

## **Test Technical Manual LING 660**

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Test Name: Speaking and Writing Language Acquisition Test (LAT) Development

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### **AI Disclosure**

For this paper, we met together and recorded what we did in audio and then used AI to populate the template. We then read what was produced for accuracy and amended it as needed. etc.

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# 1. Introduction

The purpose of this test was to evaluate the speaking and writing abilities of international students at the English Language Center (ELC) at Brigham Young University (BYU) in Provo, UT. The speaking test consisted of 12 questions, ranging from novice to superior levels, with two novice, four intermediate, three advanced, and three superior questions. Students' proficiency levels were rated based on their responses. The writing test included two prompts, one at the intermediate level and one at the superior level. Most students were Spanish speakers, though other languages were also represented. The test measured speaking and writing skills according to the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines, with tasks organized across levels from novice low to advanced high. The test was designed to assess the proficiency of international students enrolled at the ELC in both speaking and writing.

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## 2. Proficiency Framework and Test Design

The test was guided by the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines, which range from novice low to superior, with proficiency levels operationalized through a rating scale from 0 to 7. Items were designed to align with these levels, ensuring tasks were appropriate for each proficiency stage. The speaking test included two novice questions as a warm-up, followed by intermediate prompts related to personal life and routines, and advanced questions that elicited descriptions, problem resolution, and past narration. Superior-level questions focused on opinions, consequences, and interpretations. The writing test had one intermediate-level prompt asking about personal life and one superior-level prompt focused on opinions and consequences. These tasks were structured to elicit a range of language functions, ensuring a holistic assessment of the students' speaking and writing abilities and effectively demonstrating their proficiency at different levels.

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## 3. Item Development Process

### 3.1 Group Approach to Item Design

The ACTFL Guidelines provided the framework for creating test items, ensuring they aligned with proficiency levels and accurately measured students' abilities. Items were designed using the GRASPS model, which emphasizes clear real-world goals, explicit roles, well-defined

audience, realistic situations, stated product, performance, and purpose, and clear standards for task completion. These principles guided the creation of varied prompts that target different language functions, such as description, comparison, and opinion expression, while balancing proficiency levels across tasks. The assessment incorporated a mix of item types, ensuring a comprehensive evaluation of students' speaking and writing abilities at various proficiency levels. Each test item was strategically distributed across the test to elicit a range of responses that aligned with the intended proficiency levels, from novice to advanced.

## 3.2 Individually Authored Items

Each group member should document the items they personally wrote, including:

**#1**

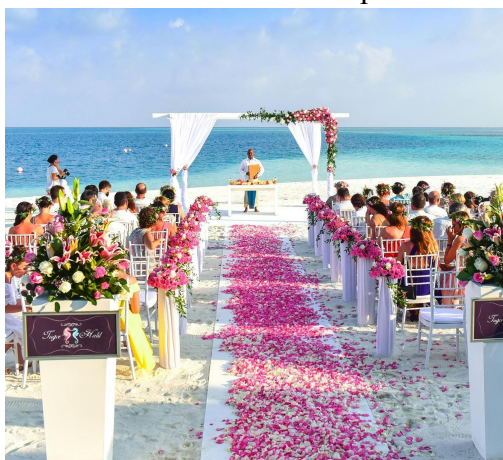
Author: Tim Arnold

Level: Novice

Item: Talk about the picture. What do you see?



Actual Item: Talk about the picture. What do you see?



Rationale: This item required listing, which is a novice function. The content of the photo was related to a commonly covered novice topic (travel).

Revisions: There were complaints that there were not enough unique items in the first photo, so we found a second one that was related to a novice level vocabulary and topics.

## #2

Author: Irene Purushootam

Level: Novice

Item: List the things that are in your bedroom at home.

Actual Item: Talk about your bedroom. What does it look like? What are some things in your bedroom?

Rationale: This prompt requires listing basic items in the language, consistent with Novice abilities to create word-phrase level discourse about typical daily activities.

Revisions: Revised to have make the question clearer.

## #3

Author: Addison Fisher

Level: Intermediate

Item: You are an international student, and it is your first day of school at the ELC. Your teacher asks you to share why you are studying English. How would you answer?

Actual Item: You are an international student, and it is your first day of school at the ELC. Your teacher asks you to share why you are studying English. Tell them about your goals.

Rationale: This prompt requires creation in the language, consistent with Intermediate abilities to create sentence-level discourse about typical daily activities.

Revisions: Revised to have the examinee share their goals for learning English.

## #5

Author: Irene Purushottam

Level: Advanced

Item: You are an international student living in the USA and studying English at the ELC. Your friend wants to come to the USA and learn English as well. She asks you about your experience studying and living here. Do the following to respond to your friend.

- a. Compare and contrast between studying in the USA versus your country.
- b. Describe your experience living here.

Actual Item: You are an international student living in the USA and studying English at the ELC. Your friend wants to come to the USA and learn English as well. She asks you about your experience studying and living here. Do the following to respond to your friend.

- a) Compare and Contrast between studying in the USA vs your country
- b) Describe your experience living here.

Rationale: This prompt requires description, compare/contrast, consistent with Advanced abilities to elicit paragraph-level discourse.

Revisions: No Revisions

## #8

Author: Jagaanaa Ireedui

Level: Superior

Item: What are some possible positive and negative effects of government control over freedom of speech, especially on social media?

Actual Item: You are talking to a fellow student about the freedom of speech in social media. Different countries have different perspectives on what should or should not be included as freedom of speech. Some countries believe that there should be strong government oversight while others deem this as unnecessary. Your friend would like to hear your stance on this issue. What are some potential and problematic consequences of government oversight on freedom of speech? What potential beneficial or harmful impacts could this issue have on adolescents?

