

National Testing of English Language Skills for Taxi Drivers

D. E. Ingram
Honorary Professorial Fellow,
University of Melbourne
Co-Director,
ISLPR Language Services
cnr Padstow and Warrigal Roads,
Eight Mile Plains, Queensland, 4113.
Email: d.ingram@islpr.org

Plenary paper to the Australian Taxi Industry Association (ATIA) Conference, Darwin Convention Centre, Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia, 1 June 2010.

National Testing of English Language Skills for Taxi Drivers

D. E. Ingram

ABSTRACT

This paper states the English proficiency level required by taxi drivers on entry to the occupation (the NMES, National Minimum English Standards). It describes the methodology used in the project to identify the needs of taxi drivers and to specify the most appropriate level for occupational entry purposes. Prior to the project referred to here, the national taxi industry had adopted the International Second Language Proficiency Ratings (ISLPR®) as the basis for the specification of English language standards. The paper also outlines the nature of the ISLPR® and how it can be used in the taxi industry.

This is a personal paper. No statements made in this paper should be seen as expressing the views of Australian, State or Territory Governments, the national taxi industry, or State or Territory jurisdictions.

PRESENTER

Dr. David Ingram is an Honorary Professorial Fellow in the University of Melbourne. He is Co-Director of the private language testing organisation, ISLPR Language Services Pty Ltd. He taught in Primary and Secondary Schools for 14 years, in teacher education for 14 years, before founding three university language centres in Griffith University, Brisbane (1986 – 2003), where he was Professor of Applied Linguistics and Director of the Centre for Applied Linguistics and Languages for 14 years, after which he became Executive Dean of the School of Applied Language Studies in Melbourne University Private and a Professorial Fellow in the University of Melbourne. He has substantial experience in consultancies in second language education and language policy and has published extensively worldwide, especially in the areas of language policy, curriculum design, methodology, and language testing. His most recent book is *Fostering Positive Cross-Cultural Attitudes through Language Teaching* [Teneriffe, Qld: PostPressed; 2008]. He was one of the developers of the IELTS Test and was IELTS Chief Examiner (Australia) for 10 years. He is the originator and co-author of the *International Second Language Proficiency Ratings (ISLPR®)*. He is currently involved in a major AusAID-funded project in Kiribati, testing teachers and students, and providing training in language testing to Teachers College staff while guiding the development of a new proficiency and achievement test of English for use in Kiribati schools. He recently completed a major report on English language proficiency requirements and testing procedures for the Australian taxi industry. In the Australian Honours list in June 2003, he was appointed a member of the Order of Australia, “*For services to education through the development of language policy, through assessment procedures for evaluation of proficiency, and through research and teaching.*”

National Testing of English Language Skills for Taxi Drivers

D. E. Ingram

INTRODUCTION

ISLPR Language Services Pty Ltd was contracted in 2009 to provide advice on the language needs of taxi drivers nationally in Australia. In doing so, it is necessary to differentiate between what level of English taxi drivers would ideally have and what is the minimum level that a driver should have on entry to the occupation. Entry requirements, whether to a course of study or an occupation, should be related to the practical needs of the student or worker. The central activity in the project was to identify the English language needs of taxi drivers in their everyday activity and in their training and re-training programmes. In doing so, the project looked at current policies and practices together with the perceptions of the people in the industry as to the needs of drivers. We also tried to observe drivers' needs directly. In the light of the needs so established, policy and practice were proposed. Additional information will shortly be provided on the methodology we used.

I understand that the report and its recommendations have been accepted at the national level. However, there are limits to what can be said in this paper and it will be based around five main points:

1. the instrument, the ISLPR[®], that is used to specify the national standards,
2. the project methodology that led to the specification of the national standards,
3. the National Minimum English Standards (NMES),
4. how the ISLPR[®] is administered, and
5. quality assurance measures.

THE ISLPR[®]¹

At some time prior to the project to develop national taxi driver standards, the industry's controlling bodies decided that the standards should be developed in terms of the *International Second Language Proficiency Ratings*, commonly known as the ISLPR[®] [Ingram, D. E. and Elaine Wylie. 1979/2007. *The International Second Language Proficiency Ratings*. Brisbane: ISLPR Language Services].

