

TESTING AND EVALUATION OF SPEAKING ABILITY

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Submission date: 04-Oct-2024 05:39PM (UTC+0600)

Submission ID: 2474778217

File name: Evaluating_Speaking_Ability.pdf (1.75M)

Word count: 6300

Character count: 41570

IC-LING P2B

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON LINGUISTICS

PROCEEDINGS

ENGLISH AND ARABIC, 18-19 SEPTEMBER 2018



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PREFACE

Assalamu 'alaikum wr wb

We are very pleased to introduce the proceedings of the International Conference on Linguistics (ICLing-P2B). The theme was *Optimizing Linguistics Contribution for Science and Culture Development*. Teaching English and Arabic create the teaching materials, curriculum, methods, planning, students, teachers, etc. The process of language learning requires knowledge of those principles above. Language teachers may not carry out their duties properly and effectively, as long as they do not have knowledge of language, moreover the language taught is not mother tongue, but it is a foreign language such as Arabic or English. Linguistics with the various sciences in it is the most powerful and appropriate source for determining the syllabus of language teaching. Linguistics has a big role in language teaching. The conference is aimed to develop linguistics to contribute the development of science and culture, to expand insight for the development of aspects of teaching Arabic and English, to open knowledge into the development of linguistics in the field of communication and information technology, to enhance the understanding of linguistics for being implemented to Islamic studies, and to Improve understanding of linguistics in cultural studies.

The presentations made in the conference have shown the dynamism and commitment of those who study and respond to Linguistics and language Teaching. On behalf of the center for language development IAIN Surakarta, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to our keynote speakers, as follows

- Sean Timothy Stellfox, MA. TESL from University of Delaware, USA
- Trevor Campbell Cooke from McGill University Canada
- Dr. Mahmud Hamzawi Fahim Usman, MA from Egypt
- Prof. Dr. H. Imam Taufiq, M.Ag. from UIN Walisongo Semarang
- Prof. Dr. Endang Fauziati, M.Hum from Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta
- Prof. Drs. M.R. Nababan, M.Ed, M.A., Ph.D from Universitas Sebelas Maret Surakarta
- Dr. Ali Subhan, MA. from IPMAFA Pati
- Dr. Imam Makruf, M.Pd from IAIN Surakarta

and all presenters who have made this conference such a productive, stimulating and successful meeting. I admit that I did have high expectations for this conference but the work both the presenters and participants have done here has far exceeded them. I assure them that the contributions they have made will be very important for guiding the further development of our Language Teaching both Arabic and English for IAIN Surakarta and also for their institution.

We have learned new ideas from each other, which we could adopt to further improve our work in this important area. I know that there have been many interesting and useful presentations both in the plenary session and in the Parallel session. I believe many good experiences have been shared and good lessons learned.

Thank you very much.

Wassalamu 'alaikum wr wb

K.H. Drs. Abdullah Faishol, M.Hum
Director, Center for language development

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
 CONTRIBUTIONS OF LINGUISTIC THEORIES TO EFL TEACHING	
<i>Endang Fauziati</i>	1
 THE DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF DRAMA “ONE MORE MILE TO A SMILE” (IDEOLOGY IN SPOKEN TEXT OF “DRAMA”)	
<i>Aliya Izet Begovic Yahya</i>	11
 POLITENESS IN DIRECTIVE SPEECH ACT BY THE MEMBERS OF LOCAL PARLIAMENT HOUSE OF SUKOHARJO DISTRICT	
<i>Sri Kuncoro Dibyo Sarjono Maskuri, Sri Samiati Tarjana, Djatmika, Dwi Purnanto</i>	31
38 BLENDED LEARNING IN A PARAGRAPH WRITING COURSE: EXPECTATIONS VS. REALITY	
<i>Anggri Muhtia, Suparno, Sumardi</i>	41
 FOSTERING STUDENTS’ MOTIVATION IN LEARNING ENGLISH THROUGH VIRTUAL COMMUNITY	
<i>Aprilian Ria Adisti</i>	48
43 MODELLING RELATIONSHIPS OF SELECTED FACTORS AFFECTING STUDENTS’ LISTENING COMPREHENSION	
<i>Yoga Purnama</i>	54
 TEACHER’S PERCEPTIONS AND TEACHER’S APPROACHES TO FOSTER LEARNERS’ AUTONOMOUS LEARNING	
<i>Sukma Shinta Yunianti, Dian Muhammad Rifai</i>	65
 COMPARISON OF CONTEXTS BETWEEN ENGLISH AND SUNDANESE PREFIXES	
<i>Ayu Pratiwi Ulfah, Sutiono Mahdi</i>	69
 ENHANCING READING COMPREHENSION SUPPORTED BY LEARNING GRAMMAR THROUGH GRAMMAR TRANSLATION METHOD IN SPEAKING CLASS	
<i>Edy suseno</i>	80
 GENDER DIFFERENCES IN USING LANGUAGE: A CASE STUDY OF STUDENTS IN ASSALAAM MODERN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL	
<i>Eka SusyLOWATI; Sumarlam; WAKIT Abdullah, Sri Marmanto</i>	88
19 THE USE OF VIDEO TO ENHANCE SPEAKING PROFICIENCY IN BROADCASTING : PERCEPTIONS OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS	
<i>Sri Wahyuningsih</i>	92