Rationale: This prompt aligns with the Superior-level by requiring the examinee to present, support, and elaborate on a complex opinion involving political and social implications. It involves analyzing hypothetical outcomes, considering multiple perspectives, and discussing abstract concepts like censorship, regulation, and adolescent development. These are all tasks that demand extended discourse, precise argumentation, and the ability to hypothesize and defend viewpoints—all characteristics of Superior-level writing.

Revisions: Revised the item to make the key questions clearer and more focused on potential outcomes and impacts while preserving the complexity of the topic.

## #9

Author: Tim Arnold

Level: Superior

Item: Abraham Lincoln is quoted as saying, “Avoid popularity if you want to have peace.” How does this quote reflect the truth, and what should be learned from it?

Actual Item: In your Listening and Speaking class, your teacher divided the class into four groups and assigned your group this quote by Abraham Lincoln: “Avoid popularity if you want to have peace.” After your group discussion, you were selected by your group to be their spokesperson. In your report to the class, explain:

- a) How does this quote either succeed or fail at reflecting truth?,
- b) Who should learn from it?, and
- c) What should be done about it?

Rationale: This prompt requires narration in the present and past, consistent with Intermediate Mid abilities to create paragraph-level discourse about personal experiences.

Revisions: Original prompt did not have superior language and was not fully eliciting superior functions such as hypothesizing, discussing abstract topics, and explaining complex matters in detail.

## **#10**

Author: Addison Fisher

Level: Advanced

Item: Describe your first day in Utah. How was your first day? What did you think? What did you see?

Actual Item: You just moved to the USA one week ago to study English. Your family misses you and they called you. They want to know about what you have done since you have arrived in Provo. Respond to them by describing your first day in Utah. How was it? What did you think? What did you see?

Rationale: This prompt requires narration in the past, consistent with Advanced abilities to elicit paragraph-level discourse about personal life.

Revisions: Revised to have an audience and situation of sharing their experience with a family member over the phone.

## **#11**

Author: Jagaanaa Ireedui

Level: Intermediate

Item: Your classmates are talking about their weekend routines. They ask you what you usually do.

Actual Item: Your classmates are talking about their weekend routines. Some of them spend time cleaning, and others choose to sleep in. Your classmates ask you what your weekend routine is. Respond to them by describing your weekend routine.

Rationale: This prompt aligns with Intermediate-level writing or speaking, requiring learners to produce sentence-level discourse about familiar personal topics. It focuses on narrating present-tense routines and describing habitual actions, which are core communicative functions at this level.

Revisions: Simplified the prompt slightly to clarify the context and question, while maintaining the requirement to describe a routine using connected sentences.

## **Writing #1**

Author: Addison Fisher

Level: Intermediate

Item: How is your family? How would you describe them?

Actual Item: You have been learning about family members and how to describe them in your writing class. Your teacher wants you to write a paragraph about your family as a final assignment. Write a paragraph about

- a. How you would describe your family members and their relationships?

Rationale: This prompt requires creation in the language, consistent with Intermediate abilities to create sentence-level discourse about typical daily activities.

Revisions: Revised to have a situation where the examinee is writing a homework assignment answering these questions about their family.

## **Writing #2**

Author: Jagaanaa Ireedui

Level: Superior

Item: How has globalization affected traditional cultures?

Actual Item: Your college is hosting a prestigious academic conference on globalization, and you have been selected to write a compelling thesis on the topic: "How has globalization affected traditional cultures?" In your thesis, critically analyze how globalization has influenced traditional cultural practices, values, and identities. Provide examples and arguments to support your opinion.

Rationale: This prompt requires abstract, extended, and well-organized written discourse. It aligns with Superior-level performance by asking the examinee to support an argument with evidence, present a nuanced viewpoint, and analyze cultural phenomena across global contexts. It also demands precise vocabulary, syntactic control, and discourse cohesion.

Revisions: Revised the prompt to place it within a formal academic context and explicitly require analysis and argumentation appropriate for Superior-level writing.

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## 4. Item Vetting and Pre-Administration Review

The test items were written by four group members who evaluated their efficiency and selected the most effective items to elicit desired responses from test takers. Afterward, these items were revised to align with the GRASPS model (goals, role, audience, situation, product, performance, and purpose, standards). Based on feedback from review and piloting, items were revised for clarity and difficulty, with some excluded if they did not meet quality criteria. The criteria applied for evaluation included clarity, appropriate difficulty, and the absence of bias.

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## 5. Test Administration

### 5.1 Administration Context

The LATs are administered to all students enrolled in the ELC at Brigham Young University. The tests are conducted at the end of each semester to evaluate students' progress and determine their readiness to advance to the next level. Additionally, the LATs are used as placement tests for new students at the beginning of the semester to ensure they start at the appropriate proficiency level.

### 5.2 Instructions Provided

Students receive clear instructions on how to complete both the speaking and writing components of the test. For the speaking section, students are informed about the number of questions, the expected length of their responses, the range of difficulty, and the criteria on which they will be evaluated. Students are also informed that they will have a variable amount of preparation time (dependent on item difficulty) after the prompt is read to them. For the writing section, students are informed that they will complete two prompts: one intermediate and one superior. Students are told that they will be given 10 minutes to complete the intermediate prompt and 30 minutes to complete the superior prompt. Students are also told that if they finish responding to either prompt before the allotted time is up, they can submit their response.