The ISLPR[®] is probably different from any test you have taken and from your idea of what a test is like. We don't ask people to tick boxes or write answers except in a

¹ The ISLPR[®] scale is available from ISLPR Language Services, Level 1, Office Suites, Eight Mile Plains Shopping Centre, cnr Padstow and Warrigal Roads, Eight Mile Plains, Queensland, 4113, Australia; Email: info@islpr.org. *The ISLPR for Taxi Drivers*, when published, will also be available from this address.

writing test. Instead, what we try to do is to have them use language in as natural a way as possible and then to compare the language we observe with descriptions of real language behaviour that make up a scale from zero ability to native-like. In other words, the emphasis is on real, natural use of the language, not on academic knowledge or formal testing procedures. In this way, we believe the ISLPR[®] provides a measure of a person's practical ability in a second language, in this case in English.

The concept of the ISLPR[®] came out of research the present writer was doing in the 1970s and the opportunity to commence its development came during a major Department of Immigration project to develop new on-arrival English courses for migrants in 1978. The research to develop the scale and the procedures by which it is applied in assessing candidates were continued over the last 30 years by David Ingram and his co-author, Elaine Wylie. For more than 25 years, the ISLPR[®] was administered through Griffith University in Brisbane until, in January 2007 after having retired from universities, the two authors started their own language testing business, ISLPR Language Services (ILS). It should be noted that the intellectual property and the trade mark, ISLPR[®], are owned by David Ingram and Elaine Wylie though they are always willing to agree to others using them subject to appropriate quality assurance procedures.

The term, ISLPR[®], is used to identify both a test and a scale. The scale is designed to describe proficiency in a second or foreign language as it develops from zero proficiency to native-like. The focus of the scale and its accompanying assessment procedures is on the practical language ability of, in this case, learners and users of English as a second language (ESL). The scale consists of 12 levels of proficiency from 0 (zero proficiency) to 5 (native-like proficiency). A specific rating (i.e., measure of proficiency) is provided for each of the four macroskills of speaking, listening, reading and writing. In the full scale, each of 9 levels (there are three intermediate levels) is described in a full page description of language behaviour focussing on the tasks that learners can carry out and how (i.e. in what language forms) they are carried out.

The ISLPR[®] is adaptive and can be used to assess proficiency in any language for both general proficiency and proficiency in any specific purpose area, for example, in English for teachers or, in the present case, English for Taxi Drivers. Currently, ILS's principal testing activities focus on the assessment of the English proficiency of international students for entry to university, school or college courses, the proficiency for registration and other vocational purposes of overseas trained teachers and taxi driver recruits, and the proficiency certification of students and professionals for a variety of other purposes including course entry, course attainment and vocational registration. In addition, occasional testing occurs for other purposes including for purposes related to the law. The ISLPR[®] scale also provides an overall framework of language development within which courses may be developed, goals set and entry and exit levels specified.

The ISLPR[®] scale describes how a second or foreign language develops from zero to native-like proficiency in each of the four macroskills of Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing. Proficiency is defined as the ability to carry out practical language tasks and how those tasks are carried out (i.e., tasks and the form of the

language used in carrying out the tasks). It thus provides a highly practical approach to language testing which focuses on real practical ability rather than mere academic knowledge about the language or the ability to handle set itemtypes.

The ISLPR[®] has been in very widespread use for approximately 30 years. It has been formally trialled and its results checked for validity and reliability on several occasions, the results confirming a high level of validity and reliability when used by trained ISLPR[®] testers, monitored and checked by senior assessors. In ILS, for example, tests are checked by a senior tester and, if necessary, re-checked by one of the ISLPR[®]'s authors. It is recognised by most universities in Australia, it is widely known and respected, not only nationally but internationally, it has contributed to the development of other major international tests including IELTS², ACCESS³ and the ACTFL Guidelines⁴, it has been challenged and accepted in courts of law in both Australia and the United States, it has, on occasions, been accepted for visa purposes in Australia (though its formal recognition for this purpose is still awaited), and it is used by a variety of vocational registration authorities in both Australia and New Zealand (e.g., for teachers and now for taxi drivers in Australia).

