

**Using the Common European Framework of Reference for Evaluating Language
Volunteers for the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games**

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Using the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) for Evaluating Language Volunteers for the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games

Abstract

This paper presents the results of a small-scale study on the use of a modified version of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) for the self-assessment and placement of language services volunteers at the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. While many of the 25,000 volunteers working at the Games used more than one language in their role, a group of about two hundred language volunteers provided highly specialized consecutive interpretation services to athletes from the eighty-eight countries represented. Because the Games are a highly charged and fast-moving environment, we needed a practical and inexpensive way to select from the 5000 applicants to the International Client Services department where the interpreters were located. The self-assessment grid of the CEFR was sent to 1200 applicants who had indicated a high level of fluency in one or more of the thirteen languages needed by the international sport federations. This initial indication of language competence was contained in the volunteer application form via a four-point scale (basic, conversational, fluent, mother tongue).

The self-assessment via the CEFR was the primary means by which the number of volunteers was reduced to two hundred. Additional criteria such as sport experience, knowledge of protocol and dignitary management, length of time available and secured accommodation were included the selection and placement process. Once the interpreter-volunteers were selected and had received letters of offer, we administered an additional language proficiency test online to one hundred of the volunteers. The Canadian Foreign Language Institute (CFLI) of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade assisted us by mounting to the web a spoken production test that had been used in previous Games. The CFLI assessors used the scale of proficiency of the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) for some of the questions and a point total scoring for an Olympic terminology question and a memory test. This additional test allowed us to make a final check of competency and in particular alerted us to any potential deficiencies on the memory test. We compared the results from the CEFR and the online test and found there to be a significant although weak correlation between the two. As our sample was small, more research would be needed to make any definitive conclusions in that regard. Although we were not able to observe the on-the-job performance of many of the interpreters due to the nature of the Games environment, we know from second-hand comments that their work was successful.

Focus

The purpose of this paper is to present the results of a small-scale study on the use of a modified version of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001) for the self-assessment and placement of language services volunteers at the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.

Research environment

The description of the context below tells only part of the story of what it means to conduct research within an Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games (OCOG). Even using the words “conduct research” implies a sense of intention, order and control on the part of the researchers, a state that would not accurately characterize this highly charged and fast-moving environment. It is not overly simplistic to say that the primary role of an OCOG is to stage the Games. In fact, we did not intend this study to be, in fact, a “study” – we were merely endeavouring to solve the very practical problem of finding enough qualified volunteers to fill the 188 roles for language specialists providing consecutive interpretation to our clients (athletes, dignitaries, media). In fact, we were actually completing the final offers to the volunteers in early 2009 when the opportunity arose to frame a research project concerning the methods of assessing the language competence of the volunteers.

Within the Vancouver Organizing Committee (VANOC), there was a constant sense of shifting ground as the organization moved through several waves of rapid organic expansion, from the 346 employees and approximately forty pre-Games volunteers in mid-2006 when the first author, Sally Rehorick, joined VANOC through to some 1500 full-time paid workforce members, 3000 paid short-term temporary staff, 15,000 contractors, 10,000 participants (performers) and 25,000 volunteers (18,000 for Olympics and 7,000 for Paralympics) at Games-time. A key challenge in this kind of environment is the sheer size of the workforce, including volunteers, across all of VANOC. The timeline for recruitment, selection, placement, and training, along with additional administrative planning requirements for key areas such as accreditation, uniforms, scheduling, transportation, meals and so forth meant that the lead time required for implementation of the volunteer program was a full two to three years, depending on the department.

The documentary evidence presented in this paper suggests a linear organization of data gathering with one step leading to another along a pre-determined timeline. There certainly were corporate-wide timelines within VANOC’s complex operating plans and there was a Road Map created by the Games Operations department that gave a high level overview of the major milestones for the seven years of pre-Games planning. All fifty-two functional areas within VANOC had detailed, schedule- and budget-driven business, operational and contingency plans. In addition, the selection, training and deployment of the approximately 900 volunteers (of whom 188 were in venue protocol and language services) within the department of International Client Services (ICS) followed a corporate-wide schedule for all 25,000 volunteers. All these milestones and plans were driven by the immutable date for the Opening Ceremonies on February 12, 2010.

However, in spite of these detailed operational plans and schedules, there was a continual feeling that decisions had to be taken quickly, without full information and with a great deal

of ambiguity. Our research questions did not emerge until the last year of pre-Games preparations, a point at which many key decisions about the volunteers had already been made. It is for this reason that we begin by explicating the background and context within which the research questions become meaningful.

Background of the CEFR as a tool for self-assessment

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and its companion application, the European Language Portfolio (ELP) (Council of Europe, 1998) have generated world-wide attention for their potential to define and enhance language learning, teaching and assessment (CASLT, 2010; Little, 2009 a and b; Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, 2010; Rehorick & Lafargue, 2005; Vandergrift, 2006). At the core of both the CEFR and the ELP, the chart of Common Reference Levels: self-assessment grid is the basis for six levels of competency (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2) over five major categories of language use: Listening, Reading, Spoken Production, Spoken Interaction and Reading (Council of Europe, 2001: 26-7).

While most applications of the CEFR and ELP thus far are within educational settings, there are explicit goals for their use that would see them form an essential component of an adult's professional résumé such that language competencies are described and understood across jurisdictions. This goal of facilitating "pan-European recognition and mobility" is further underscored in the European Union's Europass which contains the Language Passport to "... make your skills and qualifications clearly and easily understood in Europe [so that you can] move anywhere in Europe" (Council of Europe, 1998, [Europass](#)). The present study has the potential to have applications and utility beyond educational settings.