### 5.3 Accommodations or Special Considerations

Accommodations are made for students with disabilities or special needs to ensure they have an equal opportunity to demonstrate their proficiency. This may include extended time, alternative formats for test materials, a separate/private room for test taking, or the use of assistive technology. Additionally, cultural sensitivity is considered in the selection of test topics to ensure all students can relate to and understand the prompts, thereby mitigating the risk of students from one cultural background having an unfair advantage over the other students.

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## 6. Test-Taker Demographics

There were seventy-seven individuals who took this test. The average age of those who took this test was 26.5 years old with the oldest test taking being 67 years old and the youngest test-taker being 18 years old. There were thirty-one males and forty-six females who took this test. Table 1 shows the L1 percentage for the test-takers; Table 2 shows the percentage for each language level.

**Table 1**

*Percentage for L1 of Test-Takers*

|                         |     |
|-------------------------|-----|
| Spanish                 | 64% |
| French                  | 9%  |
| Korean                  | 4%  |
| Russian                 | 3%  |
| Japanese                | 9%  |
| Mandarin                | 3%  |
| Malagasy                | 1%  |
| Portuguese              | 5%  |
| Creole                  | 1%  |
| Haitian; Haitian Creole | 1%  |

**Table 2**

*Percentage of Proficiency Levels of Test-Takers*

|                  |     |
|------------------|-----|
| NOV-L/M to NOV-H | 4%  |
| NOV-H to INT-L   | 6%  |
| INT-L to INT-M   | 10% |
| INT-M to INT-H   | 17% |
| INT-M to INT-H   | 30% |
| INT-H to ADV-L   | 21% |
| ADV-L to ADV-M   | 12% |

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## 7. Scoring Procedures

The speaking and writing portions of the proficiency test were scored manually by our class, along with additional trained raters, in order to ensure scoring accuracy and reliability. We used the official ACTFL proficiency rubrics to evaluate each student's performance. These rubrics allowed us to assess key dimensions such as task completion, comprehensibility, language control, vocabulary use, and the ability to maintain discourse appropriate to the target proficiency level. To prepare for this task, we engaged in rater training sessions where we analyzed and discussed sample responses. This helped us align our understanding of the scoring criteria and reduce potential subjectivity in our evaluations.

Multiple raters scored each test to promote inter-rater reliability. This process, often referred to as double scoring, allowed us to compare our evaluations and resolve any discrepancies through discussion. It also increased the fairness of the assessment by minimizing individual bias. The combination of rater training, the use of a standardized rubric, and collaborative scoring helped us produce a more valid and reliable measure of the students' speaking and writing proficiency levels.

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## 8. Overall Test Statistics

The table below captures the overall test statistics. Some of these statistics include the average, standard deviation, and distribution of scores.

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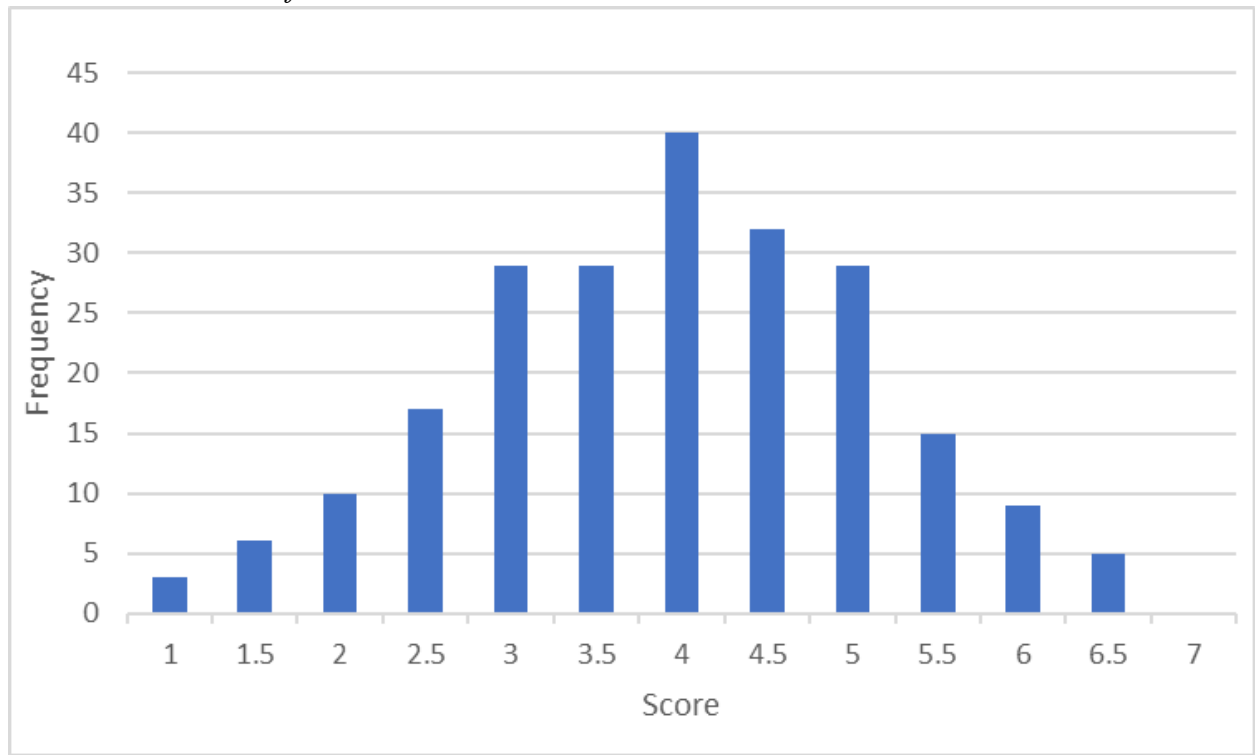
**Table 3**