The standard manner of administering the ISLPR[®] is in a face-to-face interview of individual candidates by trained testers to assess proficiency in Speaking, Listening and Reading while Writing is assessed by having candidates carry out at least two writing tasks. The purpose of the test in all macroskills is to elicit the candidate's best language behaviour, which is then matched against very detailed descriptors. As already noted, the ISLPR[®] scale itself consists of 12 proficiency levels from 0 (zero proficiency) to 5 (native-like) in each of Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing. Nine of the twelve levels are described in detail, focussing on the language tasks that candidates can carry out and how (i.e., with what language forms) they are carried out. Each descriptor (except 0) in each macroskill occupies an A4 page in 3 columns: General Description, Examples of Specific Tasks, and Comments. Though results are characteristically expressed in a numerical profile, e.g. S: 2, L: 2+, R: 2, W: 2+, the numbers and the abbreviated titles of each level in each macroskill are merely shorthand for the full, detailed descriptor. A summary of the ISLPR[®] together with examples of what candidates can do at each level is provided in an appendix to this paper.

A special purpose version of the ISLPR for Taxi Drivers is currently being developed [Ingram, D.E., Elaine Wylie and Hilda Maclean. Forthcoming. *International Second Language Proficiency Ratings, Version for Taxi Drivers*. Eight Mile Plains, Brisbane:

² The present writer was the Australian representative on the joint British-Australian project that developed IELTS in 1987-88 and was Chief Examiner (Australia) and Consultant Examiner in Chief from its release in 1989 until December 1998.

³ ACCESS was developed in the early 1990s for the Australian Department of Immigration and used internationally for several years to assess the English proficiency of applicants for migration to Australia. David Ingram and Elaine Wylie were advisers to the development project and then were the principal academic managers for three years when Griffith University's Centre for Applied Linguistics and Languages and IDP won the contract for the on-going management of the test after its release.

⁴ The ACTFL Guidelines were under development at a time in 1981 when David Ingram undertook a lecture tour around the world including the United States. Certain descriptors in the Guidelines, which appeared a couple of years later, bear close resemblance to early ISLPR[®] descriptors that no longer exist.

ISLPR Language Services Pty Ltd. ISBN 978-0-9807820-1-1]. The general description of language behaviour will be the same as in all other versions of the scale but the Example Column will provide examples pertinent to the use of English by taxi drivers.

PROJECT METHODOLOGY

It is important to note that the focus of the ISLPR[®] is on tasks that a language user can carry out and how they are carried out. The approach adopted in this and similar projects was to observe the language used, the nature of the tasks drivers carry out whether they are native or non-native speakers of English and the language forms required to carry out those tasks. This language was matched against the ISLPR[®] scale to identify the minimum levels of language proficiency drivers require.

In summary, the approach was:

1. to invite all jurisdictions nationwide to make available whatever data they already held on the language needs of taxi drivers;
2. to seek information on and review pre-admission requirements for other occupations with more or less comparable levels of language demands;
3. to record and analyse taxi driver interactions with supervisors, operators, passengers and other personnel. In particular, recorders were installed for the duration of a shift in some eight taxis in each of Brisbane and Perth.
4. A number of supervisors and drivers were interviewed about their experiences on the job, in particular to elicit any implications for language skills and any “difficult” situations encountered.
5. Driver interactions were also observed from the central control stations of selected companies. Access was also sought to any recordings of “difficult”, situations made by operators and held by the companies.
6. Copies were sought from taxi companies of any written materials that drivers had to produce or read.

The purpose of this data-gathering was to identify the needs of, especially, non-native English speaking drivers in terms of ISLPR[®] proficiency levels in all four macroskills of speaking, listening, reading and writing and for evidential data on those needs to be obtained, analysed and used to justify the proposed levels and policy. Cultural needs were also observed.

