Japanese CAST – a computer assisted oral assessment tool
CAST-Computer Assisted Screening Tool
-online oral diagnostic screening instrument
jointly developed by 5 institutions:

ACTFL
Brigham Young University
The Center for Applied Linguistics
The Defense Language Institute
The LARC at SDSU
Currently
CAST is available in 9 languages

Arabic
Chinese
English
Filipino
Iraqi Dialect
Japanese
Persian
Spanish
CAST
-conform to ACTFL OPI, in terms of test item design and rating

Proficiency Level
CAST exists only at the Advanced level
-Function: to screen whether or not the candidates’ language proficiency have reached the Advanced level.
Rational behind the creation of CAST

Cost
ACTFL OPI
- conducted in an individual interview
- test taker’s performances are blindly rated twice independently by a certified ACTFL OPI rater under the supervision of the ACTFL Testing Office.

CAST
- conducted on-line at any time at any place
- large number of test takers can be tested at once.
logistically feasible for various purposes
- Exit exam
- Placement test for transferred students
- Diagnostic tests for study abroad purposes
Why Advanced level?

(1) Undergraduate language majors are expected to achieve Advanced level proficiency prior to graduation.

(2) Screening Advanced level from Intermediate level is expected to be feasible even without the existence of the interlocutor.
Major difference between Advanced level and Intermediate Level in terms of participatory manner, according to OPI Assessment criteria:

Advanced level:
- language is more abundant and more accurate
  - present a composite of successive sequences logically developed in a topic frame
  - sustain the speech without the assistance from the Interlocutor.

Intermediate level:
- require assistance from the interlocutor to sustain speech
- tend to react to the interlocutor rather than to take the lead in any communicative exchange
Test items
- Test items are principally same across all the languages with some alteration.

- First, all the test items were created in English
- These items were analyzed/ reviewed/ revised by ACTFL to ensure level appropriateness.

In case of Japanese,
- Honorific expressions are crucial aspects in the Sociolinguistic component for the advanced level achievement.

- The role playing test items with unexpected complications are Altered:
  -- Candidates’ roles are something in which they are forced to use honorific expressions naturally.
The following context areas are selected:

Arts/ Entertainment
Business/ Commerce
Community/ Country
Family/ Friends
Health/ Fitness
Leisure time
Popular culture
School/ Education
Science/ Technology
Sports
Travel/ Transportation
Work/ Profession
Functions:

- Describe/ narrate in past/ present/ future time
- Handle a situation with complication

Out of the five questions given in a CAST test, three of the functions mentioned above are obligatory:

• Describe in Present
• Narrate in Past
• Handle a Situation with a Complication
Accuracy

- Fluency
  --- Delivering speed
  --- Elements of cohesion and coherence
- Grammar
  --- Syntactically/ morphologically accurate forms
- Pragmatic competence
  --- Ability to use various discourse management devices to get the meaning across
- Pronunciation
- Sociolinguistic competence
  --- Ability to use a language appropriately in different registers
  In various situations
- Vocabulary
  --- Appropriateness in diction
Provision of Feedback

- Test takers receive not only the results indicating whether or not they achieved Advanced level
- They also receive feedback on
  - which area needs to be improved
  - How their performances can be improved
Example questions of CAST

#1083 School/ Education
#1094 Community/ country
#1125 Science/ Technology
#1171 Family/ Friends
#1178 Travel/ Transportation
#1192 Health/ Fitness
#1208 Community/ country
#1216 Sports
#1248 Work/ profession
#1261 Arts/ entertainment
Research areas:
- Whether CAST can elicit an adequate speech sample to assure a reliable floor rating

- Whether performances on CAST can be rated, by means of existing OPI rating criteria