*Descriptive Statistics for Overall Average of Score*

|                       |        |
|-----------------------|--------|
| Mean                  | 3.94   |
| Standard Error        | 0.08   |
| Median                | 4.00   |
| Mode                  | 4.00   |
| Standard Deviation    | 1.20   |
| Sample Variance       | 1.43   |
| Kurtosis              | -0.01  |
| Skewness              | -0.21  |
| Range                 | 6.50   |
| Minimum               | 0.00   |
| Maximum               | 6.50   |
| Sum                   | 878.50 |
| Count                 | 223.00 |
| Largest(1)            | 6.50   |
| Smallest(1)           | 0.00   |
| Confidence Level(95%) | 0.16   |

**Figure 1**

*Overall Distribution of Scores on the Test*



## 9. Item-Level Statistics

### 9.1 Group Summary of Item Statistics

We calculated the average score for each item (Q1–Q12) on the speaking proficiency assessment to examine item difficulty. The difficulty level of each item was based on the mean score given by raters across all student responses. Items with higher average scores were considered easier, while lower averages indicated more challenging items.

The easiest item was Q1, with an average score of 3.05, while the most difficult item was Q8, with an average score of 0.78. Based on these values, the range of item difficulties was 2.27, showing a good spread of item challenge levels across the test. This range indicates that some items were much easier for students to respond to successfully, while others required more advanced language skills and were more difficult to complete.

### 9.2 Trends in item discrimination

Item discrimination refers to the ability of an item to differentiate between high-performing and low-performing students. Items with good discrimination are effective in identifying differences in proficiency levels. Discrimination indices can be calculated using statistical methods such as point-biserial correlation or item-total correlation.

The trends for these questions show that all but the first two questions are doing a good job of discriminating between different learner proficiency levels. Currently the mean scores are 4.33 and 4.35 respectively, which means that few to none of the students are being placed in the novice level. Now, this trend could just be due to there not being enough students whose true proficiency falls into that level, but it could also be due to the items not functioning correctly. They also have a very low item-rest correlation score (0.309 and 0.287 respectively), so, at a minimum, the items bear reviewing to see if they are targeting novice functions, contexts, and accuracy.

### 9.3 Patterns across proficiency levels

Analyzing item performance across different proficiency levels helps to ensure that the test items are appropriately challenging for each level. This analysis can reveal whether certain items are too easy or too difficult for the intended proficiency level. It also helps to identify any gaps in item coverage.

## 9.4 Visuals encouraged (tables, graphs)

Using tables and graphs to present item-level statistics makes it easier to interpret the data and identify key insights. Visuals can highlight trends and patterns that may not be immediately apparent from raw data. Examples include histograms of item difficulties, scatter plots of item discrimination indices, and bar charts showing item performance across proficiency levels.

## 9.5 Individually Authored Item Statistics

#1

Author: Tim Arnold

Item: Talk about the picture. What do you see?



Level: Intermediate Mid

Difficulty: 4.33 (calculated for polytomous item)

Discrimination: Item rest score of 0.309

Interpretation: low difficulty, poor discrimination, somewhat aligned with expectations.

Revisions: It is possible that the item is too easy and needs to be reworded, but it is also possible that there were not many students in the novice proficiency level. If it is revised, it needs to align better with intermediate high functions.

#2

Author: Irene Purushootam

Item: List the things that are in your bedroom at home

Level: Novice (2)

Difficulty: 0.68

Discrimination: 0.42

Interpretation: Moderate difficulty, good discrimination, aligned with expectations.

Revisions: Add a follow-up prompt to prompt more elaboration.

### #3

Author: Addison Fisher

Level: Intermediate (3)

Item: You are an international student, and it is your first day of school at the ELC. Your teacher asks you to share why you are studying English. How would you answer?

Difficulty: 0.173

Discrimination: 0.103

Interpretation: Moderate easy, not great discrimination, but aligned with expectations as an Intermediate-level question.

Revisions: Add a follow-up prompt to prompt more elaboration.

### #5

Author: Irene Purushottam

Item: You are an international student living in the USA and studying English at the ELC. Your friend wants to come to the USA and learn English as well. She asks you about your experience studying and living here. Do the following to respond to your friend.

- a. Compare and contrast between studying in the USA versus your country.
- b. Describe your experience living here.

Level: Advanced - Description

Difficulty: 0.68

Discrimination: 0.42

Interpretation: Moderate difficulty, good discrimination, aligned with expectations.

Revisions: Add a follow-up prompt to prompt more elaboration.

### #9

Author: Tim Arnold

Item: In your Listening and Speaking class, your teacher divided the class into four groups and assigned your group this quote by Abraham Lincoln: "Avoid popularity if you want to have peace." After your group discussion, you were selected by your group to be their spokesperson. In your report to the class, explain:

a) How does this quote either succeed or fail at reflecting truth?,

b) Who should learn from it?, and

c) What should be done about it?

Level: Superior

Difficulty: 1.42 (calculated for polytomous item)

Discrimination: 0.586

Interpretation: High difficulty, good discrimination, aligned with expectations.

Revisions: Revise the second and the third questions to better elicit superior language. For example, “how should we change who we are because of what Abraham Lincoln said?”

## #10 -

Author: Addison Fisher

Level: Advanced

Item: Describe your first day in Utah. How was your first day? What did you think? What did you see?

Difficulty: 0.09

Discrimination: 0.10

Interpretation: Moderate easy, good discrimination, but aligned with expectations as an Intermediate-level question.