Privacy requirements meant that drivers, passengers, taxi companies and most other personnel were not identified in the report and recordings were made only with the prior agreement of all persons involved, especially drivers and their passengers. Unfortunately, this obligation also meant that difficult situations with aggressive or unruly passengers were unlikely to be recorded though a limited number were, as already noted, made available by some companies from control room recordings. Interviews with supervisors and drivers, both native English speakers (NS) and non-

native English speakers (NNS), were also used to elicit information on 'difficult' situations as well as other views they had on the English language needs of drivers.

In light of this data-gathering, needs analysis and the audit of current requirements, policy and practice, language proficiency standards (the NMES or National Minimum English Standards) were proposed as national policy and implications drawn for driver training in language and culture. Implementation procedures were also proposed along with recommendations for testing procedures and the training, accreditation and monitoring of ISLPR[®] testers of taxi drivers. The proposed National Minimum English Standard (NMES) for the registration of taxi drivers thus includes specified standards expressed in ISLPR[®] terms, test administration procedures, and quality assurance procedures.

THE NATIONAL STANDARDS

In proposing "National Minimum English Standards " (NMES), it was necessary to take into account the language needs of taxi drivers, the need to maintain recruitment levels, and the need to set levels that gave potential drivers some hope of achieving the requirements since, if levels were set too high, not only would it severely damage recruitment but it would set up a situation in which persons who would otherwise be likely recruits would be precluded from ever reaching the entry level with serious impact on their socialisation and language development.

The minimum entry levels recommended and, I understand, adopted as the National Minimum English Standards (NMES) for entry to the taxi industry are ISLPR[®] S:2+, L:3, R:2, W:1+. The report prepared by the present writer provides a long discussion on why these levels were recommended based on specific examples from the data gathering undertaken.

The proposed NMES levels were intended as entry levels with S:3, L:3+, R:3, W:2+ being preferable goals as drivers gain more experience. Language is learned through experience and it is reasonable to expect that most drivers who enter at the recommended levels will go on developing their language as their language and culture experience broadens and deepens.

IMPLEMENTATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

The Testing Procedure: As already stated, the ISLPR[®], is administered in an interview by trained testers to measure applicants' proficiency in speaking, listening and reading and in a written test for writing proficiency. When potential drivers are tested for entry to the occupation prior to undertaking a training course, the test should be of general proficiency. However, if the test is taken after training, then it is legitimate for it to be given entirely in the context of the language used in the taxi industry. In any case, most of the interaction in the cabs has to be considered to be in general, non-specific language and specific-purpose language is more likely to occur in reading where drivers need to be familiar with the laws and regulations and sometimes in listening where company or technology specific codes are used. Such

specific language forms would generally be encountered first in initial training programmes.

In principle, the ISLPR can be used to assess learners' language proficiency as they use the language in real life, in the course of normal language use whether in academic or vocational contexts or in everyday life. However, the difficulties with such direct observation, are that it is very time consuming and quite impractical where a large number of learners are to be assessed. In addition, unless one spends a great deal of time in such observation, one can never be certain that the full extent of a learner's strengths or weaknesses has been observed. For these reasons, the ISLPR is normally applied in a face-to-face interview in which the interviewer sets out to elicit the candidate's maximum language ability in each of the four macroskills. The observed language behaviour is matched against the scale descriptors.

In most testing, each macroskill is rated against the scale with one of 12 proficiency levels being assigned from 0 to 5. The advantage of candidates' proficiency in each macroskill being rated against the whole scale is that implications can be drawn for training programmes and future development goals can be set. However, a threshold approach can also be adopted, i.e. in the case of the NMES, the aim of the test is, initially at least, to assess whether or not a candidate meets the requirements for registration as a taxi driver, i.e. the outcome of the test can be an indication that the candidate has a speaking proficiency of at least S:2+, a listening proficiency of at least L:3, a reading proficiency of at least R:2, and a writing proficiency of at least W:1+. This "threshold approach" is shorter and less exacting than the regular approach seeking to give candidates an accurate rating wherever their proficiency falls on each of the macroskill scales from 0 to 5. Whether the regular approach or the threshold approach is adopted is really a matter for each jurisdiction or company to determine.