The question of whether the CEFR can be used in an accurate way for decisions in the world of work has not been widely studied. Stoicheva, Hughes and Speitz (2009) conducted an impact study "...to gauge the impact of ELP use in the classroom, on other projects in the education system and on language policy in general in the [Council of Europe] member states" (p. 1). In addition, the European Union commissioned a survey to evaluate the usefulness of the Europass among its users for presenting their qualifications to potential employers (ECOTEC Research and Consulting Ltd., 2008). Neither study reported on any efforts by employers to use the self-assessment on the CEFR grid for decisions to either hire or not hire the individuals.

Language services at the Olympics and Paralympics

The primary use of the CEFR self-assessment grid by the Organizing Committee of the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games (VANOC) was to inform decisions about the placement of language services volunteers into positions requiring informal interpretation skills. The CEFR was one of several sources of information about the language proficiency of the VANOC volunteers who provided services to various clients including athletes, officials, spectators, dignitaries, media, and the general public.

Although there was written translation for some situations, the language services volunteers provided only oral services for the languages of the Olympic and Paralympic Family members and the athletes. For major meetings and events, such as the three-day Session of

the International Olympic Committee and the large press conferences in the Main Media Centre, a cadre of professional interpreters provided simultaneous interpretation services in up to seven languages: French, Russian, English, German, Japanese, Korean and Mandarin.

The language volunteers provided two kinds of services: 1) assistance to members of the National Olympic Committees and the International Olympic and Paralympic Committees; and 2) consecutive interpretation for athletes interacting with various functions across the Games, such as medical, anti-doping, security, sport and the press. The focus of this study is on the second kind of services. Some examples of situations in which these volunteers used their interpretation skills were as follows:

- Mixed zone for media at the exit of the field of play: volunteers interpreted interviews with journalists as the athletes passed through the mixed zone.
- Medical clinics in sport venues and athlete villages: interpretation was provided for athletes needing to interact with doctors, physiotherapists, dentists and so forth.
- Anti-doping requirements: athletes who were selected for anti-doping procedures could request interpretation services.
- Non-competition venues: in the main media centres, the airport and the athlete villages, language services volunteers provided interpretation for any situations in which accredited individuals needed assistance to negotiate their way around.

The highest level of language competence was required by those providing interpretation (C1 and C2) whereas B2 was generally considered sufficient for the language assistants. In total VANOC recruited and trained approximately eight hundred volunteers with language skills, of whom 188 were in the “interpreter” category. The range of languages was vast and focused on the languages of the athletes themselves (representing eighty countries) and the languages most frequently used by the different International Sport Federations. The language volunteers who were interpreters provided services in thirteen languages. While all volunteers received general orientations to the Games as well as job-specific and venue-specific training, only those in the interpreter category received specialized training for consecutive interpretation. This one-day workshop conducted by VANOC’s Chief Interpreter provided the volunteers with specific techniques for consecutive interpretation, such as note-taking and ways to ensure that the original message of the speaker was respected and maintained.

Volunteer Recruitment, Selection and Training Timelines

Because of the sheer numbers of volunteers required for the Games, the process of recruitment and selection started in 2007 with the Human Resources division (HR) of VANOC conducting extensive “headcount” needs assessments with each functional area. The actual number of volunteers to be engaged fluctuated a great deal during that period as VANOC endeavoured to establish the definitive and optimal number of people required to stage the Games. Each functional area was required to go through extensive justifications for the numbers of volunteers for that area before approval was given. In the fall of 2007, HR sponsored dozens of community presentations to targeted groups, explaining the volunteer program. The launch of the application process was February 12, 2008, exactly two years before the Games. The ICS volunteer timeline is outlined in Table 1:

Table 1 Internationa Client Services Volunteer Timeline

Dates	Activities for decision-making	Number of volunteers	Methods/criteria
May 2008	Screening into ICS “bucket”	5000 applicants reduced to 2000	- ICS special code for recommended applicants. - language self-assessments in certain languages - experience dealing with dignitaries/protocol - accommodation secured in Vancouver or Whistler - preferences for positions
June to August 2008	Interviews	1500 +	- Group presentation for general orientation to ICS - Group activities to assess teamwork - Individual interviews
July 2008 to Jan 2010	CEFR language self-assessment and language background questionnaires	1200 (approximately)	- e-mailed forms to applicants. - 868 returned. Interpreters (188) selected from those indicating C1/C2 in English and target language
Nov 2008 – Jan 2009	Offers sent to successful applicants with specification of position and venue	1000 (approximately)	Letters from HR
Nov 2008 – March 2009	Interpreter training for sport test events	22	3-hour classroom sessions conducted by ICS
March – Nov 2009	Online language test	100 (the 188 already selected through the CEFR were invited to take the test)	Conducted by Canadian Foreign Service Institute
Sept – Nov 2009	ICS training	900 (not all were available for this)	200 received protocol and language services training (1 day)
Dec 2009 – Jan 2010	Venue specific training	900 (not all were available)	Classroom and some in-venue sessions (1 day)
	Interpreter training	110 (approx.)	Classroom (1 day)

The activities outlined in Table 1 were not always sequential either in an overall sense or for an individual volunteer. Many activities were occurring simultaneously and an individual volunteer's own route could vary from a two year period to a two month one (and in a few cases even shorter).