Revisions: Add a follow-up prompt to prompt more elaboration.

## #2 writing

**Author:** Jagaanaa Ireedui

**Item:** How has globalization affected traditional cultures?

**Level:** Superior (10)

**Difficulty:** 0.82

**Discrimination:** 0.51

**Interpretation:** High difficulty, strong discrimination. This item is suitable for test-takers at the highest proficiency level and effectively differentiates between strong and weak performers.

**Revisions:** No revisions needed. The item already prompts extended analytical writing with cultural and critical thinking depth.

## #8

**Author:** Jagaanaa Ireedui

**Item:** What are some possible positive and negative effects of government control over freedom of speech, especially on social media?

**Level:** Superior (10)

**Difficulty:** 0.79

**Discrimination:** 0.47

**Interpretation:** High difficulty, strong discrimination. This item encourages nuanced analysis and persuasive reasoning, suitable for learners at the Superior level.

**Revisions:** Simplified the wording to highlight the central issues while keeping the complexity required for Superior performance.

**#11**

**Author:** Jagaanaa Ireedui

**Item:** Your classmates are talking about their weekend routines. They ask you what you usually do.

**Level:** Intermediate (6)

**Difficulty:** 0.55

**Discrimination:** 0.39

**Interpretation:** Moderate difficulty, fair discrimination. This prompt aligns well with Intermediate-level learners' ability to narrate familiar routines in sentence-level discourse.

**Revisions:** Add a follow-up prompt asking about how you feel about your weekend routine to encourage elaboration and more connected discourse.

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## 10. Reliability Analysis

### 10.1 Overall reliability (e.g., Cronbach's alpha)

We calculated Cronbach's alpha to check how consistent the speaking proficiency test was. The result was 0.908, which is a very high score. This means the rubric items worked well together and the raters used them in a consistent way. A score this high shows that the test was measuring the same speaking skill across all student performances.

### 10.2 Interpretation of reliability estimate

We also looked at inter-rater reliability by having more than one person score each student's speaking sample. Our class practiced scoring with sample responses and talked about any differences we had. This helped us understand the ACTFL rubric better and agree on what to look for in student answers. Multiple raters scored the same responses, and we worked to keep our scores as close as possible.

### 10.3 Limitations due to sample size, item count, etc.

The high alpha score and consistent scoring from trained raters show that the test was reliable and that the scores reflected real student ability. The only thing to keep in mind is that our sample size and the number of items were limited since this was a classroom practice test, so results might be a little different with a larger group or a more formal test.

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## 11. Validity Evidence

This test was constructed to test students on different prompts that would elicit answers that fit within the ACTFL levels (Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, and Superior). These questions prompted different types of topics. Table 4 includes the types of questions with the connected ACTFL level.

**Table 4**

*ACTFL Levels and Connected Questions*

|              |                                           |
|--------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Novice       | Warm Up                                   |
| Novice       | List                                      |
| Intermediate | Personal Life                             |
| Intermediate | Questions                                 |
| Advanced     | Description                               |
| Superior     | Opinion                                   |
| Advanced     | Problem Resolution                        |
| Superior     | Consequences,<br>Advantages/Disadvantages |
| Superior     | Quote Interpretation                      |
| Advanced     | Past Narration                            |
| Intermediate | Routine                                   |
| Intermediate | Cool Down                                 |

The test-takers completed this test through following the instructions outlined for each question. They answered each question either orally or in writing. Usually, students would begin through prefacing their answer then proceed to answer. They would take time to read the prompt and were given a portion of time to form their answer before recording their answer through speaking or writing. The responses of the test-takers show a strong response process validity as the test-takers' cognitive processes match up with the test processes that the test is intending to measure.

Each of the test variables was individual, but they had a recurring theme where the test-takers were given a situation that was authentic to them as a student at the ELC. The internal design of the test with each variable accurately reflected the intended

relationship between variables, requiring the test-takers to answer a question that would elicit English from them on topics they have already faced or could potentially face.

The impact of this test and the social implications of the test on teachers and students are very high as seen by the test statistics. There were some questions that resulted in a lower item correlation (questions 1 and 2), but the questions on the test had a high positive correlation, indicating a strong relationship across. The reliability for the entire test was also very high (91%).

There were some questions that the test-takers did not fully answer because of misunderstanding the question. One example was the Intermediate-level question that required test-takers to explain their weekend routine. Some students would misinterpret this as a question requiring test-takers to describe their daily routines on the weekdays, explaining about attending English classes or working.

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## 12. Limitations and Recommendations

### 12.1 Main Limitations of Test or Process

**Sample Size:** The reliability and validity of the test results may be affected by the sample size. A small sample size can limit the generalizability of the findings.

**Item Coverage:** While the test aims to cover a range of proficiency levels, there may be gaps in item coverage that could affect the accuracy of the proficiency assessment.

**Cultural Bias:** Despite efforts to ensure cultural sensitivity, some test items may still be more familiar to students from certain backgrounds, potentially affecting their performance.

### 12.2 Recommendations for Future Revisions or Administrations

**Expand Sample Size:** Increase the number of test-takers to improve the reliability and validity of the test results.

**Enhance Item Coverage:** Review and revise test items to ensure comprehensive coverage of all proficiency levels and language skills.

**Address Cultural Bias:** Continuously review test items for cultural bias and make necessary adjustments to ensure fairness for all students.

### 12.3 Suggestions to Improve Reliability/Validity:

**Rater Training:** Provide thorough training for raters to ensure consistent and accurate scoring of test responses.

**Double Scoring:** Implement double scoring for a subset of test responses to check for scoring consistency and address any discrepancies.

