ORAL PROFICIENCY INTERVIEW
Susham Bedi, certified ACTFL Hindi Trainer

Interview: #5
Language: Hindi
Interviewee: Madri
Level: Unratable

In the warm-up, the interviewer asks the interviewee to talk about herself. In response, the testee provides a lot of detailed information about herself in connected paragraphs, which is extremely useful for the interviewer. She collects a rich topic-bank to give a new direction to the conversation later on (*Naugaon, bhashaa vigyaan, shodh*, *NYU meN chatravritti*) as well as she develops a clear idea of her higher level of language proficiency at the initial stages of the interview.

The interviewer starts with an Advanced level question, to talk about her native city Naugaon, which requires performing the description function, which the speaker completes with ease and brings up several issues, specific to the area and to the life of the residents of this area (*Assam ke sinh genDee, paryaavaraN, vataavaraN*). The second question is to compare and contrast her birth city and New York, which is also at the Advanced level. Then, a question is asked about Narendra Modi and his ambition to change Benares, which also prompts the description and narration functions. However, from the very initial stages of the interview, the testee has given indications that she has Superior level ability -- she produces extended discourse, has native fluency, demonstrates control over high register expressions ("*vyaavsaayik*", "*bhaaShaa vigyaan*", "*praakritik ruup se*") also control over elaborate complex language structures, such as the passive voice ("*kahaa jaataa hai*"), aspectual forms -- the frequentative ("*huaa karte the*"), the progressive "karte aa rahe haiN" -- also the presumptive with a compound verb ("*mil gaye hoNge*"), participial forms ("*bharii huii*"), etc. The interviewer could have elicited right away high register speech with formal and hypothetical elements by asking more abstract level questions or by initiating a debate in order to probe the higher proficiency skills, but unfortunately, long time is lost unnecessarily at the Advanced level.

Then, the next topic which is introduced is 'gender discrimination' ("*ling-bhed*"). The interviewee is able to handle the question efficiently, with consistency and confidence. Her language production is characterized by native fluency: an excellent flow, native pronunciation, high speech rate, the choice of words is done with precision. She mostly uses colloquial Hindi as opposed to formal Sanskritized Hindi, with a few exceptions when she sporadically uses conventionalized expressions from the formal public discourse, such as "*aavaaz uThaane kii kshamtaa*", "*dahej kii prathaa*". In addition, she displays excellent command of the language at the extended discourse level. Noteworthy, however is that the main function of her oral performance is the description and narration mode.

The subject is not exhausted completely, however, the interviewer introduces another topic – 'the nuclear family' ("*ekal parivaar*"). The interviewer's question is not only too long, but it partly includes language for a possible answer to it and thus some phrases and appropriate vocabulary are 'given away' to the testee which she can use in her response. Since the interviewee herself has a strong opinion about the subject, she does take off and answers eloquently by constructing well developed and cohesive as well as well linked paragraphs. However, because of the specific way the question is formulated, it allows to be handled even with an Intermediate level response, since it is not articulated in a formal context and does require high-register language use.

The interviewer mostly asks questions which require supporting an opinion and the interviewee answers those well with native fluency. Consequently, a new topic is then introduced – social media – by asking 'what is your opinion' ("uske bare meN kyaa sochtii haiN?"). However, with this question the interviewer does not challenge the testee enough. In order to sustain oral performance at the Superior level introducing a controversial issue, antagonizing or provoking the testee to provide structured and extended arguments to support or dispute opinions or positions, to construct and develop hypotheses or to explore alternative possibilities, tasks which would elicit language performance at the Superior level.

It is obvious that the interviewee is consistently speaking with high speed rate and smooth transitions between paragraphs, and uses highly expressive language with no lengthy hesitations. She can explain complex matters in detail, and provide extended discourse and coherent narrations, all with ease and accuracy, e.g. when talking about *"ling-bhed"* in Assam. She also handles a variety of topics, familiar and unfamiliar, and situations that were introduced during the interview, we can assume, therefore, that she is a Superior level speaker. With regards to accuracy, she demonstrates full control of the linguistic features needed to handle any situation. Hence, she can be easily understood by native speakers and her text type is extended discourse. However, the interviewee was not sufficiently prompted to demonstrate if she can hypothesize, speculate, evaluate or support opinion with extensive arguments against another position, which are major functions at the Superior level. Hence, all the requirements of the Superior level checks and probes were not sufficiently done. One more observation needs to be made about the interview structure: too much time is spent with descriptive-narrative functions at the Advanced level in the beginning, therefore the time left for Superior level probes was quite limited. In addition, there is no proper wind-down segment of the interview as the interviewer abruptly finishes the interview by stating that time is up. As a result, this interview is deemed unratable.