

# Introduction to the Preliminary Japanese Speaking Test

## Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview (SOPI)

This test is produced by the Centre for Applied Linguistics, Washington DC to evaluate speakers between the levels of Novice High and Intermediate Mid. For a description of these levels please see the chart at the end of this document. Many learners with a Western background will be at Intermediate Mid level after a year of full time Japanese language study. If you think you are above the intermediate level then you should consider taking the regular SOPI Japanese test produced by OMF especially with missionaries living in Japan in mind.

.A face-to-face interview is the best way of doing evaluating proficiency but it is often impractical outside of a school situation. For this reason OMF uses the preliminary Japanese speaking test that can be administered at low cost anywhere and at any time. The Preliminary Test is evaluated by Japanese staff at the OMF Language Centre in Sapporo, all of whom have received official certification by CAL to carry out such evaluations. The tasks vary in level from Novice through Intermediate level so some tasks you will find easier than others.

### How is the evaluation done?

The Interview is just over 36 minutes long and can be ordered from the OMF Language Advisor at [la@omf.or.jp](mailto:la@omf.or.jp) You will be sent a CD together with a copy of the test booklet (in English) to be used together with the instructions you will hear on your CD. The interview requires equipment suitable for playing the CD and also something on which to record your replies. You may record into a digital voice recorder or directly through a mike into your computer. **When you do the interview please make sure that you record both the interview questions and your answers. I.E. just simply keep the CD and recording equipment running throughout. You are not permitted to take a break during the interview. Ensure before you start that your voice will be recorded clearly.** Your completed SOPI can be sent on CD through the post or by e mail as MP3 files (or similar digital audio files) to the OMF Language Advisor at [la@omf.or.jp](mailto:la@omf.or.jp) An easy way to send large files over the internet for free is the Sendthisfile home page at <http://www3.sendthisfile.com/index.jsp> You will need to register for this service however.

The **postal address** is:

OMF Language Advisor, OMF Japanese Language Centre, 1-35 Higashi 17, Kita 36,  
Higashi Ku, Sapporo 007-0836

007-0836 札幌市東区北36条東17丁目1-35、

OMF 日本語センター,  
日本語学習アドバイザー

**The cost of evaluation and administration** of one Preliminary JP SOPI is **4,500 yen**. This includes the initial mailing costs. Payment is by means of postal furikae. Please pay as soon as your order reaches you with the enclosed form. Should you misplace the form, payment should be made by means of postal furikae as follows:

OMF International Post Office account (yubin furikae):

Account number: 00150-7-776571

Account name: 国際福音宣教会 (こくさいふくいんせんきょうかい)  
Kokusai Fukuin Senkyokai.

When making the payment please ensure that you write on the form that this is a payment for the Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview.

### **What is the format of the interview?**

The Preliminary Japanese Speaking Test has been **especially modified to fit missionaries living and working in Japan**. The format is as follows:

You will first be asked to state your name, place and the current date. Then you will hear the General Directions which are on the front page of your test booklet read aloud in English.

- **Warm-up:**

This is designed to introduce you to the type of questions you will be asked in the interview. There are 2 parts to this. In each part you will first hear a model dialogue or self-introduction in Japanese and then you will be asked to speak in a similar way. Prior to each task directions are given

- **Part 1:**

This consists of **2 short dialogues that allow you to demonstrate your ability to answer questions in Japanese**. Each dialogue occurs in a different everyday setting. A general description of each setting will be presented in English in the test booklet and on the CD.

- **Part 2:**

This consists of **3 real-life speaking tasks. These will allow you to demonstrate your ability to give detailed information in Japanese.** Each task occurs in a different everyday setting. A general description of each setting will be given to you in English in the test booklet and on the CD.

- **Part 3:**

This consists of **2 situations which allow you to demonstrate your ability to answer Japanese questions.** Each situation occurs in a different everyday setting. A general description of each setting will be given to you in English in the test booklet and on the CD. The Japanese questions you will be asked will only be heard on the CD.

- **Part 4:**

This consists of **2 situations which will allow you to demonstrate your ability to form questions in Japanese.** General directions as well as information about the questions you need to ask are given in English.

### **How long do I have to prepare my answer and give it?**

The instructions on the CD will tell you that you have a certain number of seconds (e.g. 30 seconds) to think about your answer and then will instruct you how much time you have to speak (between 45 seconds to 1 minute and 45 seconds) after you hear a question in Japanese. You may like to practice timing some of these periods with the second hand of your watch before you start your SOPI so that you have some idea of what length of time is being allowed for preparation or for speaking.

### **But how can I talk into a machine?**

The testee is at a greater disadvantage in this kind of mechanical assessment than when face to face with a native speaker. However, it is a low cost way to evaluate oral ability when distance prevents face to face interviews. It is not easy to speak into a faceless machine. You may find it helps to practice speaking into a tape recorder or recording yourself on your computer so that you get used to this before you embark on the SOPI. You may still feel uncomfortable and strange but be assured that your evaluators will take this into account and the recorded material will be sufficiently broad in compass to give us a fair assessment of your ability. In any case, the result of your SOPI evaluation should only be one of a variety of methods of assessment of language ability.

## How is the Preliminary Japanese Speaking Test graded?

The interviews are graded according to the following levels set by the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages with Superior (Distinguished) as the highest level. The Preliminary Test is, however, only intended to test up to Intermediate level so it is unlikely higher levels will be reached on this test.

ACTFL Scale	ILR Scale	Definition
Superior	3	Able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations
Advanced Plus	2+	Able to satisfy most work requirements and show some ability to communicate on concrete topics
Advanced	2	Able to satisfy routine social demands and limited work requirements
Intermediate - High	1+	Able to satisfy most survival needs and limited social demands
Intermediate - Mid	1	Able to satisfy some survival needs and some limited social demands
Intermediate - Low		Able to satisfy basic survival needs and minimum courtesy requirements
Novice - High	0+	Able to satisfy immediate needs with learned utterances
Novice - Mid	0	Able to operate in only a very limited capacity
Novice - Low	0	Unable to function in the spoken language