Language Evaluation

When volunteers applied to VANOC through the online recruitment process, they were asked to assess their own language skills as Basic, Conversational, Fluent, or Mother Tongue. Although this rubric approach aided in initial screening (i.e. only those choosing “Fluent” or “Mother Tongue” were “bucketed” into the language services volunteer category), it was not helpful in making a final selection of candidates. Such broad scales do not generally impart either a valid basis for differentiating between the levels nor a reliable

description of what the speaker can actually do. Moreover, the four labels proved to be particularly problematic in the context of Canada, and Vancouver especially, since the multicultural nature of the population is highly diverse in terms of the number of languages and the frequency and domains of their use. Many of our immigrant language volunteers identified a particular language as their “mother tongue” because they had learned it first in their homeland. However if they had arrived in Canada at the age of ten, for example, it was entirely possible that they spoke gradually less and less of their mother tongue and more English, a situation resulting in a higher level of fluency in English than their mother tongue. The volunteer application form itself did not provide this kind of texture.

Since the Olympic Games in Atlanta (1996), language proficiency had been assessed through an oral test that focused on spoken production in both the language of the host country and the target language. The instructions were pre-recorded and the candidates recorded their own answers onto cassette tapes in a language laboratory. The structure of this test is represented in the Table 2:

Table 2 Structure of Spoken Production Test used in previous Olympic Games

Graduated segment	Description	Criteria	Points to pass
Tier One	a) Candidate identification in English b) Linguistic background in target language	a) Grammar b) Accent c) Style d) Content/structure	30/40
Tier Two	a) Map exercise	a) Grammar b) Accent c) Style d) Conciseness	20 total available points
	b) Olympic Terminology	10 terms to interpret	10 total available points
	c) Role playing (medical assistance situation)	# of valid questions posed x 3 points each	15 total available points
			35/55 to pass
Tier Three	Memory recollection exercise	2 segments with requirements of accuracy of details of content	36 points available. Passing mark not fixed

Prior to the Vancouver 2010 Games, evaluators (typically university or college language teachers), used a point-based, criterion-referenced scoring system (see Appendix B for the full scoring details). Although this test had not been scientifically validated, it nonetheless provided a practical way to benchmark the volunteers’ competency in domain-specific language (Sweeney, 2007). Moreover it addressed the issue of “memory”, a skill much needed by consecutive interpreters. The limitations of the test were that the nearly 1200 volunteer candidates had to present themselves in person to take the test in a language laboratory (or over the phone) and also that a willing and able cadre of evaluators was needed to conduct the assessments.

The language volunteer applicants for the Vancouver 2010 Games came from all across Canada and abroad and VANOC’s International Client Services department needed a way to accurately assess their language competence from wherever they were during the recruitment period of one to two years prior to the Games. VANOC was interested to mount the Atlanta test on the internet so that the test could be taken by candidates from locations other than Vancouver. Over a period of six months, from January until July 2008,

the Director of International Client Services (Sally Rehorick) sought the assistance of several post-secondary institutions in the Vancouver area. However, budget constraints prevented a successful negotiation with any of the institutions to provide these language evaluation services.

We therefore took the decision to use the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages as a mail-out self-assessment tool. Since the skills of writing and reading were not essential for the language volunteers, we adapted the CEFR's main grid to include only listening, spoken production and spoken interaction (Appendix C). Nevertheless, although the CEFR itself has been rigorously validated (Vandergrift, 2006), the grid is still undergoing scrutiny in terms of its accuracy as a self-assessment tool (Little, 2009a and 2009b) and we wanted to triangulate the information with additional assessment data.

Information was gathered from the Language Background Questionnaire (Appendix D) to determine the domains of use as well as the frequency with which the candidate used the target language. Candidates were asked to describe how they had learned the target language, how they currently used the language and how comfortable they were to do informal interpretation. A few of the volunteers were available to provide interpretation for the sport test events and we were thus in a position to evaluate their work one-year before the start of the Games. Finally we were able to observe the volunteers during their one-day interpretation workshop, which provided us with a situation as close to on-the-job performance as possible during the pre-Games period. From these data sources (and especially the CEFR), we were able to select the 188 people fulfilling the criteria of C1/C2 in both English and the target language. In some cases, we accepted a lower self-assessment (e.g. B2), if we were in short supply of a particular language, or if the candidate had other qualifications and requirements (e.g. accommodation in Whistler, availability for a full month).

As noted above, we had not been successful in locating a university or college to assist us with mounting an online version of the Salt Lake proficiency test. Moreover, as our timeline outlined earlier shows, we had already made the volunteer selections and extended offers by the end of January 2009. At about the same time, an unexpected offer was made to VANOC by the Government of Canada: a colleague from VANOC's government relations department learned that the Canadian Foreign Language Institute (CFLI) of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade in Ottawa was willing to collaborate with VANOC to create an online version of the test. Even though we had already made our volunteer selections and placements, we decided to accept the CFLI's offer, surmising that this could be a confirmation of the volunteers' skills, at least for those in the interpreter category.