Testers who are to apply the ISLPR[®] require specific training.

Tester Training: The validity and reliability of the ISLPR[®] and its testing procedures depend on the quality of the testers, the quality of their training, and the implementation of a strong quality assurance system. Testers should be well educated persons, preferably with a minimum of a Bachelor degree from a university and should, desirably, be trained ESL teachers or have other training in language as part of their degree studies. Alternatively, they should be able to demonstrate the necessary understanding of language and culture and of testing to be able to cope adequately with ISLPR[®] testing.

The minimum training required of ISLPR[®] testers who meet such requirements is the "Introduction to the ISLPR[®]" offered by ILS. It is typically a 20-hour course in which there is an introduction to the theory underlying the ISLPR[®] and its testing methods, participants are introduced in detail to the scale and the testing methods, they are given practice in rating candidates interviewed on video and in assessing their writing scripts, they are introduced to the development and selection of test materials, and they are given supervised practice in testing live candidates in all four macroskills. Participants who demonstrate sufficient ability both to conduct high

quality interviews and to rate reliably may then be accredited to conduct ISLPR® tests, subject to agreed conditions which include participation in quality assurance.

Quality Assurance: The validity and reliability of ISLPR® tests depends on the ability of the testers to conduct appropriate interviews, design appropriate writing tests, and match the candidates' language behaviour against the scale descriptors. While some tests depend on statistical procedures to control test error and monitor validity and reliability, such procedures are complex and less immediately practical in the form of direct proficiency assessment used by the ISLPR®. The usual quality assurance procedures applied by ILS require that all tests be check-marked by a senior tester with the final rating approved by one of the authors of the ISLPR® where the two testers disagreed.

Where ISLPR Language Services has been involved in accreditation and quality assurance previously, licensing arrangements have been put in place authorising the use of the ISLPR® trade mark and quality assuring the test results. Testers have been trained as described earlier and accredited by ILS. Testers have submitted an agreed number of their first tests to ILS for feedback and evaluation and they submit an agreed random percentage of their subsequent tests (videotaped) to ILS for feedback on the quality of the interview and writing test and on the ratings assigned. Provided that the tests reviewed meet an acceptable level of agreement from ILS, ILS accredits the testers for an agreed period (generally for one year in the first instance) with automatic re-accreditation provided that the quality assurance procedures have been adhered to and acceptable quality achieved in both tests and ratings. In addition, appropriate security procedures must be established to ensure that test security is not put at risk, that quality is maintained, and that the good name of the ISLPR® is not damaged.

Quality assurance is essential but what form it takes is a matter for organisations that use the ISLPR® though the report proposed approaches.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the ISLPR® is a well-established and widely recognised proficiency scale and testing procedure initiated by David Ingram and developed by David Ingram and Elaine Wylie, and researched and administered now for some 30 years. It has been adopted by the national taxi industry as the basis for specifying the National Minimum English Standards (NMES). The NMES has been specified and adopted as S:2+, L:3, R:2, W:1+. Tests require trained testers who implement the scale using either a regular approach to rating candidates from zero to native-like or a threshold approach. Quality assurance involves using trained testers together with a checking process.

Appendix

SUMMARY TABLE OF THE ISLPR®

The following table provides the number and short name of each proficiency level used in the ISLPR® and the introductory summary description from the “General Description of Language Behaviour” of each level. The full description of the proficiency at each level is much longer with each description of each macroskill (speaking, listening, reading and writing) at each level (except 2+, 3+ and 4+) filling an A4 page in three columns, headed “General Description of Language Behaviour”, “Examples of Language Behaviour”, and “Comment”. The same key introductory description is used for each macroskill at each level. In the table below, the macroskills are grouped together at each level since the same number, name and key description apply to each one at that level. A full proficiency statement identifies each macroskill separately, e.g. S:2+, L:3, R:2, W:1+.