A CONTRASTIVE STUDY OF MEDICAL CONSULTATION VIDEOS: A GESTURAL PERSPECTIVE	
<i>Muhammad Rudy, Diah Kristina, Sri Samiati Tarjana</i>	102
RECEPTION TO ASSERTIVE SPEECH ACTS IN OBAMA'S SPEECH IN CUBA MARCH 22, 2016: PRAGMATICS STUDIES	
<i>Syahrul Rohid; Sutiono Mahdi</i>	109
INDONESIAN BOROWING LANGUAGE: A BRIEF LOAN-WORD IN BAHASA ILMIAH (SCIENTIFIC) USAGE	
<i>Ari Amnan</i>	118
LEARNING STRATEGIES USED BY MALE AND FEMALE STUDENTS IN DEVELOPING ENGLISH : A CASE STUDY AT SAHID UNIVERSITY OF SURAKARTA SURAKARTA	
<i>Dian Muhammad Rifai</i>	122
LANGUAGE SHIFT, LOSS, AND MAINTENANCE IN JAKARTA: A CASE STUDY OF THREE DIFFERENT NATIONAL ETHNIC PERSPECTIVES	
<i>Rudi Haryono</i>	129
TRANSLATION ANALYSIS OF TAXIS IN "THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA" NOVEL	
<i>Arso Setyaji, Sri Samiati Tarjana, M. R. Nababan, Tri Wiratno</i>	139
THE USE OF MIND MAPPING AND FLOW CHARTING IN TEACHING ENGLISH WRITING SKILL OF INTROVERTED STUDENTS	
<i>Daniar Sofeny, Irmayani</i>	146
THE COMPARISON OF INDONESIAN AND AMERICAN'S CULTURE IN EARLY 20 TH CENTURY THROUGH THE NOVEL SENGSARA MEMBAWA NIKMAT AND THE SUN ALSO RISES	
<i>Widyastuti</i>	151
PRAGMATICS COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING	
<i>Ulva Fatiya Rosyida</i>	158
TEACHING WRITING ON NARRATIVE TEXT USING GROUP INVESTIGATION ON WHATSAPP GROUP FEATURE	
<i>Ramizah Rizqiya, Linda Mayasari, Sofi Yunianti</i>	164
TRANSLATION QUALITY OF BIBLE STORIES FOR CHILDREN	
<i>Herianto, Mangatur Nababan, Riyadi Santosa</i>	174
THE USE OF GUIDED WRITING TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' WRITING SKILL	
<i>Novita Al Ihyak Dieni</i>	185
EXPLORING THE QUALITY OF THE EXISTING MODEL FOR TEACHING SPEAKING TO THE HEARING-IMPAIRED STUDENTS	
<i>Asep Budiman</i>	196
PERFORMING PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT FOR ENHANCING STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILL	
<i>Betari Irma Ghasani</i>	204