We tailored the tests to fit the Vancouver environment (Appendix A). While the test remained the same, the CFLI used the rating scale of the American Council of Foreign Language Teachers (ACTFL, 1985) for four of the six parts of the test, as their evaluators are all trained in the use of the scale both for the Oral Proficiency Interview (spoken interaction) and their Social Integration Test (spoken production) used to assess diplomats and their families going abroad to work in embassies and consulates. In fact the Social Integration Test provides short samples of speech resembling those of the VANOC test and thus the assessors from CFLI were very comfortable with applying the ACTFL scale to the

VANOC test (Hanhan, 2011, Personal Communication). The four sections of the test (see Table 1 above) to which the ACTFL scale was applied were: 1) Tier One, Candidate identification in English; 2) Tier One, Linguistic Background in target language; 3) Tier Two, Map Exercise; 3) Tier Two, Role-playing (medical assistance situation). The Olympic terminology (Tier Two) and Memory recollection exercise (Tier Three) were treated as separate pieces of assessment information as they were scored on a system of points awarded for accuracy of information.

The test was mounted on a website using the software Adobe Connect. Volunteers registered for the test and recorded their answers online. VANOC's Language Services Manager provided a live interface for each test candidate in order for the volunteers to understand how to proceed and also to mitigate against any technical difficulties. The assessors, located in Ontario and Quebec, accessed the recorded tests via their own computers, rate them, and file the rating form with VANOC. As this was a new procedure for both VANOC and CFLI, the creation and set-up of the test required about three months to complete. The majority of the tests (108 in all) were conducted from mid-March 2009 to late October 2009.

In summary, there were several pieces of documentary evidence gathered for the evaluation of language competence (Table 3):

Table 3: Documentary evidence for evaluation of volunteers' language competence

Assessment tool	Type	Rating Scale	Timing	Purpose
1. Application form Note: the number of volunteers for each assessment tool is contained in Table 1.	Self-assessment	Basic, Conversational, Fluent, Mother Tongue	24 months before Games (volunteer launch was on February 12, 2008)	Reduce the 5000+ applications to those with Fluent or Mother Tongue in one or more of the 13 required languages. 1500 were screened in (bucketed). Other criteria for the “bucketing” were the volunteers’ availability for the full Games period and their own accommodation.
2. Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)	Self-assessment in 3 skills: listening, spoken production, spoken interaction	A1: Breakthrough A2: Waystage B1: Threshold B2: Vantage C1: Effective operational proficiency C2: Mastery	On-going from July 2008 until start of Games	Enrich the data from the application form's self-assessment of the 1200 volunteers. Reduce numbers to the 188 volunteers who filled the role of language services interpreters.
3. Language Background Questionnaire	Open-ended questions regarding how target language was learned and used as well as experience with interpretation	n/a	Sent out with the CEFR above.	Learn more about volunteers' domains of language use and comfort level with interpretation contexts.
4. Language Proficiency Evaluation (used at previous Games) (108 volunteers)	Spoken production recorded online with 6 parts:	Ratings done by the federal government's Canadian Foreign Language Institute (CFLI)	On-going from Games minus 10 months to Games minus 2 months	Gather performance proficiency data using the same tests as at previous Games.
	Proficiency sections: a) Candidate identification in English b) Linguistic background in target language c) Map exercise d) Medical role play	ACTFL: Low, mid, high for each of: Novice Intermediate Advanced. Superior		
	Domain-specific accuracy sections: a) Olympic terminology b) Memory	Points awarded for specific information		
5. Sport test events (22 volunteers)	On-the-job interpretation for athletes, media, and medical	Performance-based observations	October 2008 until March 2009	Develop sport-specific expertise in interpretation for the volunteers.
6. ICS one-day training: included some language interpretation techniques and some protocol training as all language services volunteers covered both areas	Workshop with staff from the International Client Services department	Performance-based observations	August 2009 through December 2009	Orientation to the function of International Client Services
7. One-day interpreters' training (approximately 110 volunteers)	Workshop with Chief Interpreter	Performance-based observations	December 2009 and January 2010	Learn techniques of consecutive interpretation

These multiple ways of gathering information about the proficiency of our language volunteers gave us a certain degree of confidence that at Games-time, we had the right people for the work. Nevertheless, not every language services volunteer went through each of the seven processes. The reasons for this are many: a) we provided language services at only three sport test events and only a few people could participate; and b) geographical distance or personal workloads (difficult to be present for training, sport test events, or face-to-face training). By Games-time, we had 188 language services volunteers for the department of International Client Services. The principle decisions to “hire” were based on the self-assessment of the CEFR. As the selected group of 188 was going through their final training, VANOC’s Language Services Manager (author Kristin Johannsdottir) also noted the scores on the Memory Test. If a volunteer had difficulty with consecutive interpretation techniques during training due to not interpreting enough of the original message, then sometimes their role was altered slightly.

Research Questions

Given the difficulties we had at VANOC in securing local expertise for administering and scoring the Language Proficiency Evaluation (instrument #4 in Table 3), primarily for budgetary reasons, and also given the organizational and time complexities of conducting 1200 of these tests, we were interested to know to what extent the results of the self-assessment on the CEFR grid correlated with the results of the online test components utilizing the ACTFL rubrics. If we found that there is a close association or correlation between the two, then future Organizing Committees for the Olympic Games (and indeed other jurisdictions) would be able to have confidence in the self-assessment of the CEFR and would not, therefore, need to add a second assessment, at least for the first screenings. Note that we were only able to conduct the online test with one hundred of the 188 candidates selected via the CEFR self-assessment grid. In addition, none of the applicants who were not selected from the results of the CEFR grid were given the online test.

