ASSESSMENT FOR SPEAKING SKILL

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ABSTRACT:

Speaking is of important part of communication. Crucial topic for discussion among teachers is how to assess learners' speaking progress during courses. The following article describes effective methods of evaluating spoken performance. The focus of the given paper is a method on how to develop assessment for speaking. Moreover, it gives detailed information about five basic criteria of speaking: intensive, extensive, interactive, and imitative.

Keywords: effective assessment, intensive, extensive, interactive, and imitative.

INTRODUCTION:

Evaluation is a key point in teaching programs. In particular, it is the culminating feature in teaching foreign languages; therefore, the process of assessment should be valid and reliable. However, one question appears what teachers want to listen from speaker? Do they want to assess how the students pronounce words? Or do teacher want to hear how the students retell stories or create their own ones? As Fulcher (2003) stated assessment of speaking skill is challenging task. Because oral production is production of one's creativity. Thus, speaking assessment criteria should touch specific features. Brown (2010) mentioned five basic types of speaking, namely intensive, extensive, imitative, interactive, and responsive.

Usually, four main skills (listening, speaking, writing, and reading) are closely interrelated, such as reading and writing, speaking and listening. However, listening can be presented in isolated forms, but not speaking. It is difficult to isolate oral performance. The only way is to provide test-takers with tasks, which include retelling monologues. As Brown (2010) mentioned speaking is a productive skill that can be directly and practically observed. In the following part, there is a taxonomy for oral performance.
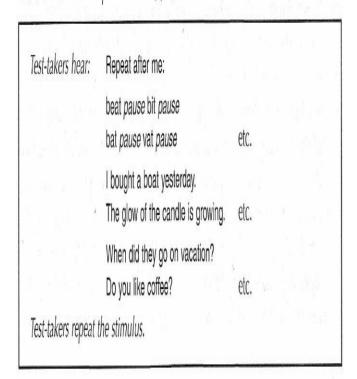
Basic types of Speaking:

There are five main categories for assessing oral production:

Imitative: learners simply parrot back given word, phrase, or a sentence. They need to acquire some information, and then reproduce it orally without having to add extra explanation. Despite the fact that this is a basic phonetic level of oral production, a number of prosodic (intonation, rhythm), lexical and grammatical properties of language may be embedded in the performance criteria. The focus in this category is to check correct pronunciation. Test receivers or listeners expect from speakers good received

pronunciation, not paying attention whether the speech is meaningful or not. Communicative competence is not essential.

Sample test for imitative speaking:

Word and sentence repetition tasks [L, S]

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.

Intensive: a second type of speaking frequently employed in assessment context is the production of stretches of oral language designed to demonstrate competence in a narrow band of grammatical, lexical, phrasal, or phonological relationships. In this type of assessment, comprehending meaning is significant whereas interaction with counterpart is minimal. Brown (2010) stated that while designing tasks for intensive speaking performance speakers should promptly give short stretches of discourse (no more than a sentence) showing their linguistic abilities at a particular level of language. There are three possible strategies on how to create tasks for intensive speaking test limited response task; mechanical task; controlled responses.

Directed response [L, S]

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.

Responsive: or simply making short conversation. Unlike two categories, which mentioned above, responsive speaking involves learners to speak promptly. Conversation should be authentic. Evaluation in responsive tasks includes brief interactions with interlocutor. Unlike interactive speaking, in responsive one test taker uses its creativity but in limited lengths of utterances.

Question and answers activity. In this type of activity, it is essential to be aware of why you are asking this very question. Are you simply trying to elicit strings of language output to gain a general sense of test taker's discourse competence? Or are you combining discourse and grammatical competence in the same question?

Sample Q&A for responsive speaking test:

A. Mary: Excuse me, do you have the time?
   Doug: Yeah. Nine-fifteen.

B. T: What is the most urgent environmental problem today?
   S: I would say massive deforestation.

C. Jeff: Hey, Stef, how's it going?
   Stef: Not bad, and yourself?
   Jeff: I'm good.
   Stef: Cool. Okay, gotta go.

Questions eliciting open-ended responses [L, S]

Test-takers hear:

1. What do you think about the weather today?
2. What do you like about the English language?
3. Why did you choose your academic major?
4. What kind of strategies have you used to help you learn English?
5. a. Have you ever been to the United States before?
   b. What other countries have you visited?
   c. Why did you go there? What did you like best about it?
   d. If you could go back, what would you like to do or see?
   e. What country would you like to visit next, and why?

Test-takers respond with a few sentences at most.

Interactive: two following categories of speaking: interactive and extensive involve tasks that contain relatively long stretches of interactive discourse (interviews, role-plays, discussions, oral presentations). Major difference between responsive and interactive categories is complexity of the sentences and amount of participants. If responsive speaking involves two speakers, interactive otherwise involves multiple participants.

Role-playing. Role-playing is well-known activity in communicative language teaching classes. Besides, it lets students to be creative in their language output. As an assessment tool, role-play opens some windows of opportunities for test takers to use discourse that might otherwise be difficult to elicit. Although the interviewer can guide role-play, this technique takes test-takers beyond simple intensive and responsive levels to a level of creativity and complexity that approaches real-world pragmatics.

Extensive: or monologue in other words. It envelops storytelling, giving long speeches, or oral presentations. Interaction between listener and speaker is minimal. Register is frequently formal. Usually, extensive speaking tasks involve complex, relatively lengthy stretches of discourse.

Picture-cued story telling. One of the common strategies for eliciting speech production is through visual pictures, photographs, diagrams, and charts.

There is a sample cue card for extensive speaking task

Picture-cued story-telling task (H. D. Brown, 1999, p. 29) [L/R, S]

Test-takers see the following six-picture sequence:

Test-takers hear or read: Tell the story that these pictures describe.
Test-takers use the pictures as a sequence of cues to tell a story.

Assessment of speaking:

Assessing speaking performance requires teachers be linguistically competent. Nunan (1999) viewed that speakers need to have sufficient vocabulary and control structural and grammatical components. Additionally, speaking requires good sense of functional competence, that is, answers should be complete, logical, and contextually appropriate. Considering the features

mentioned above, speaking assessment could vary.

Grammar:

Assessing grammar in oral production helps speakers to escape further grammatical inaccurate speech production.

Vocabulary:

Checking vocabulary range and precision indicates how proficient test taker is.

Fluency:

Evaluating fluency gives a picture how confident speaker is. Whether he/she hesitates and makes pauses in each word production. In addition, it indicates how speaker can deliver the message.

Comprehension:

Understanding the context of the conversation and able to give appropriate response according to the question.

Pronunciation:

This criterion of speaking assessment check the amount of errors occur while pronouncing words and how they influence of communication.

Task:

Task deals with finishing the command given during the speaking test.

Developing assessment for speaking:

The following section depicts the process of how assessment tool was developed and what features does it have.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSION:

The process of assessment is long-term period. In order to save time teachers should emphasize on specific criteria that need to be evaluated. Therefore, this criterion should cover only one area or skill of assessing. The given article showed that evaluating speaking skill has different variations depending on what a teacher is going to assess.

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