PRACTICES SUPPORTING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EFL INSTRUCTION AT THE MODERN ISLAMICGONTOR BOARDING SCHOOL <i>Susanto</i>	213
CLASSROOM INTERACTIONS IN SPEAKING CLASS OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT OF MUHAMMADIYAH UNIVERSITY OF SURAKARTA <i>Dian Kusuma Suci</i>	224
CULTURAL VALUES IN AN ELT TEXTBOOK ENTITLED 'BAHASA INGGRIS': A CONTENT ANALYSIS <i>Diyah Nur Hidayati</i>	230
EMERGING THE ROLE OF WORDS AND SYNTAX IN LITERACY <i>Wahyunengsih</i>	237
ANALYZING OF SOUNDS FOR THE NAME OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE PRODUCTS <i>Fauzia, Ratri Nur Hidayati</i>	245
THE ANALYSIS OF MULTIMODAL IN THE SPG STORY ON THE COVER OF THE CURSE OF BEAUTY'S INDAH HANACO <i>Fiqih Aisyatul Farokhah, Sri Kusumo Habsari, Mugijatna</i>	253
LISTENING MATERIAL IN THE 2013 CURRICULUM ENGLISH TEXTBOOK: TEACHERS' VOICE <i>Dwi Oktalia, Ngadiso, Slamet Supriyadi</i>	259
PROPER NAME CREATION AND FORMATION FOR CONTEMPORARY JAVANESE CHILDREN <i>Irwan Rohardiyanto</i>	265
LEECH'S POLITENESS PRINCIPLES ON EXPRESSING INTENTION DIALOG IN THE 2013 CURRICULUM ENGLISH HANDBOOK <i>Marisa Fran Lina</i>	271
STUDENTS COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES OPERATED BY NON-ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS OF UNIVERSITY OF MUHAMMADIYAH SURAKARTA <i>Risma Ardiansyah Nugraha</i>	278
DESIGNING AN ENGLISH TEACHING MATERIAL USING SONGS <i>Primanda Dewanti</i>	284
DEVELOPING READING SKILL AND CULTURAL INSIGHT: MODEL OF TEACHING VOCABULARY FOR INDONESIAN ENGLISH LEARNERS PICTURES SPEAKS LOUDER: PHOTOVOICE TO FOSTER THE ELT LEARNERS' CRITICAL THINKING IN WRITING <i>Sri Haryati, Ika Sulistyawati</i>	295
LINGUISTICS, RHETORIC, AND CONCEPT OF SCIENTIFIC ENGLISH TEXT AND THE IMPLICATION FOR THE READER OF ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES <i>Zainal 'Arifin</i>	303

EVALUATING A PLACEMENT TEST OF <i>TOSE</i> IN IAIN SURAKARTA <i>Lilik Istiqomah</i>	311
²⁶ SPEECH ERRORS IN STUDENTS' ENGLISH ROLE PLAY UTTERANCES: PSYCHOLINGUISTIC PRESPECTIVES IN LEARNING SPEAKING AT IAIN SURAKARTA <i>Ana Wiyasa Nugrahawati, Heru Suwignyo</i>	318
²⁹ THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TEACHING SPEAKING THROUGH HOT SEAT GAME IN ENHANCING STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS (Quasi-Experimental Research at Seventh Grade Students of SMP Islam Raden Paku Surabaya in Academic Year 2017/2018) <i>M. Farhan, Sulton Dedi Wijaya, Linda Mayasari</i>	328
TESTING AND EVALUATION OF SPEAKING ABILITY <i>Moh. Fuadul Matin</i>	336
IMPOLITENESS IN JAVANESE SOCIETY <i>Sigit Haryanto</i>	346
TEXT, THOUGHT, AND ISLAMIC STUDIES : Al-Qur'an Interpretation Theory and Gender Equality in Thought of Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd <i>Mibtadin, Wildan Mahir Muttaqin</i>	350
TRANSLITERATION AS A METHOD FOR TEACHING THE ARABIC WRITING SYSTEM IN INDONESIA الفحرة كطريقة لتعليم نظام الكتابة العربية في إندونيسيا (An article to be presented at the International Conference on Linguistics: Arabic and English; Center For Language Development; Institut Agama Islam Negeri Surakarta on 18-19 September 2018) <i>Dr.Mahmud Hamzawi Fahim Usman, MA</i>	360
استراتيجية تعليم المفردات العربية للطفولة المبكرة <i>Anisatul Barokah</i>	364
²⁵ منهج تعليم اللغة العربية بمعهد والي صابنجا فونوروغو جاوا الشرقية (بحث وصفي تقوي في المدرسة الثانوية للبنين) <i>Mabruri</i>	372
نشأة دراسة علوم البلاغة في العصرين الجاهليّ و صدر الإسلام { نحة تاريخية في نظرية الأدب العربيّ } <i>Atiq Farohidy (عتيق فراهيدي)</i>	483
الصلح والصراع: الدراسة التصويرية الخروج من الخلاف والأمر بالعدل والنهى عن الظلم بطريقة المخفوقات <i>Muthoifin, Nuha</i>	398
تحليل استعمال حرف "لا" وأنواعها في سورة الحجرات حمزة جامعة دار الدعوة والإرشاد الإسلامية بولي والي مندار، سولاويسي الغربية <i>hamzah</i>	402

