بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

Assessing Speaking
-9th Lecture-

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Assessing Speaking

- **Listening and speaking skills are interconnected in language performance.**

- **Isolating oral production from aural comprehension is challenging.**

- **Speaking assessment is influenced by the test-taker's listening skill.**

- **Designing reliable oral production tests requires careful consideration of elicitation techniques.**

- **Open-ended tasks in assessment increase scoring difficulty.**

- **Evaluating diverse responses may involve assigning multiple scores for different traits.**

Types of Speaking

1. **Imitative Spk.:** simply imitate a word or phrase or possibly a sentence. In the phonetic level (with prosodic, lexical and grammatical properties). What is interested here is pronunciation and listening has only the short-term storage.

2. **Intensive Spk.:** The production of short stretches of oral language demonstrating competence in specific grammatical, phrasal, or phonological relationships. It requires minimal interaction with an interlocutor. Assessment tasks may include directed response, reading aloud, simple picture-cued tasks, and simple sentence translation.

3. **Responsive Spk.: Tasks** include interaction and test comprehension of very short conversations, standard greetings and small talk, simple requests and comments, etc.

4. **Interactive Spk.:** The difference between responsive and interactive speaking is length and complexity of the interaction which includes multiple exchanges and participants. Interaction might be (a) transactional language (exchanging specific information), and (b) interpersonal exchanges (maintaining social relationships).

5. **Extensive (Monologue): tasks include** speeches, oral presentations, and story telling. Oral interaction from listeners is either highly limited (nonverbal responses) or none. Language style is frequently more deliberative (planning is involved).

Microskills objectives of Speaking

1. Produce differences among English phonemes and allophones
2. Produce chunks of language of different lengths
3. Produce English stress patterns, words in stressed and unstressed positions, rhythmic structure, and intonation contours
4. Produce reduced forms of words and phrases
5. Use an adequate number of lexical units (words) to accomplish pragmatic purposes
6. Produce fluent speech at different rates of delivery
7. Monitor one's own oral production and use various strategic devices—pauses, fillers, self-corrections, backtracking—to enhance the clarity of the message
8. Use grammatical word classes (nouns, verbs, etc.), systems (e.g., tense, agreement, pluralization), word order, patterns, rules, and elliptical forms
9. Produce speech in natural constituents: in appropriate phrases, pause groups, breath groups, and sentence constituents
10. Express a particular meaning in different grammatical forms
11. Use cohesive devices in spoken discourse

Macroskills objectives of Speaking

1. Appropriately accomplish communicative functions according to situations, participants, and goals

2. Use appropriate styles, registers, implicature, redundancies, pragmatic conventions, conversation rules, floor-keeping and floor-yielding, interrupting, and other sociolinguistic features in face-to-face conversations

3. Convey links and connections between events and communicate such relations as focal and peripheral ideas, events and feelings, new information and given information, generalization, and exemplification

4. Convey facial features, kinesics, body language, and other nonverbal cues along with verbal language

5. Develop and use a battery of speaking strategies, such as emphasizing key words, rephrasing, providing a context for interpreting the meaning of words, appealing for help, and accurately assessing how well you interlocutor understands you.

> Note: Both macroskills and microskills contain varying degrees of difficulty, depending on the stage and context of the test-taker.

Designing Assessment Tasks of Speaking

FIRST: IMITATIVE SPEAKING

1) Word and sentence repetition

Test-takers hear: Repeat after me:
beat *pause* bit *pause*
bat *pause* vat *pause*   etc.

I bought a boat yesterday.
The glow of the candle is growing.   etc.

When did they go on vacation?
Do you like coffee?   etc.

Test-takers repeat the stimulus.

