

The Hows of Creating Measurable and Meaningful Speaking Assessments

speaking Assessments

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Purpose of Presentation

- ▶ Understand the nature of communication
- ▶ Discuss the principles of effective assessment
- ▶ Describe examples of speaking assessment tasks that provide more measureable and meaning feedback to students, teachers, and language programs

1. Understanding the Dilemma

- ▶ I assess my students speaking skills by _____.
- ▶ The criteria I used to assess students communication skills are _____.
- ▶ The problems and challenges I have with evaluating my students skills are _____.

Understanding the Nature of Communication

- ▶ We are trying to assess language in flux that is constantly change. Very chameleonic. Inherently evolving and multidimensional based on internal and external forces.



Traditional Speaking Assessments

- ▶ Not done at all due to limited time constraints and knowledge of testing
- ▶ Artificial with limited feedback
- ▶ The criteria to assess students' communication skills are vague and subjective, leading to inconsistencies
- ▶ No uniform assessments done between levels in language programs
- ▶ Limited teacher collaboration

Brainstorm Ideas to Cover Competencies

- ▶ Identify the range of possible skills that determines competency.
- ▶ Create an assessment scale that is measurable – Less is often More
- ▶ Use multiple measures to give a multi-dimensional look at performance.
- ▶ Determine what factors represent natural speech acts, and therefore, are not tested (slips vs. errors, hesitation fillers/pauses)

Language Structures

- 1. Linguistic Competence:** Uses grammar accurately with variety? Adequate vocabulary? “Clear” pronunciation?
- 2. Functional Competence:** Answers the question completely and logically?
- 3. Strategic Competence:** Can use repair strategies when conversation breaks down?
- 4. Sociolinguistic/Cultural Competence:** Uses language appropriate to the situation?

Technology and Pedagogy

- Only use technology when it supports your assessment objectives, not just because it looks good or sounds nice.

Common Speaking Tasks in Language Classrooms

- ▶ Classroom participation
- ▶ Pronunciation
- ▶ Vocabulary
- ▶ Weekly digital voice journals with audio/video prompts
- ▶ Class presentations/debates
- ▶ Questionnaires/ fieldwork
- ▶ Group oral testing and peer evaluations

Class Participation

Seating Chart

Kumiko	Jose	Eunju	Abdulla
Sara	WooJe	Nora	Takashi
Maria	Karen	Yuki	Andrea
Carmen	Fotun	Kazu	Armen

What is “participation”? A simple grunt, a phrase, or a complete utterance?

- **Challenge:** Do can I reward students for effort and participation without inflating their grades?
- Award points for participation judiciously.
- Make participation a small part of the grade (5% or less)

Pronunciation

- **Challenge:** How can I assess a student's pronunciation concisely without giving a fuzzy grade?
- Narrow the focus area or items to make it meaningful and measurable.

Pronunciation

- **Challenge:** How can I measure a student's ability to use word stress correctly?



- *Written:* Write how many syllables are in this word and indicate word stress: *peninsula* 4 | 2



- *Speaking:* Look at this picture/map and describe five geographic features of this area.



Google Voice

(www.google.com/voice)

- One number for all your phones---free
- Record speaking tasks/questions for students to answer.
- Save files in MP3 audio.

Language Flash Cards

- **Challenge:** How can teachers help students expand their vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar skills in structured speaking tasks?
- Create flash cards that blend the language skills together.
- Such activities can be easier to measure than free, extemporaneous, conversation.

Language Flash Cards

Objectives and Directions:

The purpose of these cards is to help you improve your productive use of grammar and vocabulary in short sentences. Click on the “Show Word Now” button, review the word and grammar structure for 15 seconds, and then record three ideas using the key word in at least one sentence. Then, you will see sample sentences for the question. You have one minute to complete each task.



Begin Flash Cards

Speaking Task 1

Show Word Now

Begin Your Recording!