المغة العربية: مكانتها وتأثيرها في المغة الإندونيسية دراسة وصفية تحميمية <i>Moh. Abdul Kholiq Hasan</i>	420
LINGUISTIC APPROACH IN ISLAMIC STUDIES <i>Desti Widiani, Jiyanto</i>	429
¹⁵ UNDERSTANDING THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS IN MIDDLE-EAST THROUGH ARABIC LINGUISTICS: ALLĀH IN QUR'AN AND GOSPELS <i>Yuangga Kurnia Yahya</i>	439

TESTING AND EVALUATION OF SPEAKING ABILITY

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ABSTRACT

Testing and evaluation of language skills and competencies are very important components of language teaching. Testing becomes an integral part of teaching because it provides significant information or inputs about the growth and achievement of learner's difficulties, styles of learning, anxiety levels. Effective teaching and effective testing are two sides of the same coin. A curriculum is what constitutes a total teaching learning program composed of overall aims, syllabuses, materials, methods and testing in short. It provides a framework of knowledge and capabilities, selected to be appropriate to a particular level. Test evaluates not only the progress and achievement of learners but also the effectiveness of the teaching materials and methods used. Testing speaking skill is necessary for both learners and teachers. In this way, they both acquire more profound knowledge on what has been assimilated in a practical English use course. Testing and evaluating the ability to speak is clearly neglected by many foreign language teachers. This happens for a number of reasons, one of the most significant being apparently the difficulty of its administering as well as evaluating its scores. Teachers testing oral production easily get discouraged by the fact that they are bound to appeal to their subjective judgments while assessing students' oral performance. This paper discusses about the concept of assessing spoken English production starting from the theoretical and developing speaking assessment.

Keywords: Test, Evaluation, Speaking Evaluation.

1. Introduction

Language test broadly classified into two types as testing skills and testing knowledge of content. Skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing and sub- skills such as comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc. Different kinds of tests are there to test student's knowledge in language, the tests like non-referential test, aptitude test, proficiency test, achievement test and diagnostic test. It is important to clarify the distinction between evaluation and assessment. These terms are often used interchangeably, but they are technically different. Assessment of an individual student's progress or achievement is an important component of evaluation: it is that part of evaluation that includes the measurement and analysis of information about student learning. The primary focus of assessment in Teaching English Language has been language assessment and the role of tests in assessing students' language skills. Evaluation goes beyond student achievement and language assessment to consider all aspects of teaching and learning and to look at how educational decisions can be made by the results of alternative forms of assessment.

To be useful and effective, evaluation and assessment requires planning. Preparing for evaluation should be an integral part of planning each lesson or unit as well as general planning at the beginning of the school year or course. Instruction and evaluation should be considered together in order to ensure that instruction provides itself to evaluation and that the results of evaluation can direct ongoing instructional planning. Moreover, if evaluation is not planned along with instruction, the time required for assessment activities will most

likely not be available. As pointed earlier, clearly an important focus of classroom assessment and evaluation is student achievement. Teachers need to know what and how much students have learned in order to monitor the effectiveness of instruction, to plan ongoing instruction, and for accountability purposes. Speaking skill is an important part of the curriculum in language teaching, and this makes it an important object of assessment as well. One of the great difficulties in testing speaking is the assessment and its scoring. Aspects of speaking that might be considered in the assessment scale are grammar, pronunciation, fluency, content, organization, and vocabulary. The ability to speak in a foreign language is at the very heart of what it means to be able to use a foreign language. This article discusses about the testing and evaluation of speaking ability in order to have more deep understanding about it and to develop the speaking assessment.

2. Discussion about Testing

Gronlund in Nurgiyantoro (2016: 7) explains that testing is instrument or systemic procedure to measure a sample of performance. Within the last three decades there have been tremendous theoretical and methodological developments within the field of evaluation. Despite its progress, there are still many fundamental problems faced by this field as “unlike medicine, evaluation is not a discipline that has been developed by practicing professionals over thousands of years, so we are not yet at the stage where we have huge encyclopedias that will walk us through any evaluation step-by-step”, or provide a clear definition of what evaluation entails (Harris, 1969). It could therefore be argued that a key problem that evaluators face is the lack of a clear definition of evaluation, which may “underline why program evaluation is periodically called into question as an original process, whose primary function is the production of legitimate and justified judgments which serve as the bases for relevant recommendations.”. However, the strict adherence to a set of methodological assumptions may make the field of evaluation more acceptable to a mainstream audience but this adherence will work towards preventing evaluators from developing new strategies for dealing with the myriad problems that programs face.