Number	Name	Short Description of Language Behaviour	Examples of Language Use at this Level	Elements of the ISLPR® Descriptors Cited in the Report	Taxi Driver Tasks identified in the Report
S:0, L:0, R:0, W:0	Zero Proficiency	Unable to communicate in the language.	Unable to use the language for any purpose.		
S:0+, L:0+, R:0+, W:0+	Formulaic Proficiency	Able to perform in a very limited capacity within the most immediate, predictable areas of own need, using essentially formulaic language.	Produces or understands mainly single word utterances or simple formulae in predictable areas of need.		Gives basic greetings and farewell for courtesy purposes.
S:1-, L:1-, R:1-, W:1-	Minimum ‘Creative’ Proficiency	Able to satisfy own immediate, predictable needs, using predominantly formulaic language.	Can make simple material purchases or give predictable information about self or immediate others.	R: Recognises all of the letters of the printed form of the alphabet (both upper and lower case) and can name most of them. Is aware of the more frequent sound-symbol relationships, and is able to recode some unfamiliar phrases into spoken form, but errors are frequent.	Understands basic initial directions, which may be only a street name, a number and a suburb, basic stopping instructions or directions to find a particular location.

Number	Name	Short Description of Language Behaviour	Examples of Language Use at this Level	Elements of the ISLPR® Descriptors Cited in the Report	Taxi Driver Tasks identified in the Report
S:1, L:1, R:1, W:1	Basic Transactional Proficiency	Able to satisfy own basic everyday transactional needs.	Can make basic transactions in familiar shops, institutions, public transport, restaurant, or in very basic social interactions (e.g. making an appointment).	<p>R: Can understand a wide range of regulatory, warning and directional signs in public places (e.g. traffic signs, shop designations, and public transport destinations).</p> <p>Can scan lists (e.g. basic menus using essentially English terms or well established borrowings, timetables, TV programs, tables of contents) and isolate information required.</p>	<p>Asks for address clarification.</p> <p>Uses an index and is familiar with the order of the English alphabet.</p> <p>Fills in application forms and renewals, daily worksheets, BAS statements for the ATO, Transport Subsidy Scheme and Cabcharge/credit card dockets with assistance.</p>
S:1+, L:1+, R:1+, W:1+	Transactional Proficiency	Able to satisfy own simple everyday transactional needs and limited social needs.	In 'vocational' (e.g. work) situations can communicate simple routine needs and provide basic details of less predictable occurrences; in social situations, can make introductions, give basic biographical information, and convey simple intentions or attitudes.	<p>L: Understands very little of even the simplest radio news story presented at a slow pace by the most clearly articulating newsreader ... May have fair understanding of frequently heard simple texts such as community announcements, commercials and program promotions.</p> <p>R: Can understand simple transactional communications on familiar topics ...</p> <p>Can follow simple, clearly set out instructions on product labels and on signs at public facilities such as pay telephones or parking ticket machines, provided key vocabulary is familiar or can be deduced from graphics or from the context.</p> <p>Follows simple, high-frequency relationships expressed by a subordinate clause (e.g.</p>	<p>Draws on assistance when necessary, to complete pro formas and write short reports such as Driver Incident Reports comprehensibly even though not linguistically accurately.</p>