There has been extensive work to determine ways to calibrate existing standardized language examinations to the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2003; Figueras, N. & Noijons, J., 2009). To date, this calibration has not been done with the ACTFL’s primary standardized test (the Oral Proficiency Interview). However, Vandergrift (2006) carried out a preliminary alignment of various well-known language proficiency scales. His comparison of the levels of the ACTFL and CEFR scales is as follows:

Table 4 Comparison of CEFR and ACTFL Levels

CEFR	ACTFL
A1	Novice – all levels
A2	Intermediate – all levels
B1	Advanced low
B2	Advanced mid
C1	Advanced high
C2	Superior

We had determined that language volunteers fulfilling interpreter roles would need C1 or C2 in the three skills of Listening, Spoken Production and Spoken Interaction. In theory then, the volunteers would need to obtain Advanced High or Superior on the online test components rated by the CFLI evaluators with the ACTFL scale. Our overarching research questions for this study was therefore as follows:

- Can the CEFR self-assessment grid be used as an accurate and reliable self-assessment tool?
- What is the association between the volunteer application form self-assessment, the CEFR self-assessment and the results of the online test using the ACTFL scale?
- Which pieces of assessment information provided the most accurate determinants for the on-the-job performance of the language volunteers?

Statistical Analysis

As we have noted, decisions to select the 188 language volunteers were made by November 2008 with all letters of offer completed by mid-January 2009. The primary decision factors were the self-assessments of the volunteer application form (first cut) and the CEFR. Additional factors included which language(s) the volunteer spoke (languages not used by athletes were not included), whether the volunteer had local accommodation, and other relevant skills and preferences. Thus the online test with the ACTFL scale served as a confirmation check and was used only after the 188 language volunteers had been selected.

Ultimately we had a group of 100 volunteers who were able to sit for the online test. As mentioned above, they had already been selected through their high (C1 and C2) levels reported through the CEFR. Although this was a small sample size, we conducted some statistical analyses to determine if there was a correlation or association among the three tools of the volunteer application form, the CEFR and the online test. The data showed that the correlation between the online test and the CEFR was weak but significant.

Our initial analysis of the data was to conduct analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests to attempt to discard the null hypothesis that there is no significant variation between the two tests. This test showed that there were significant differences between the tests. See Table XX for the ANOVA comparing the CEFR and ACTFL tests. This test showed that there were significant differences between the two tests. Subsequent post-hoc tests for robustness were not possible due to the small sample size and concomitantly small size of groups within the data.

Table 5 – ANOVA: CEFR and ACTFL test results

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	318.172	16	19.886	3.586	.000
Within Groups	388.173	70	5.545		
Total	706.345	86			

The correlation between the CEFR and ACTFL tests was weak, but statistically significant:

Table 6 – Correlation between CEFR and ACTFL results

		Correlations	
		SUM: CEFR	Sum: ACTFL
Spearman's rho	SUM: CEFR	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.003
		N	95
	Sum: ACTFL	Correlation Coefficient	.315**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.003
		N	87
			92

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

There was a strong correlation between the two self-assessment tools: the volunteer application and the CEFR for the 100 candidates in the data set. We could not include the full database of 868 volunteers who had completed the CEFR because of the fact that the self-assessment had screened out all except the 188 people whose applications were accepted. Thus these statistics cannot be considered definitive in terms of the total population of volunteers who had applied to be interpreters.

Discussion and Conclusions

Because of the multiple ways that we had used to become familiar with not only the language competence of the volunteers but also how they performed in the interpretation simulations in training or the real situations during the sport test events, we had confidence in their readiness before the Games. Once the Games had started, there was no means to observe the volunteer interpreters as they carried out their various interpretation tasks. All of the paid and volunteer workforce members were assigned to a specific venue (of which there were seventeen in total) and everyone in each venue had a role to play to “put the Games on”. There was no practical way to assess their on-the-job performance, at least not through observations by the members of the research team. Authors Kristin J. and Milena P. managed the volunteers at venues and both reported successful interpretation work by their volunteers. In addition, we received no complaints from the clients receiving the language services. Any other program evaluation techniques such as surveys, interviews or questionnaires could not be used either. The intense focus and pressures already present during the Games would not have permitted any additional requests of this nature. Thus although we had wanted to anchor our study in the “live” Games environment, the impossibility of this last step was apparent.

Nevertheless, the use of the CEFR as a self-assessment tool proved to be productive and achieved the desired results: its use permitted us to select the 188 volunteers from among the 868 who had returned their self-assessment. Moreover, it was easy to adapt and administer. The CEFR could have been an even more textured instrument if we had had

time to develop more detailed proficiency descriptors for the Olympic environment, either through categories in a theoretical way or through representative performance samples (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 208). This kind of analytical exercise would also be useful for enhancing the training curriculum.

The usefulness of the CEFR for self-assessment of language competence in the world of work was demonstrated in our study. Even though our research was on a small scale and not in “ideal” research circumstances, we believe that much can be gleaned from our analysis of this case study. Future Organizing Committees of the Olympic Games could use the CEFR as an inexpensive and effective way to select their language volunteers.

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APPENDIX A

VANOC 2010 LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY EVALUATION RECORDING SCRIPT

Introduction

Welcome to the language proficiency evaluation session of the Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games. This assessment is designed to measure your knowledge of the language in which you are being evaluated as well as your interpreting skills. The exercise will take approximately 25 minutes. Please listen carefully to the instructions and speak clearly.

TIER ONE

Candidate identification

In *English* please state your name, address and phone number, as well as the language in which you are going to be evaluated. In addition, please describe briefly what you think of the Olympic Games, why you want to volunteer your services to help stage the Games, and what impact you think the Games will have on Vancouver and on Canada overall. You will have three minutes.

Begin now.