One justification of this is that “when evaluation findings are challenged or utilization has failed, it was because stakeholders and clients found the inferences weak or the warrants unconvincing” (Harris, 1969). Some reasons for this situation may be the failure of the evaluator to establish a set of shared aims with the evaluation, or creating overly ambitious aims, as well as failing to compromise and incorporate the cultural differences of individuals and programs within the evaluation aims and process.

None of these problems are due to a lack of a definition of evaluation but are rather due to evaluators attempting to impose predisposed notions and definitions of evaluations on clients. The central reason for the poor utilization of evaluations is arguably due to the lack of tailoring of evaluations to suit the needs of the client, due to a predefined idea (or definition) of what an evaluation is rather than what the client needs are (House, 1980).

3. Definition of Evaluation

Evaluation is giving the determining of grading, valuing, value judgment or in education context is determine the result of student achievement, teacher strategies, learning process and education curriculum. (Nurgiyantoro, 2016: 9). In other hand, evaluation is the comparison of actual (project) impacts against the agreed strategic plans (Rossi & Freeman, 2004). It looks at the original objectives, at what was accomplished, and how it was accomplished. It can be

formative that is taking place during the life of a project or organization, with the intention of improving the strategy or way of functioning of the project or organization. It can also be summative, drawing learning from a completed project or an organization that is no longer functioning.

Evaluation is inherently a theoretically informed approach (whether explicitly or not), and consequently a definition of evaluation would have to be tailored to the theory, approach, needs, purpose and methodology of the evaluation itself. Having said this, evaluation has been defined as:

- a. A systematic, rigorous, and meticulous application of scientific methods to assess the design, implementation, improvement or outcomes of a program. It is a resource-intensive process, frequently requiring resources, such as, evaluator expertise, labour, time and a sizeable budget
- b. 'The critical assessment, in as objective a manner as possible, of the degree to which a service or its component parts fulfills stated goals. The focus of this definition is on attaining objective knowledge, and scientifically or quantitatively measuring predetermined and external concepts.
- c. 'A study designed to assist some audience to assess an object's merit and worth'. In this definition the focus is on facts as well as value judgments of the program's outcomes and worth.

4. Purpose of Evaluation

Nurgiyantoro (2016:31) explains that the purposes of evaluation are to what extent the process of learning, to give objectivity in the student performance, to know the competencies of the student, to know the strength and the weakness of the student, to decide the student grade, and give feedback of the learning. The main purpose of a program evaluation can be to "determine the quality of a program by formulating a judgment. Reeve (2007). An alternative view is that "projects, evaluators and other stakeholders (including funders) will all have potentially different ideas about how best to evaluate a project since each may have a different definition of merit'. The core of the problem is thus about defining what is of value. "From this perspective, evaluation "is a contested term", as "evaluators" use the term evaluation to describe an assessment, or investigation of a program whilst others simply understand evaluation as being synonymous with applied research. Not all evaluations serve the same purpose some evaluations serve a monitoring function rather than focusing solely on measurable program outcomes or evaluation findings and a full list of types of evaluations would be difficult to compile. This is because evaluation is not part of a unified theoretical framework, drawing on a number of disciplines, which include management and organizational theory, policy analysis, education, sociology, social anthropology, and social change.

5. Standards in Testing and Evaluation

Depending on the topic of interest, there are professional groups which look to the quality and rigor of the evaluation process. The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation has developed standards for program, personnel, and student evaluation. The Joint Committee standards are broken into four sections: Utility, Feasibility, Propriety, and Accuracy. Various European institutions have also prepared their own standards, more or less related to those produced by the Joint Committee. They provide guidelines about basing value judgments on systematic inquiry, evaluator competence and integrity, respect for people, and

regard for the general and public welfare. The American Evaluation Association has created a set of Guiding Principles for evaluators. The order of these principles does not imply priority among them; priority will vary by situation and evaluator role. The principles run as follows:

Testing Language skills

- a. Listening
- b. Speaking
- c. Reading
- d. Writing

6. Speaking Types

Before assessing speaking, we need to acknowledge five basic types of speaking. Brown and Abeywickrama (2010: 184-185) propose five types of speaking as explained in the following:

1. Imitative

This type of speaking requires the test takers to copy a word, phrase, or a sentence. Pronunciation is the main aspect of the assessment although grammar also takes part as the scoring criteria. What needs to be highlighted in imitative speaking is that the communicative competence of the language is not essential. They need to acquire some information, and then reproduce it orally without having to add extra explanation. What comes out from them is solely the information they hear.