**Ongoing Review:** Regularly review and update test items based on feedback and performance data to maintain the quality and effectiveness of the test.

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## 13. Appendices

The following appendices include the speaking and writing rubrics, test questions, and data graphs.

# Appendix A: Speaking Rubric

| ACTFL Level | ELC Rating | Text Type<br>(length, fluency, organization, task completion) | Content<br>(functional ability, vocabulary) | Accuracy<br>(grammar, structure, pronunciation, comprehensibility) |
|-------------|------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
|-------------|------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|

Demonstrates ability to **use memorized chunks of language** with consistent success.

|              |          |                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|--------------|----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>NL-NM</b> | <b>0</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produces nothing to some memorized words/phrases</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shows no functional ability</li> <li>Has very limited vocabulary – often taken directly from prompt; may just read the prompt</li> <li>May include native language</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produces too little to accurately assess grammar</li> <li>Pronunciation may make response unintelligible</li> <li>Is completely or nearly incomprehensible to those used to non-native speakers</li> </ul>                              |
| <b>NH</b>    | <b>1</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produces short and often incomplete sentences</li> </ul>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited to survival topics</li> <li>Creates language mostly successfully by piecing together memorized words/phrases</li> </ul>                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has many errors in sentences; stays in present tense</li> <li>Pronunciation causes comprehension problems; heavily influenced by native language</li> <li>Is understood with difficulty by those used to non-native speakers</li> </ul> |

Demonstrates ability to **create with the language** with consistent success.

|           |          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----------|----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>IL</b> | <b>2</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produces short sentences</li> <li>Ideas are not connected logically</li> <li>Completes intermediate tasks but with some hesitation</li> </ul>                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Handles limited number of predictable social situations</li> <li>Asks a few basic questions and briefly discusses basic routines</li> <li>Uses some general vocabulary</li> </ul>                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has many errors in sentences; uses present tense and simple structure but sometimes attempts other time frames and structures</li> <li>Pronunciation causes some comprehension problems; strongly influenced by native language</li> <li>Is generally understood by those used to non-native speakers but may need to repeat or rephrase.</li> </ul> |
| <b>IM</b> | <b>3</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produces simple, complete sentences</li> <li>Ideas/Sentences are strung together</li> <li>Completes intermediate tasks comfortably; struggles with advanced tasks</li> </ul>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Handles a variety of social situations</li> <li>Asks several questions and discusses routines</li> <li>Uses a variety of general vocabulary</li> </ul>                                                                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has error patterns that sometimes obscure meaning; uses a limited range of time frames and sentence structures</li> <li>Pronunciation causes some comprehension problems; moderately influenced by native language</li> <li>Is generally understood by those used to non-native speakers</li> </ul>                                                  |
| <b>IH</b> | <b>4</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produces moderate-length sentences</li> <li>Ideas are connected by a few discourse markers</li> <li>Completes intermediate tasks with ease; is mostly successful with advanced tasks</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Handles a wide variety of social situations</li> <li>Asks several questions and discusses routines in detail</li> <li>Narrates and describes mostly successfully</li> <li>Uses wide variety of general vocabulary and some academic vocabulary</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has error patterns that may obscure meaning; uses all time frames but is not consistently correct; uses a variety of sentence structures</li> <li>Pronunciation causes some comprehension problems; sometimes influenced by native language</li> <li>Is easily understood by those used to non-native speakers</li> </ul>                            |

Demonstrates ability to **narrate and describe** with consistent success.

|           |          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-----------|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>AL</b> | <b>5</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produces simple paragraph-like discourse</li> <li>Ideas are connected by predictable discourse markers</li> <li>Completes advanced tasks with some hesitation</li> </ul>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Narrates and describes personal and community topics</li> <li>Resolves problems in predictable manner</li> <li>Uses academic vocabulary appropriately</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has error patterns that do not distort meaning; uses all time frames mostly correctly; uses a variety of sentence structures</li> <li>Pronunciation rarely causes comprehension problems; influences of native language may be evident</li> <li>Is generally understood by those not used to non-native speakers</li> </ul> |
| <b>AM</b> | <b>6</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produces paragraph-like discourse</li> <li>Ideas are connected by appropriate discourse markers</li> <li>Completes advanced tasks comfortably; struggles with superior tasks</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Narrates and describes personal and community topics in detail</li> <li>Resolves problems</li> <li>Attempts abstract but reverts to concrete discussion</li> <li>Uses a variety of academic vocabulary appropriately</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has a few error patterns that do not distort meaning; uses all time frames correctly; uses wide variety of structures</li> <li>Pronunciation rarely causes comprehension problems; influences of native language may be evident</li> <li>Is easily understood by those not used to non-native speakers</li> </ul>           |
| <b>AH</b> | <b>7</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produces paragraph-like discourse</li> <li>Ideas are highly organized</li> <li>Completes advanced tasks with ease; is mostly successful with superior tasks</li> </ul>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Narrates and describes personal and community topics in great detail</li> <li>Resolves problems clearly and confidently</li> <li>Supports an opinion and hypothesizes mostly successfully</li> <li>Speaks in abstract but sometimes reverts to concrete</li> <li>Uses a wide variety of academic vocabulary appropriately; uses some content-specific vocabulary</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has minimal errors that do not distort meaning; uses complex grammar structures</li> <li>Pronunciation rarely causes comprehension problems; influences of native language are minimal</li> <li>Is easily understood by those not used to non-native speakers</li> </ul>                                                    |

Demonstrates ability to **hypothesize and defend an opinion** with consistent success.