Number	Name	Short Description of Language Behaviour	Examples of Language Use at this Level	Elements of the ISLPR® Descriptors Cited in the Report	Taxi Driver Tasks identified in the Report
S:2, L:2, R:2, W:2	Basic Social Proficiency	Able to satisfy basic social needs, and the requirements of routine situations pertinent to own everyday commerce and recreation and to linguistically undemanding 'vocational' fields	In social situations, can participate in informal conversations on everyday topics in face-to-face situations or on the telephone. In 'vocational' situations, can generally communicate own needs and wishes to those with whom they regularly interact. In academic situations, can give a simple spontaneous recount of a personal experience. Some TAFE courses in some institutions allow entry at this level.	<p>clauses marked by when, because, if).</p> <p>S: ... sustains basic social conversations on everyday topics, routine transactions pertinent to own consumption of goods and services, and routine tasks in a 'vocational' area which does not require high-level or specialised language skills. .. Can not express any significant degree of complexity or abstraction... there may be a significant difference between what the speaker wants or intends to convey and the total message (including purposive and attitudinal elements) that is actually conveyed...Idioms are noticeably lacking or misused. Pronunciation is generally intelligible... Register flexibility is limited. In very familiar situation types, language used may be appropriate to the situation in terms of, for example, level of formality, intimacy and technicality, but this appropriateness is unlikely to be sustained in a wide range of situations involving spontaneous language use ...</p> <p>May sometimes offend native speakers not used to interaction with such learners by unintended blandness or apparent aggressiveness, or irritate by over-deference where informality is expected. Has tentative use of modals such as 'could', 'would', for politeness in requests.</p> <p>Pronunciation is generally intelligible. Undue exertion on the part of the listener is not usually necessary in familiar situation types, although some repetition may be needed when there is relatively little support from the context.</p>	<p>Participates in a general conversation with passengers on everyday non-controversial topics.</p> <p>Reads and understands most of the training modules with trained teacher able to accommodate students with lower proficiency.</p>

Number	Name	Short Description of Language Behaviour	Examples of Language Use at this Level	Elements of the ISLPR® Descriptors Cited in the Report	Taxi Driver Tasks identified in the Report
				<p>On the telephone, can relay a simple, relatively concrete message from someone to a third party ... Will have problems in situations where the information is relatively complex or there is less support from the context (e.g. if required to make a telephone call to report unforeseen events ...).</p> <p>L: When listening to the radio, can get the essential information in simple community announcements within familiar registers, provided they are delivered at low rates of utterance (140 to 160 w.p.m.) with clear articulation and good acoustics. Can get the gist of some radio news stories with the delivery and acoustics described above.</p> <p>R: Has particular problems with any sections of texts where the information is dense (especially where there is little redundancy), or where important meanings are carried by complex or elliptical syntactic forms.</p> <p>... With plenty of time and full contextual support, can follow sequential instructions. ...</p> <p>... can generally get the sense of simple routine bulletins ... For simply-structured but less routine texts such as memos on a new venture and promotional material from a supplier, extensive use of a dictionary and/or other help will generally be needed for reasonable understanding.</p>	

Number	Name	Short Description of Language Behaviour	Examples of Language Use at this Level	Elements of the ISLPR® Descriptors Cited in the Report	Taxi Driver Tasks identified in the Report
				<p>Misses meanings realised by complex or unfamiliar grammatical forms or forms stripped of redundancies such as elliptical passives ... or low-frequency idioms.</p> <p>W: In 'vocational' (e.g. work) situations on an 'in-house' level (e.g. to immediate supervisor) can write informal memos and simple informal reports on routine situations or activities ...</p> <p>Can relay a simple, relatively concrete ... message ... to a third party in writing.</p>	
S:2+, L:2+, R:2+, W:2+	Social Proficiency	Proficiency at this level is significantly better than Level 2 but has not reached Level 3.	TAFE courses in some institutions require 2+ in all macroskills for entry.		Can undertake training with a suitably trained teacher able to accommodate students with lower proficiency.
S:3, L:3, R:3, W:3	Basic 'Vocational' Proficiency	Able to perform effectively in a wide range of informal and formal situations pertinent to social and community life and everyday commerce and recreation, and in situations which are not linguistically demanding in own 'vocational' fields.	Some universities accept this as the minimum level for entry to undergraduate degree programmes.	<p>S: ...conveys fairly precise meanings...however cannot pursue the argument to the complexity, depth, level of precision and/or abstraction that are often required in specialised fields. Gives relatively long narratives or descriptive monologues fairly effectively ... Errors are made ... but they rarely interfere with understanding, and do not generally irritate or amuse native-speaking interlocutors of a similar sociocultural background ... There may be a fairly strong accent, but other elements in utterances are sufficiently standard to compensate for non-standard phonological features, and problems with intelligibility rarely disturb the native speaker...</p> <p>Can generally handle the linguistic aspects of fairly tricky persuasive situations ... and handle</p>	<p>Speaking to calm down an irate or drunken passenger and avoid aggravating a difficult situation.</p> <p>Understands passengers using Broad Australian or who swear or use frequent colloquialisms.</p> <p>Can present a case to the Ombudsman.</p> <p>Reads and understands such documents as: - Information Bulletins - Taxi codes of conduct</p>