2. Intensive

Unlike imitative, intensive speaking does not emphasize on pronunciation or phonological aspect. Understanding meaning is needed to respond certain tasks but the interaction with the counterpart is minimal. The activity sample is reading aloud, sentence and dialogue completion.

3. Responsive

Authenticity in a conversation is important. Therefore, the speaker is stimulated to speak promptly. To response a short conversation, making a simple request comment is a kind of activity that belongs to this type of speaking.

4. Interactive

The load and complexity of the sentences is the major different between responsive and interactive speaking. The number of the speakers also matter as sometimes it needs more than two people in the conversation.

5. Extensive

Extensive speaking involves a wide range of speech production. Also, the speaker will need to interact with the counter speakers, which could be answering question, making discussion. It can be said that extensive speaking is the ultimate speaking skill that requires strong language components.

7. Speaking Evaluation

Speaking is a productive skill. From testing point of view, it is special because it is interactive in nature and has to be measured directly in live interaction. The basic purpose of developing speaking skill is to interact successfully in that particular language and it involves comprehension as well as production. Testing speaking skill is necessary for both learners and teachers. In this way, they both acquire more profound knowledge on what has been assimilated

in a practical English use course. According to the author of the article, administering an oral proficiency test regularly has a positive backwash effect, as more time can be spent in a course to develop students' speaking skill.

Teachers accept testing and evaluating students as a part of foreign language curriculum at all stages of teaching. Systematic evaluation of learners' progress and final achievement allows teachers to identify the errors students commit, diagnose their weak points and implement some forms of corrective feedback. Additionally, testing students enables teachers to evaluate to what extent the employed teaching materials, techniques or syllabi were effective. Another advantage of oral tests is that they may be motivational to students who speak well but have problems with reading or writing. Testing and evaluating the ability to speak is clearly neglected by many foreign language teachers. This happens for a number of reasons, one of the most significant being apparently the difficulty of its administering as well as evaluating its scores. Teachers testing oral production easily get discouraged by the fact that they are bound to appeal to their subjective judgments while assessing students' oral performance.

Therefore, when evaluating and scoring learners' oral language, teachers first may need to specify the level of language they are targeting and then decide to target one or more of the following criteria (Brown, 2007) :

a. Pronunciation

Pronunciation deals with how often errors in pronunciation occur and how the pronunciation aspect interfere the communication are the criteria of the assessment.

b. Fluency

The language fluency indicates that the production of speech in a conversation is well delivered. Have confidence in delivering the speech and able to responds specific theme without many hesitation in choosing words.

c. Vocabulary

The range, precision, and the usage of vocabulary features in a conversation used by test takers indicate the level of how proficient they are.

d. Grammar

Test takers are assessed on how to control its usage within sentences, to construct, to use it appropriately and accurately and to avoid grammatical errors in speaking.

e. Discourse features (cohesion, sociolinguistics, appropriateness, etc)

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

f. Task (accomplishing the objective of the task)

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

Brown (2004: 142) enumerates the various components of the speaking skill under two categories: micro skills and macro skills. Micro skills "refer to producing the smaller chunks of language such as phonemes, morphemes, words, collocations, and phrasal units". On the other hand, macro skills "imply the speaker's focus on the larger elements: fluency, discourse, function, style, cohesion, nonverbal communication, and strategic options".

For scoring purposes, holistic and analytic rubrics may be used. It is difficult to say which one is better. A holistic rubric assesses performance across multiple criteria as an integrated whole. For instance, when holistically assessing a student's performance the teacher assesses the extent to which the student meets the descriptions on the rubric and gives an overall score that reflects the range of that performance level. An analytic rubric separates levels of performance and assesses the speaker's performance for each criterion. Each element of a student's oral

ability is scored separately, for example, a separate score is put on pronunciation, word choice, task completion, level of discourse, fluency, and grammar.

Like all test scores, speaking scores must be dependable, fair, and above all useful for the intended purposes (Luoma, 2004). To ensure speaking skill assessment is trustworthy, there are factors that should come into consideration (Luoma, 2004; Nunan, 1999):

1. Practicality

The first principle of making language assessment is practicality. Before deciding a test, we need to analyze how practical the test is to be used considering the time constraint of running and interpreting the scoring of the test, budget limitation, and facilities.