▶ **excited** (present possibility)

- The man _____
- The woman _____

View Next Slide for Possible Answers

Possible Answers

- ▶ The man ***might be excited*** because his girlfriend accepted his marriage proposal.
- ▶ The man ***might not realize*** that the woman is dating another man, and today is their last date.
- ▶ They ***must be excited*** to know that they don't have to take Randall's grammar class again.
- ▶ The man must ~~to~~ be ~~happiness~~ happy because of the person.

Assessment Criteria:

- Grammar Accuracy (modal of present possibility) – 3 2 1 0
- Grammar Variety (modal of present possibility) – 3 2 1 0
- Task (complete three ideas) - 3 2 1 0
- Word Choice - 3 2 1 0
- Pronunciation (Word Stress/Adjectives) – 1 0

Radio Dramas/Other Media

- Extend the life of student productions by using them for speaking tasks.
- “What are three things that Ondra **should/could have done** in this situation?”



Assessment:

- Grammar variety and accuracy
- Pronunciation of “have” to “ve”
- Task completion (three ideas)
- Transition words of order
- Strategic competence

Weekly Digital Voice Journals

- ▶ **Challenge:** How can students learn how to check and measure their own progress?
- Assign speaking task (personal or group recording)
- Record (digital voice recorders/Google Voice)
- Make a transcription of the recording
- Analyze for strengths and errors
- Make second recording on new topic to assess progress and needs for future study

Digital Voice Journal Pretest

Having never lasted more than two weeks in a relationship, your roommate decides to try a new Web site:

FindthatPerfectCompaniontodayin20minutesorless.com

Your roommate signed up for the service for a five-year contract of \$2,000, but he was banned from the service after one month because he no longer met their criteria: he didn't look handsome enough for their clientele. Outraged, he demanded his money back, saying that wasn't fair, but they refused his request based on the fine print that he failed to read. What are three things he should or could have done to have avoided this painful situation, but still have found someone meaningful in his life? You have 2 minutes to record your answer.

Voice Journal Example

Directions: The purpose of this activity is to help you learn how to self-correct and then make specific plans on how to improve your speaking skills. The homework your turn in should (1) follow this exact example and (2) be specific and clear to the reader.

1. Write the words of your recording. Use numbers to show examples of the points you used in the conversation, either correctly or incorrectly.

Transcript:

There are three things that I (1) did (2) since I came to Utah to make new friends. (3) First of all, I (4) meet many people (5) for the last three weeks, and these people (6) helped me learn new words and grammar. For example, (7) the last night, one of my roommates (8) taught me some new slang like "hit the sack" and "That's sweet." Second, (9) I've join a guitar class on campus, and in this class, the teacher (10) has introduced me to new people. One guy's name (11) was Josh. Some of these people (12) invited to a bar . . . part . . . no, what's the word? Uh, outdoor eating . . . barbecue. Yeah. And we (13) have had a great time. (14) Finally, I (15) have attended some ELI activities in Salt Lake City, and I (16) learned to use my English skills.

2. Write at least two examples of what you said correctly.

- I used the correct time expressions to show the difference between simple past and present perfect like (7) when I used "last night" to show past tense.
- I said my ideas in another way (12) when I couldn't think of the word.

Class Presentations/Debates

Challenge: How can I evaluate students' oral presentations? (Crazy debate – pencil vs. frying pan)

- Determine the criteria
 - Logical connectors: “to begin with” or “In addition to its use for cooking, a frying pan can be used as a weapon.”
 - Selected grammar structures: “If pencils didn't exist, people would simply use a different writing instrument.”
 - Logical reasoning:
 - Sociolinguistic: Ladies and gentleman, esteemed judge, and humble opponent” instead of “Hey, you guys.”

Assessment Model

Before

- Review the criteria with students
- Make sure students have seen similar items

During

- Provide sufficient time to complete the test without cognitive overload

After

- Give clear and measureable feedback and allow for retakes to master concepts

Conclusion

1. Determine what skills need to be evaluated.
2. Develop clear criteria for judging students' work.
3. Collaborate with others to build consistency throughout your program.
4. Expect to learn by trial and error.