Scoring criteria must be clear to avoid reliability breakdowns

- **Example of scoring scale:**

    2 acceptable pronunciation
    1 comprehensible, partially correct pronunciation
    0 silence, seriously incorrect pronunciation

FIRST: IMITATIVE SPEAKING
2) Versant (Phonepass): Repetition of sentences

Versant® Test

Producer	Pearson Education, Inc.
Objective	To test oral production skills of nonnative English speakers
Primary market	Worldwide; primarily in workplace settings where employees require a comprehensible command of spoken English; secondarily in academic settings to place and evaluate students
Type	Computer assisted or telephone mediated, with a test sheet. Versant also produces the Versant Spanish Test, Versant Arabic Test, Versant French Test, Versant Dutch Test, Versant Aviation English Test, and other tests
Response modes	Oral, mostly constrained sentence-level tasks
Time allocation	Approximately 15 to 17 minutes
Internet access	https://www.versanttests.com
Description	Test-takers respond to prompts that require them to read aloud, repeat, answer short questions, build sentences, retell stories, and answer open-ended questions. An automated algorithm calculates numeric scores ranging from 20 to 80.

SECOND: INTENSIVE SPEAKING

Also called: Limited- Response tasks, Mechanical tasks, & Controlled responses

- Test- taker produce short stretches of lang (no more than a sentence)
- Many tasks are cued to narrow the response

1) Directed Response Tasks:

- limited response task (mechanical and not communicative)
- Eliciting grammatical forms or transforming a sentence

Test-takers hear:
Tell me he went home.
Tell me that you like rock music.
Tell me that you aren't interested in tennis.
Tell him to come to my office at noon.
Remind him what time it is

SECOND: INTENSIVE SPEAKING

2) Read- Aloud Tasks:
- Reading a passage
- the test-taker's output is recorded
- scoring is easy because all of the test-taker's oral production is controlled.

Drawback: Reading aloud is inauthentic as we seldom read anything aloud to someone else in the real world (except reading a story to a child).

3) Sentence/Dialogue Completion Tasks and Oral Questionnaires
- test-takers read a dialogue with omitted lines of one speaker
- They read through the dialogue to get its gist and think about appropriate responses.

Advantage: moderate control of the output of the test-takers (with possible variation of responses)

Disadvantage:
- an ability to transfer easily from written to spoken English
- the inauthentic nature of this task.
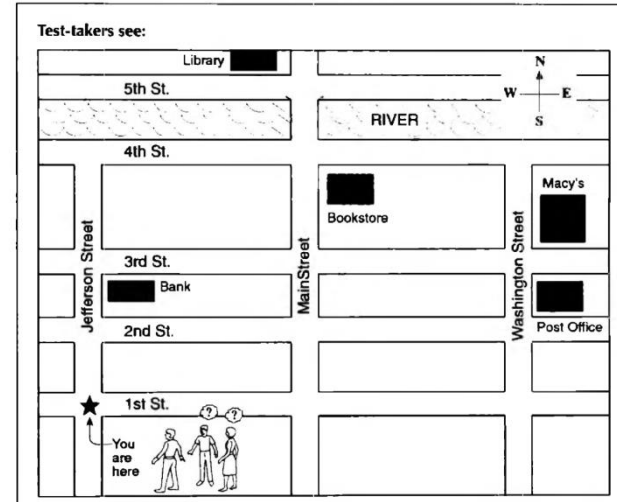
SECOND: INTENSIVE SPEAKING

4) Picture- Cued Tasks:

- a picture-cued stimulus that requires a description from the test-taker.
- Fit both intensive and extensive levels.
- very simple picture to elicit a word The scoring is correct/ incorrect.
- a series of pictures to tell a story/ directions in a map, monologues, etc. A suggested scoring rubric:

Map-cued elicitation of giving directions (Brown & Sahni, 1994, p. 169)

Test-takers see:

Library
5th St.
RIVER
N
W E
S
4th St.
Bookstore
Macy's
Jefferson Street
MainStreet
Washington Street
3rd St.
Bank
2nd St.
Post Office
1st St.
You are here

Scoring scale for intensive tasks

2	comprehensible; acceptable target form
1	comprehensible; partially correct target form
0	silence, or seriously incorrect target form

5) Translation (of limited stretch of discourse):

- the test-taker is given a native-language word, phrase, or sentence and is asked to translate it.