2. Validity

Consistently accurate measurement must be provided to assign a valid test. It has to measure what should be measured by excluding all irrelevant variables to be tested. When speaking skill is tested, making essay is not a valid test as it fails to provide information of the test takers speech production. In result, it may not bring about the real test takers' ability. In accordance to types of speaking, test designer should decide what kind of speaking types would be tested as it will influence the design of assessment. Using interview test for imitative speaking may lead to invalidity of assessment.

3. Reliability

The need of consistent scoring measurement is very important to make a test reliable. In addition, clear rubric and scoring criteria is also a must. Sometimes a reliable test may not be a valid test. However, a test designer should struggle to keep a reliable test as valid as possible.

As a need of reliable scoring system is unavoidable in speaking test, before conducting speaking test, test takers must prepare a standard scoring system. The items on it should represent all aspects of what are to be assessed from the students. The weight of the score must be printed clearly on the form as well to make sure each student's ability is well presented. During the test, the standard scoring system will be used to record students' work. Without a good scoring system, it is hardly possible to have a reliable result of the test.

4. Authenticity

It refers to a contextual language or language in use. Students are asked to represent something related to their values. In that case, the language produced is authentic.

One goal of language testing is its backwash effect. It tells both teacher and learners of the effect of the learning and teaching (Harris, 1969). As it is important, therefore, this issue should also be explored in designing a test.

8. Problems in oral testing

There are many advantages of administering an oral test which have been outlined in the introduction to the article. Still, many teachers withdraw from testing the speaking ability substituting it with written tests. It is due to the fact that testing speaking skill is difficult in many respects. The first problem appears at the stage of *designing an oral test* that should be *valid, reliable, scorable, practical* (economical) and *administrable* Lado, 1961). The three qualities that constitute the so called *sine qua non*, without which a test is not worth spending any time over it, are *validity, reliability, and practicality*. Let us have some insight into these three concepts which seem to be crucial for testing any skills, including speaking skills.

20

The validity of a test is the extent to which it measures what it is supposed to measure and nothing else (Heaton, 1988). In order to be able to regard the test as valid for our purposes, two questions have to be answered, namely: (1) *What precisely does the test measure?* and (2) *How well does it measure?* If there is enough evidence of a high correlation between the test scores and the student's actual ability in the skill tested, one may assume that the given test is valid.

There may be a problem with validity in an oral test if it measures not only the speaking ability but also external knowledge or other skills. For example, a student has limited vocabulary and extensive knowledge of a topic but still his/ her overall oral performance is highly evaluated.

With regard to reliability, it refers to the stability of test scores (Harris, 1969). An oral test will be reliable if it produces essentially the same results consistently on different occasions when the conditions of the test remain the same and when there has been no instruction intervening. As Lado (1961) asserts, a reliable test will yield dependable scores in the sense that they will not fluctuate much if we were to give the same test to the same student in another time, or if it was to be assessed by another competent scorer.

A highly reliable and valid instrument may not be at the same time practical or usable. Its practicality is related to economical factors (the time spent on its preparation), the ease of administration and scoring, and the ease of interpretation. Whatever scoring format a tester uses, he or she should remember to develop a scoring key precisely in order to avoid the approach of having a general idea what he/ she is looking for (Krypsin and Feldhusen, 1974).

There are various types of scoring which may be implemented in an oral examination. Drawing up a precise banding system or rating scale seems advisable. This scoring method is commonly known as *analytic*. Clear and accurate description of the various characteristics of performance at each level makes it possible for a teacher to identify precisely what he or she expects for each band and assign the most appropriate grade to a student. In the table below, there is a sample of analytic scoring system.

Table 1 Example of analytic rating scale related to pronunciation

11-12 points	excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • native like English pronunciation • no problems with understanding • no L1 interference of prosodic features and individual sounds • word stress/rhythm always appropriate • individual sounds are unambiguous and well-articulated
10-8 points	good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • almost native like English pronunciation • at some points problems with understanding • noticeable L1 interference of prosodic features and individual sounds • word stress/rhythm occasionally inappropriate • individual sounds may be sometimes ambiguous and not well articulated
7-5 points	enough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • far from native like English pronunciation • frequent problems with understanding • many instances of L1 interference of prosodic features and individual sounds • word stress/rhythm frequently inappropriate • individual sounds are frequently ambiguous and not well articulated

4-0 points	poor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • very far from native like English pronunciation • gross errors and a very heavy L1 pronunciation/rhythm make understanding impossible • abundant instances of L1 interference of prosodic features and individual sounds • word stress/rhythm always inappropriate • individual sounds are always ambiguous and not well articulated
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9. Developing Speaking Assessment