(wait three minutes)

Thank you.

Linguistic background

For the remainder of this language assessment exercise, you are to speak only in the language in which you are being evaluated. No more English is to be used.

Please describe briefly your linguistic background by providing us with such information as the languages you grew up with at home, languages learned in school and countries where you have lived or traveled. You have three minutes.

(wait three minutes)

Thank you.

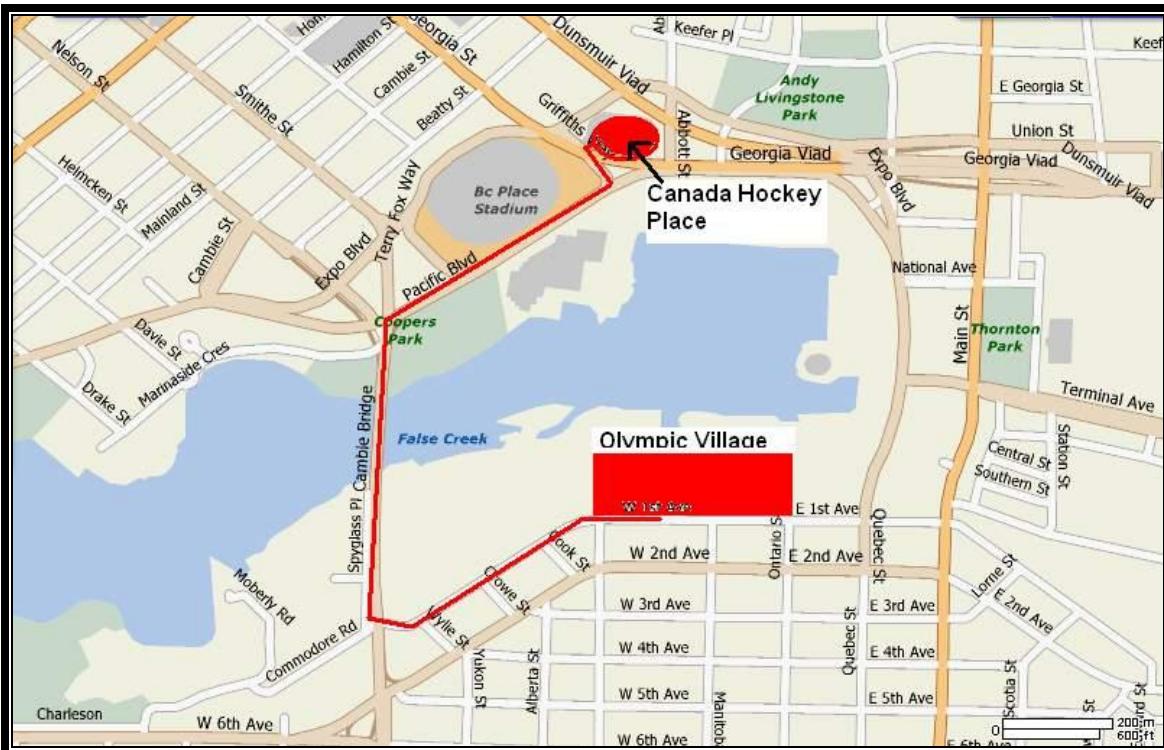
TIER TWO

Map Exercise

In front of you is a map of the Vancouver area. Imagine that an athlete has just asked you how to get from the Olympic Village to Canada Hockey Place. Your task is to explain how to get from the Olympic Village to Canada Hockey Place following the highlighted route on the map. You will be judged on such criteria as clarity, accuracy and correct phrasing. You have two minutes. Begin now.

(wait two minutes)

Thank you.



Olympic Terminology

Ten general terms related to the Olympic movement will be presented in *English*, one at a time. After each term, you will be given ten seconds to provide the equivalent in the language in which you are being evaluated. If you do not know the exact equivalent, please give a close synonym. We will now begin.

The Olympic Games	(10 seconds)
The International Olympic Committee	(10 seconds)
The Opening Ceremony	(10 seconds)
The Competition Sites	(10 seconds)
The Judges	(10 seconds)
The Olympic Flag	(10 seconds)
The Olympic Village	(10 seconds)
The National Olympic Committees	(10 seconds)
The Competitors	(10 seconds)
The Venue	(10 seconds)

Thank you.

Role Playing

An athlete who speaks only your foreign language is having a great deal of trouble walking and needs medical attention. What specific questions will you ask him in order to obtain as much information as possible concerning the injury? Keep in mind that the answers to your questions will assist the doctor in his diagnosis and treatment of the problem. Please ask as many questions as you can think of. You will have one minute. Begin now.

(Wait one minute)

Thank you.

TIER THREE

Memory Recollection Exercise

The memory recollection exercise lasts approximately 10 minutes. In the following exercise, you will hear a speech on the Olympic movement presented to you in three segments. Please listen carefully because at the end of each segment you will be asked to repeat orally all the main ideas you have just heard. You will have two minutes following the end of each segment to recall as much as you can. Please remember to speak clearly in the language in which you are being evaluated.

Segment 1

1. All of us realize that the value of the Olympic celebration of sport is to show that it is possible for the people of the world to come together and work for one common purpose.
2. We all realize too that this tradition is an ongoing movement and that it has been embraced by over 180 National Olympic Committees throughout the world.

Begin recalling now.

(Wait two minutes)

Thank you.