|          |          |                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------|----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>S</b> | <b>8</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produces lengthy discourse-like speech</li> <li>Ideas are clearly and highly organized</li> <li>Completes superior tasks comfortably</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supports an opinion and hypothesizes in a wide variety of topics</li> <li>Speaks in the abstract and rarely, if ever, reverts to concrete</li> <li>Uses a wide variety of academic and content-specific vocabulary</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May have sporadic errors but they do not distort meaning; does not avoid any grammar structures</li> <li>Pronunciation does not cause comprehension problems</li> <li>Is easily understood by those not used to non-native speakers</li> </ul> |
|----------|----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

## Appendix B: Writing Rubric

| ACTFL Level | ELC Rating | Text Type<br>(length, organization, task completion) | Content<br>(functional ability, vocabulary) | Accuracy<br>(grammar, structure, mechanics, comprehensibility) |
|-------------|------------|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
|-------------|------------|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|

Demonstrates ability to **use memorized chunks of language** with consistent success.

|              |          |                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|--------------|----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>NL-NM</b> | <b>0</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produces nothing to some memorized words/phrases</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shows no functional ability</li> <li>Has very limited vocabulary – often taken directly from prompt; may just type the prompt</li> <li>May include native language</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produces too little to accurately assess grammar</li> <li>Errors in mechanics are frequent</li> <li>Is completely or nearly incomprehensible to those used to non-native writers</li> </ul> |
| <b>NH</b>    | <b>1</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produces short and often incomplete sentences</li> </ul>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writes about limited familiar topics</li> <li>Creates language mostly successfully by piecing together memorized words/phrases</li> </ul>                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has many errors in sentences; stays in present tense</li> <li>Errors in mechanics are frequent</li> <li>Is understood with difficulty by those used to non-native writers</li> </ul>        |

Demonstrates ability to **create with the language** with consistent success.

|           |          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-----------|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>IL</b> | <b>2</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produces short sentences</li> <li>Sentences may be grouped together but not organized</li> <li>Completes intermediate tasks but at the minimum</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writes statements about familiar topics</li> <li>Uses some general vocabulary</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has many errors in sentences; uses present tense and simple sentence structure but sometimes attempts other time frames and sentence structures</li> <li>Errors in mechanics may be frequent</li> <li>Is generally understood by those used to non-native writers</li> </ul>                                     |
| <b>IM</b> | <b>3</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writes 1 paragraph; may under-develop ideas if writing more than one</li> <li>Paragraph is mostly organized; may attempt basic cohesive devices</li> <li>Completes intermediate tasks comfortably; struggles with advanced tasks</li> </ul>                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writes simple compositions about personal topics and preferences</li> <li>Uses a variety of general vocabulary</li> </ul>                                                                                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has error patterns that sometimes obscure meaning; uses a limited range of time frames and sentence structures</li> <li>Errors in mechanics may be frequent</li> <li>Is generally understood by those used to non-native writers</li> </ul>                                                                      |
| <b>IH</b> | <b>4</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Write 2-3 paragraphs; may under-develop ideas if writing an essay</li> <li>Paragraphs are mostly organized; may use a few predictable cohesive devices; if attempting an essay, organization may not be clear</li> <li>Completes intermediate tasks with ease; is mostly successful with advanced tasks</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Includes mostly narrations and/or concrete descriptions, but sometimes reverts back to simple compositions about personal topics and preferences</li> <li>Uses wide variety of general vocabulary and some academic vocabulary</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has error patterns that may obscure meaning; uses all time frames but is not consistently correct; uses a variety of sentence structures</li> <li>Errors in basic mechanics may occur, but errors in complex mechanics are frequent</li> <li>Is easily understood by those used to non-native writers</li> </ul> |

Demonstrates ability to **narrate and describe** with consistent success.

|           |          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>AL</b> | <b>5</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writes a 4-5 paragraph essay; may under-develop ideas</li> <li>Paragraphs are organized and the essay is mostly organized; uses a few predictable cohesive devices</li> <li>Completes advanced tasks but at the minimum</li> </ul>                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Includes narrations and/or concrete descriptions to support ideas</li> <li>Uses academic vocabulary appropriately</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has error patterns that do not distort meaning; uses all time frames mostly correctly; uses a variety of sentence structures</li> <li>Errors in basic mechanics may occur, but errors in complex mechanics are frequent</li> <li>Is generally understood by those not used to non-native writers</li> </ul>  |
| <b>AM</b> | <b>6</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writes a 4-5 paragraph essay; ideas are developed but may not be highly detailed</li> <li>Paragraphs are organized and the essay is mostly organized; uses cohesive devices</li> <li>Completes advanced tasks comfortably; struggles with superior tasks</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Includes detailed narrations and/or concrete descriptions to support ideas</li> <li>Attempts abstract but reverts to concrete discussion</li> <li>Uses a variety of academic vocabulary appropriately</li> </ul>                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has a few error patterns that do not distort meaning; uses all time frames correctly; uses wide variety of sentence structures</li> <li>Errors in basic mechanics are rare, but errors in complex mechanics may be frequent</li> <li>Is easily understood by those not used to non-native writers</li> </ul> |
| <b>AH</b> | <b>7</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writes a 4-5 paragraph essay; ideas are developed and detailed</li> <li>Paragraphs and the essay are organized; uses a variety of cohesive devices</li> <li>Completes advanced tasks with ease; is mostly successful with superior tasks</li> </ul>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writes mostly in abstract and may hypothesize but sometimes reverts to detailed narrations and/or concrete descriptions to support ideas</li> <li>Uses a wide variety of academic vocabulary appropriately; uses some content-specific vocabulary</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has minimal errors that do not distort meaning; uses complex grammar structures and wide variety of sentence structures</li> <li>Errors in basic mechanics are rare, but errors in complex mechanics may occur</li> <li>Is easily understood by those not used to non-native writers</li> </ul>              |