As speaking assessment falls into subjective, careful considerations need to be taken into account when developing speaking assessment (Rahmawati & Ertin, 2014). The writer tries to describe developing speaking assessment below. It explores the usage of assessment, the assessment instruction, scoring assessment, and oral presentation criteria.

a. The Usage of Assessment ⁴⁵

The assessment is designed to assess students' extensive speaking skill. The result of the test will decide whether test takers pass or fail the subject (speaking subject).

b. Assessment Instruction

The instruction given is as follows:

- a) Students are asked to do 15 minutes oral presentation which consists of 10 minutes of presentation and 5 minutes of discussion time. Topic for presentation is free. Students can choose any themes that interest them. During discussion time, presenter has to keep the discussion to make sure it is not out of topic.
- b) Presentation is presented by using power point and delivered in front of the class. The media is provided but students need to prepare the materials. Scoring criteria sheet is given to acknowledge students about the skills going to be assessed.
- c) Due to a large number of students, the test will be held in four times meetings. Students may choose to deliver their presentation on the first or second meeting. The turn is not based on alphabetical order but student's willingness.

c. Scoring Assessment

Brown and Abeywickrama (2010) contend that to provide effective assessment, there are four rules that need to establish: specify criterion, give appropriate tasks, present maximum output, and set practical and reliable scoring procedures. For this assessment, the table on oral presentation criteria below is going to be used to evaluate students' performance. Each criterion is designed to ease teacher to score students' presentation. It is also practical as teacher only needs to put ticks on the appropriate score presented in.

The criteria used to evaluate students' performance are based on those developed by Brown (2007). He suggests there are at least six criteria to assess speaking skill: pronunciation, fluency, grammar, vocabulary, discourse feature, and task accomplishment. In addition, presentation skill checklist will be added to oral presentation assessment criteria. However, the point is not more than twenty percent of overall score to maintain the validity of assessment which focuses on speaking skill (Table 2).

Each rating criteria is worth some points. The table below shows the numbers.

Table 2. Rating Points

Initial	Criteria	Score
A	Excellent	5
B	Very Good	4
C	Good	3
D	Satisfactory	2
E	Poor	1

Table 3. Oral Presentation Assessment Criteria by Brown & Abeywickrama (2010)

Criteria	A	B	C	D	E	Comment
SPEAKING SKILLS						
Fluency and Coherence <i>Speaks fluently with only rare repetition or self-correction;</i> <i>Speaks coherently and develops topics fully and appropriately</i>						
Lexical resource and range <i>Express with some flexibility and appropriateness, giving effective descriptions and expressing viewpoints on a variety of topics.</i>						
Grammatical range and accuracy <i>Complex sentence use and minor grammatical occurrence.</i>						
Pronunciation <i>Pronounce words correctly, articulate clearly, intonate appropriately</i>						
Interaction (Listen and respond) <i>Good contribution to other</i> <i>Active in conversation development</i>						
Task accomplishment						
PRESENTATION SKILLS <i>Presentation was organized, information was logical and presented in well sequencing.</i> <i>The assignment was completed according to instruction provided.</i> <i>Presentation done within time allocation</i>						
Total						
Comments						

10. Conclusion

The Speaking skill is viewed as the most substantial part of an EFL course. The growing need for international communication in the information age, has led many language learners to language classes in order to improve their speaking ability. As it can be noticed, testing

the speaking skill is difficult in many respects. Taking into consideration the complexity and vagueness of the nature of speaking ability, it is hard to establish what expectations of language performance we should have when testing. For different examiners, various aspects of oral performance are important. Additionally, there are very many factors influencing the speaking ability such as proficiency level, speaking apprehension, or extroversion/introversion dichotomy. This is especially important in creating rating criteria. Regarding interactive and social features of speaking, few people would question their relevance for understanding what speaking is like. Since teachers are the one who execute this type of assessment, they must be familiar and understand in assessment in language skill especially with the issues on practicality, validity, reliability, authenticity and wash-back effect. In other hand, for there may be many teachers who have limited knowledge on speaking assessment, it is recommended to more have training about assessment and develop the assessment in language skill.

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PAGE 1

PAGE 2

PAGE 3

PAGE 4

PAGE 5

PAGE 6

PAGE 7

PAGE 8

PAGE 9

PAGE 10

PAGE 11

PAGE 12

PAGE 13

PAGE 14

PAGE 15

PAGE 16

PAGE 17

PAGE 18

PAGE 19