
ATFL-DES
Presidio of Monterey, CA
93944-5000
Colin P. Masica
South Asian Languages and
Civilizations
Foster Hall
University of Chicago
1130 East 59th Street
Chicago, IL
60637

Ernest McCarus, Director
Dept. Near East Studies
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, MI
48109

Dr. Myriam Met
Coordinator of Foreign Languages
Montgomery County Public Schools
850 Hungerford Drive
Rockville, MD
20850

John Middleton, Director
African Studies Center
Yale University
Yale Station
New Haven, CT
06520

Liobi Moshi
Linguistics Dept.
Stanford University
Stanford, CA
94305

Dr. Kur Muller
Executive Vice President
National Council on Foreign Language
and International Studies
605 Third Avenue,
17th Floor
New York, NY
10158

Renee Myer
Central Security Service
E-303
Fitz Meade, MD
20755
Patrick O'Meara, Director
African Studies Center
Indiana University
Terre Haute, IN 47809

Dilworth B. Parkinson
4072 JKHB
Brigham Young University
Provo, UT 84602

Thomas Perry
Language Training Division
Language School
Washington, D.C. 20505

Mark Plane
Linguistics Dept.
1168 Van Hise Hall
U. of Wisconsin-Madison
Madison, WI 53706

Don Porter
Dept. of Linguistic Science
University of Reading
Whiteknights, Reading
RG6 2AA England

Bruce Pray, Director
Dept. Southeast & South Asian Studies
U.C. Berkeley
Berkeley, CA 94720

Frances Pritchett
Middle East Languages and Cultures
609 Kent Hall
Columbia University
New York, NY 10027

John Quinones
Language School
Washington, DC 20505
Sandra Savignon
Department of French
2090 Foreign Langs. Bldg.
707 South Mathews Ave.
Urbana, IL
61801

Mr. C. Edward Scebold
Executive Director
American Council on the
Teaching of Foreign Languages
P.O. Box 408
Hastings-on-Hudson, NY
10706

Russel Schuh
Linguistics Dept.
UCLA
Los Angeles, CA
90024

Michael Shapiro
Asian Languages and Literature
Gowen Hall (D) - 21
University of Washington
Seattle, WA
98195

David Solnit
DMLL, Morrill Hall
Cornell University
Ithaca, NY
14853

Brian Spooner, Director
Dept. Middle East Studies
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, PA
19104

Sally J. Sutherland
1203 Dwinelle Hall
U.C. Berkeley
Berkeley, CA
94720

Spencer Swinton,
ETS
Princeton, NJ
08541
Emory Tetrault
Central Security Service
E-303
Fort Meade, MD
20755

Irene Thompson
Department of Russian
George Washington University
Washington, D.C.
20052

Richard Thompson
c/o Irene Thompson
Department of Russian
George Washington University
Washington, D.C.
20052

Chantal Thompson
4006 JKHB
Brigham Young University
Provo, UT
84602

Dr. Hai T. Tran
Bilingual Education
Multifunctional Resource Center
University of Oklahoma
555 Constitution Street
Norman, OK
73037

Chairman
Arabic Department
University of Chicago
Chicago, IL
60637

Chairman
Arabic Department
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, MI
48109

Chairman
Arabic Department
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, PA
19104
Stephen Wadley  
Asian Languages  
4052 JKBB  
Brigham Young University  
Provo, Utah  
84602

Leroy Walse-  
Director,  
Room 503, Reporters MS5502  
400 Maryland Ave., SW  
Washington, DC 20202  
Ronald Walton  
National Foreign Language Center  
1619 Mass. Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20036

Sandy Wang  
4C-213 Wymount Terrace  
Provo, UT  
84604

David Wiley, Director  
African Studies Center  
Michigan State University  
East Lansing, MI  
48824-1027

R. Bayly Winder, Director  
Dept. Middle East Studies  
New York University  
New York, NY  
10003

Amy Winter  
ACTFL  
579 Broadway  
Hastings-on-Hudson, NY  
10706

Frances Wilson, Director  
Dept. South Asian Studies  
U. Wisconsin at Madison  
Madison, WI  
53706

John Wolff  
Linguistics Dept.  
Morrill Hall  
Cornell University  
Ithaca, NY  
14853