THIRD: RESPONSIVE SPEAKING

- Brief interactions with an interlocutor
- Responsive Speaking Vs. Intensive Speaking: more creativity to the test-taker
- Responsive Speaking Vs. Interactive tasks: limited length of utterances

1) Question and answer: one or two questions from an interviewer that prompts in an oral interview.

2) Giving Instructions and Directions: the test-taker gives instructions of recipes, how to operate an appliance, etc.

- Scoring is based on comprehensibility and grammatical or discourse categories.

- impromptu stimulus to avoid memorized outputs.

4) Paraphrasing: the test-taker reads or hear a short story or a description (of two to five sentences) and paraphrases it.

- Phone paraphrasing is more authentic (voice message with some instructions)

FOURTH: INTERACTIIVE SPEAKING

Interactive Speaking & **Extensive Speaking:**

- **long stretches of interactive discourse (interviews, role plays, discussions, games)**

- **Tasks with long duration but less interaction (speeches, telling longer stories, and extended explanations and translations).**

Interactive Speaking Vs. **Extensive Speaking:**

- **the degree of interaction with an interlocutor.**

- **Interactives task are more interpersonal and extensive tasks are more transactional**

FOURTH: INTERACTIVE SPEAKING

1) **Interview:** A test administrator and a test-taker sit down in a direct face-to-face exchange and proceed through a protocol of questions and directives.

- **It might be recorded for re-listening**

- **Scoring criteria:** accuracy in pronunciation and/or grammar, vocabulary usage, fluency, sociolinguistic/pragmatic appropriateness, task accomplishment, and even comprehension.

- Time: 4- 45 minutes (depending on the purpose & context)

Mandatory stages of interviews:

Michael Canale (1984) proposed a framework for test-takers to perform at their best.

1. **Warm-up:** 1 minute of small talk to make the test-taker comfortable (no scoring).

2. **Level check**: responding to the interviewer's preplanned questions.

3. **Probe**: difficult questions that elicit the test-takers highest ability. (ex. Giving an opinion , discussing his/her field of specialization, etc.

4. **Wind-down**: a short period of relaxation and information about when and where to get results.

FOURTH: INTERACTIVE SPEAKING

2) Role Play: test-takers are free and creative in their linguistic output with possible rehearsal time for mapping out their ideas.

Ex. Pretend that you're a tourist asking me for directions

3) Discussion and Conversations: authentic and spontaneous tasks which are more difficult to asses and score.

Ex. attention getting, interrupting, floor holding, negotiation, clarifying, questioning, politeness, formality, and other sociolinguistic factors

4) Games: informal assessment devices with formative assessment & washback benefits.

Ex. Crossword puzzles, hangman, Hot Seat, Yes/No question, Word play, etc

Word Play

o	m	e
n	a	p
c	l	i

* Students are grouped. Groups compete to form as much words as possible out of the letters. No repeated letters are allowed. All the letters form one word!

FOURTH: EXTENSIVE SPEAKING

- complex, relatively lengthy stretches of discourse.

- variations on monologues, usually with minimal verbal interaction.

1) **Oral Presentation:** presenting a report, paper, marketing plan, sales idea, a new product, etc. Scoring is a key challenge here so a carefully designed rubric/checklist is important.

Effective assessment rules:
   a) specify the criterion,
   b) set appropriate tasks,
   c) elicit optimal output, and
   d) establish practical, reliable scoring procedures.

2) **Picture-Cued Storytelling:** test- taker provides a long story/ description of a series of pictures.

3) **Retelling a Story, News Event:** test-takers hear or read a story or news event that they are asked to retell. It differs from the responsive paraphrasing in its length.

4) **Translation (of Extended Prose):** Unlike intensive translation, longer texts are presented here in the native language and test-takers translate them into English.

References

- **Brown, H. D. & Abeywickrama, P. (2012). Language Assessment: Principles & Classroom Practices. 2nd Ed. Pearson Education, USA.**