Segment 2

1. The sports community has been encouraged to work together to communicate and to continually define the goals and objectives of the Olympic movement.
2. With its growth, success, and popularity, it has often suffered from growing pains. It has been the object of criticism from both human rights and community relations viewpoints and it must be constantly mindful of potential protests and explosive financial issues.
3. How this movement continues to respond to the politics and pressures of the ever-changing modern world will definite its future.

Begin recalling now.

(Wait two minutes.)

Thank you.

Segment 3

1. Right now the Summer Olympic Games are taking place in Beijing, China and in 2010 the Winter Games will be held in Vancouver, Canada.
2. Nearly 5000 athletes are expected to come to Vancouver in 2010. The games will be broadcasted worldwide to the estimate of three billion television viewers.
3. Undoubtedly, the success of the 2010 Winter Olympic Games will depend on Vancouver's ability to secure a large number of volunteers who will be devoting their time, energy and imagination to the Olympic cause, with no monetary compensation.
4. Like every host city, Vancouver hopes to make its unique contribution. It is proud to be hosting the 2010 Winter Olympic Games.

Begin recalling now.

(Wait two minutes.)

Thank you.

This is the end of the evaluation session. Thank you for your time and for participating in this language assessment exercise for the Vancouver Organizing Committee for the Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games.

APPENDIX B

Sample Language Proficiency Evaluation Score Sheet

Candidate: _____
Language: _____
Evaluator: _____
Today's Date: _____

Phone: _____
Tape#: _____
Evaluation Date: _____
Final Scores: _____ / _____ / _____

Scoring:
1=Minimal, 2=Limited, 3=Working, 4=Good, 5=Native/Near Native

TIER ONE

Candidate Identification (in Italian)

a) Grammar	1	2	3	4	5
b) Accent	1	2	3	4	5
c) Style	1	2	3	4	5
d) Content/Structure	1	2	3	4	5

TOTAL: _____

Linguistic Background (in the foreign language)

a) Grammar	1	2	3	4	5
b) Accent	1	2	3	4	5
c) Style	1	2	3	4	5
d) Content/Structure	1	2	3	4	5

TOTAL: _____

TOTAL POINTS TIER: _____

MINIMUM NUMBER OF POINTS REQUIRED TO PASS: 30

(CIRCLE ONE) PASS FAIL

TIER TWO

Map Exercise

a) Grammar	1	2	3	4	5
b) Accent	1	2	3	4	5
c) Style	1	2	3	4	5

d) Conciseness 1 2 3 4 5

TOTAL: _____

Olympic Terminology

Assign one point per correct equivalent

POINTS

- | | |
|-------|-------------------------------------|
| _____ | The Olympic Games |
| _____ | The International Olympic Committee |
| _____ | The Opening Ceremony |
| _____ | The Competition Sites |
| _____ | The Judges |
| _____ | The Teams |
| _____ | The Olympic Flag |
| _____ | The Olympic Village |
| _____ | The National Olympic Committees |
| _____ | The Competitors |

TOTAL: _____ /10

Role Playing: (medical assistance situation)

Number of valid questions: _____ x 3 = _____

(Maximum number of points for role playing section = 15)

TOTAL POINTS TIER 2:

MINIMUM NUMBER OF POINTS REQUIRED TO PASS: 35

(CIRCLE ONE) PASS FAIL

TIER THREE

Memory Recollection Exercise

Segment 1:

- 1. Original:** All of us realize that the value of the Olympic Celebration of sport is to show that it is possible for the people of the world to come together and work for one common purpose.
Score: 2 points = possible for the people of the world to come together _____
2 points = possible for the people to work for one common cause _____

- 2. Original:** We all realize too, that this tradition is an ongoing movement and that it has been embraced by over 180 National Olympic Committees throughout the world.
Score: 2 points = tradition is an ongoing movement _____
2 points = tradition has been embraced by 180 National Olympic Committees _____

Segment 2:

- 1. Original** The sports community has been encouraged to work together, to communicate and to continually define the goals and objectives of the Olympic movement
Score: 1 point = sports community encouraged to work together _____
1 point = sports community encouraged to communicate _____
1 point = sports community to define goals of the Olympic Movement _____

2. Original With its growth, success, and popularity, it has been suffered from growing pains. It has been the object of criticism from both human rights and community relations viewpoints and it must be constantly mindful of potential protests and explosive financial issues.

Score: 2 points = due to popularity, has suffered growing pains _____
 2 points = object of criticism from human rights and/or community relations viewpoints _____

 2 points = mindful of protests and financial issues _____

3. Original How this movement continues to respond to the politics and pressures of the ever-changing modern world will define its future.

Score: 2 points = How will the movement continue to respond to the politics and pressures of the changing world?
 2 points = response will define its future _____

TOTAL SEGMENTS 1 & 2 _____

Final Segment:

1. Original: Right now the Summer Olympic Games are taking place in Beijing, China and in 2010 the Winter Games will be held in Vancouver, Canada.

Score: 2 points = Summer Games in Athens, Greece _____
 2 points = Winter Games in Salt Lake _____

2. Original: Nearly 5000 athletes are expected to come to Vancouver in 2010. The games will be broadcasted worldwide to the estimate of three billion television viewers.

Score: 2 points = Nearly _____ athletes expected in Salt Lake and/or in 2002 _____
 1 point = _____ members of the press _____
 1 point = _____ television viewers _____

3. Original: Undoubtedly, the success of the 2010 Olympic Games will depend on Vancouver's ability to secure a large number of volunteers who will be devoting their time, energy and imagination to the Olympic cause, with no monetary compensation.