Demonstrates ability to **hypothesize and defend an opinion** with consistent success.

|          |          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|----------|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>S</b> | <b>8</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writes a 4-5 paragraph essay; ideas are highly developed and detailed</li> <li>Paragraphs and the essay are clearly organized; uses a wide variety of cohesive devices</li> <li>Completes superior tasks comfortably</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writes in the abstract and, when appropriate, hypothesizes; rarely, if ever, reverts to narrations and/or concrete descriptions</li> <li>Uses a wide variety of academic and content-specific vocabulary</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May have sporadic errors but they do not distort meaning; does not avoid any grammar or sentence structures</li> <li>Has no errors in basic mechanics and errors in complex mechanics are rare</li> <li>Is easily understood by those not used to non-native writers</li> </ul> |
|----------|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

## Appendix C: Full Test Version

# LATs

## Speaking Prompts

### 1. Novice: Warm-up

Talk about the picture. What do you see?

You have 10 seconds to prepare your answer and 30 seconds to speak.

### 2. Novice: List

List the things that are in your bedroom at home.

You have 10 seconds to prepare and 30 seconds to speak.

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

You have 10 seconds to prepare your answer and 30 seconds to speak.

### 3. Intermediate: Personal Life

You are an international student, and it is your first day of school at the ELC. Your teacher asks you to share why you are studying English. Tell them about your goals.

You have 10 seconds to prepare your answer and 30 seconds to speak.

## 4. Intermediate: Questions

You are an international student, and your American friends invited you to a party. You don't know what food to bring. Ask your friend several questions about what you need to know about the party:

- a. Clothes to wear
- b. Food to bring

You have 10 seconds to prepare your answer and 30 seconds to speak.

## 5. Advanced: Description

You are an international student living in the USA and studying English at the ELC. Your friend wants to come to the USA and learn English as well. She asks you about your experience studying and living here. Do the following to respond to your friend.

- a. Compare and contrast between studying in the USA versus your country.
- b. Describe your experience living here.

You have 15 seconds to prepare your answer and 45 seconds to speak.

## 6. Superior: Opinion

Your professor tells you that the university you attend is considering establishing a 'NO CELL PHONE' rule in the classes offered by the university. Before they enforce this rule, the university would like to hear from its student body. Respond and defend your opinion on the following:

- a. The effects that this policy could have on the university and on the students.

You have 20 seconds to prepare your answer and 80 seconds to speak.

## 7. Advanced: Problem Resolution

You are an international student, and it is your first day at work in your position as a secretary. You open your laptop, and your computer is not turning on. To fix the issue, you call a technology specialist. They ask you to describe in detail the problem, what you have done, and what services you need the technology specialist to provide. How would you respond to the technology specialist?

You have 15 seconds to prepare your answer and 45 seconds to speak.

## 8. Superior: Consequences, Advantages/disadvantages

You are talking to a fellow student about the freedom of speech in social media. Different countries have different perspectives on what should or should be included as freedom of speech. Some countries believe that there should be strong government oversight while others deem this as unnecessary. Your friend would like to hear your stance on this issue. What are some potential and problematic consequences of government oversight on freedom of speech? What potential beneficial or harmful impacts could this issue have on adolescents?

You have 20 seconds to prepare your answer and 80 seconds to speak.

## 9. Superior: Quote Interpretation

In your Listening and Speaking class, your teacher divided the class into four groups and assigned your group this quote by Abraham Lincoln: “Avoid popularity if you want to have peace.” After your group discussion, you were selected by your group to be their spokesperson. In your report to the class, explain:

- a) How does this quote either succeed or fail at reflecting truth?,
- b) Who should learn from it?, and
- c) What should be done about it?

You have 20 seconds to prepare your answer and 80 seconds to speak.

## 10. Advanced: Past Narration

You just moved to the USA one week ago to study English. Your family misses you and they called you. They want to know about what you have done since you have arrived in Provo. Respond to them by describing your first day in Utah. How was it? What did you think? What did you see?

You have 15 seconds to prepare your answer and 45 seconds to speak.

## 11. Intermediate: Routine

Your classmates are talking about their weekend routines. Some of them spend time cleaning, and others choose to sleep in. Your classmates ask you what your weekend routine is. Respond to them by describing your weekend routine.

You have 10 seconds to prepare your answer and 30 seconds to speak.

## 12. Intermediate: Cool Down

You have been asked to give a tour of the ELC to a new student because you are a student leader. Describe how you would introduce them to the school.

You have 10 seconds to prepare your answer and 30 seconds to speak.

# Writing Prompts

## 1. Intermediate: Personal Life

You have been learning about family members and how to describe them in your writing class. Your teacher wants you to write a paragraph about your family as a final assignment. Write a paragraph about

- a. How you would describe your family members and their relationships?

You have 10 minutes to compose your response.

## 2. Superior: Opinion and Consequences or Advantages/Disadvantages

Your college is hosting a prestigious academic conference on globalization, and you have been selected to write a compelling thesis on the topic: "How has globalization affected traditional cultures?" In your thesis, critically analyze how globalization has influenced traditional cultural practices, values, and identities. Provide examples and arguments to support your opinion.

You have 30 minutes to compose your response.

## Appendix D: Histogram Data

**Figure 2**

*Histogram of the Data*