Number	Name	Short Description of Language Behaviour	Examples of Language Use at this Level	Elements of the ISLPR® Descriptors Cited in the Report	Taxi Driver Tasks identified in the Report
				<p>uncomplicated complaints from a customer or colleague about a product or service. Can generally handle the linguistic aspects of fairly tricky persuasive situations (e.g. a personal misunderstanding or an undeserved traffic ticket). While learners may not be able to convey exactly what they would like to in such situations, this is often not obvious to interlocutors. ...</p> <p>Can elaborate own emotional and intellectual attitudes.</p> <p>May [have] a fairly strong accent, but other elements in utterances are sufficiently standard to compensate for non-standard phonological features, and problems with intelligibility rarely disturb the native speaker.</p> <p>In more complicated and/or stressful situations, lack of precision and slower rate of imparting information are likely to frustrate the interlocutor</p> <p>L: Provided the utterance rates and clarity of articulation are normal, and there is little acoustic interference, gets the gist of ... most radio and TV interviews ...</p> <p>Can get the gist of straightforward radio and TV interviews ... provided the speakers do not significantly and/or continually exceed 180 w.p.m. and the speech is coherent and in the target variety or a very closely related variety.</p> <p>In key situations, particularly when under stress</p>	<p>- Information relating to changes in the road rules.</p> <p>Requires the assistance of another person to fully understand and complete a bailment agreement before signing up with an owner.</p>

Number	Name	Short Description of Language Behaviour	Examples of Language Use at this Level	Elements of the ISLPR® Descriptors Cited in the Report	Taxi Driver Tasks identified in the Report
				<p>(e.g. confrontations with angry colleagues or customers) misreading of important verbal and non-verbal signals can cause problems.</p> <p>In situations which involve registers remote from everyday language or from the language of own 'vocational' fields, and particularly when under stress ... is likely to misunderstand key meanings realised by unfamiliar lexis or by structures such as modal or tensed verbs, embedded clauses or question tags.</p>	
S:3+, L:3+, R:3+, W:3+	Basic 'Vocational' Proficiency Plus	Proficiency at this level is significantly better than Level 3 but has not reached Level 4.	Some universities require this as the minimum level for entry to undergraduate degree programmes. Some accept 3+ for entry to postgraduate degree programmes.		
S:4, L:4, R:4, W:4	'Vocational' Proficiency	Able to perform very effectively in almost all situations pertinent to social and community life and everyday commerce and recreation, and generally in almost all situations pertinent to own 'vocational' fields.	Teacher registration authorities in Australia generally require 4 as the minimum level of proficiency in English for a non-native English speaker applying for teacher registration. In some situations, may produce language which is virtually indistinguishable from that of native		Understands passengers' attempts at humour, especially humour with a significant linguistic or cultural component and make appropriate responses.

Number	Name	Short Description of Language Behaviour	Examples of Language Use at this Level	Elements of the ISLPR® Descriptors Cited in the Report	Taxi Driver Tasks identified in the Report
			speakers of the same sociocultural variety.		
S:4+, L:4+, R:4+, W:4+	Advanced 'Vocational' Proficiency	Proficiency at this level is significantly better than Level 4 but has not reached Level 5.	At this level, people are able to operate as effectively as native speakers in most situations with only slight features of the language differentiating one from the other.		
S:5, L:5, R:5, W:5	Native-like Proficiency	Proficiency equivalent to that of a native speaker of the same sociocultural variety.	In even the most complex situations (e.g. delicate diplomatic or business negotiations), no limitations are attributable to language proficiency. In everyday situations and own 'vocational' fields, can convey meaning accurately and fluently in informal consecutive interpreting from the person's first language.		