Score: 2 points = success depends on ability to secure volunteers _____
 2 points = volunteers devote time and energy _____
 2 points = volunteers receive no monetary compensation _____

4. Original: Like every host city, Vancouver hopes to make its unique contribution. It is proud to be hosting the 2010 Winter Olympic Games.

Score: 2 points = Vancouver hopes to make a unique contribution _____
 2 points = proud to be hosting the Olympic Games _____

TOTAL SEGMENT 3 _____

TOTAL POINTS TIER 3: _____ (both pages)

MINIMUM NUMBER OF POINTS REQUIRED TO PASS: 27

(CIRCLE ONE)

PASS

FAIL

EVALUATOR COMMENTS:

APPENDIX C (Self-assessment using modified Common European Framework of Reference)

Office use only
Registration number: _____
Language test score: _____



Name: _____

Languages spoken: _____

Self-assessment for languages

Dear volunteer candidate,

Please find attached a self-assessment grid for language evaluation. Read carefully the statements inside each box in order to help you determine your own language level. When you have done so, please fill in the form below (an example is given in the gray box). This will help us determine where your skills can best be used.

Please fill in information on all languages you speak, **including English**.

Example:

Language: French

	A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
Listening	X	X	X	X		
Spoken interaction	X	X	X			
Spoken production	X	X				

This person is at level B2 for listening, level B1 for spoken interaction and level A2 for spoken production

Language: English

	A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
Listening						
Spoken interaction						
Spoken production						

Language:

	A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
Listening						
Spoken interaction						
Spoken production						

Language:

	A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
Listening						
Spoken interaction						
Spoken production						

Language:

	A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
Listening						
Spoken interaction						
Spoken production						

Self-assessment grid for languages*

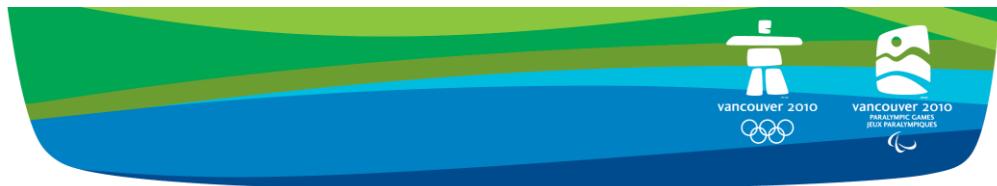
	A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
Listening	I can understand familiar words and very basic phrases concerning myself, my family and immediate concrete surroundings when people speak slowly and clearly.	I can understand phrases and the highest frequency vocabulary related to areas of most immediate personal relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local area, employment). I can catch the main point in short, clear, simple messages and announcements.	I can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. I can understand the main point of many radio or TV programs on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interests when the delivery is relatively slow and clear.	I can understand extended speech and lectures and follow even complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar. I can understand most TV news and current affairs programs. I can understand the majority of films in standard dialect.	I can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signaled explicitly. I can understand television programs and films without too much effort.	I have no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, even when delivered at fast native speed, provided I have some time to get familiar with the accent.
Spoken interaction	I can interact in a simple way provided the other person is prepared to repeat or rephrase things at a slower rate of speech and help me formulate what I'm trying to say. I can ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics.	I can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities. I can handle very short social exchanges, even though I can't usually understand enough to keep the conversation going myself.	I can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. I can enter unprepared into conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life (e.g. family, hobbies, work, travel and current events).	I can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible. I can take an active part in discussion familiar contexts, accounting for and sustaining my views.	I can express myself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. I can use language flexibly and effectively for social and professional purposes. I can formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate my contribution skillfully to those of other speakers.	I can take part effortlessly in any conversation or discussion and have a good familiarity with idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms. I can express myself fluently and convey finer shades of meaning precisely. If I do have a problem I can backtrack and restructure around the difficulty so smoothly that other people are hardly aware of it.
Spoken production	I can use simple phrases and sentences to describe where I live and people I know.	I can use a series of phrases and sentences to describe in simple terms my family and other people, living conditions, my educational background and my present or most recent job.	I can connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events, my dreams, hopes and ambitions. I can briefly give reasons and explanations for options and plans. I can narrate a story or relate the plot of a book or film and describe my reactions.	I can present clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of subjects related to my field of interest. I can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.	I can present clear, detailed descriptions of complex subjects integrating sub-themes, developing particular points and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.	I can present a clear, smoothly flowing description or argument in a style appropriate to the context and with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points.

*The Common European Framework of Reference, Council of Europe, Strasbourg 2003

Name:

APPENDIX D (Language Background Questionnaire)

Languages:



SHOW YOUR HEART. PLAY YOUR PART.
FAITES BRILLER VOS TALENTS... Dès maintenant!

Dear Volunteer Candidate,

ICS would like you to answer the following 3 questions regarding your language background. Your answers will help us understand your comfort level and will allow us to determine what roles are best suited to your skills.

1. If you identified yourself as a native / fluent speaker of a language other than English, tell us about how you learned that language.

2. How often do you use that language? Give examples of situations when you use it (at work, at home, with friends, reading newspapers, etc.).

3. What is your comfort level interpreting at: a/ casual conversations; b/ press conferences; c/ other public speaking? Do you have experience in any of the above?

Please email the completed questions to icsvolunteers@vancouver2010.com

Thanks in advance for your time. We look forward to meeting you at Creating 2010 Orientation Session coming soon.

Regards,

Janice

Janice
Team Lead, Event Volunteer Operations
International Client Services

www.vancouver2010.com