

**EVALUATION OF ORAL
PERFORMANCE:
A PROPOSED MODEL**

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ABSTRACT

Whilst highlighting the paramount significance of evaluation in general and of oral performance in particular, the present paper attempts to probe into the function of evaluation which, it is argued, should transcend mere "quantification." In the absence of adequate recording facilities, especially video equipment whereby the examiner can replay the examinee's performance as many times as necessary after the speech, the designing of an evaluative instrument - which enables the teacher to ascertain the learner's output during the speech - stands out as pre-condition for adequate and objective evaluation. After presenting a gamut of evaluation activities to be used by the teacher while evaluating oral skills, the paper looks into the four major categories and thereby the ten criteria comprised in the proposed evaluative model. Analysis is rounded up with a series of recommendations and guidelines, which are drawn from the author's own teaching experience and also from the experiences and works of other researchers in the field, and that are deemed cardinal to the endeavour of attenuating subjectivity in the evaluation of oral performance.

INTRODUCTION

The teacher of language in general and of English in particular is in need of a feedback system that enables him / her to evaluate the progress of the learner and provide information about whether improvements should be introduced into the teaching / learning process. But, evaluation in Algerian universities has gradually been moving away from its original function which is to provide data about the student's learning progress to be more and more geared almost exclusively towards the administrative requirements of students' passage from one performance in particular, no matter what efforts the teacher makes, remains not only a grade to another. Most educationalists agree that evaluation in general and of oral difficult task but also a subjective one. Yet, the teacher is expected to strive to minimize the degree of subjectivity and to achieve

as much objectivity as possible. The evaluative model put forward in this paper, and which touches on the views and experiments of other educationalists, draws from the author's experience with the teaching of Oral Expression to Third Year students of English at the University of Annaba. This model can, however, be rendered workable as an evaluative instrument only if it is adequately implemented and if the required conditions highlighted in this paper are fulfilled.

EVALUATION AND ITS FUNCTION

To evaluate a learning activity simply means to "quantify" such activity. But, with regard to oral performance, quantification is a daunting task if not a totally impossible one, especially in under-equipped institutions like the Algerian universities where the examiner hears the examinee's speech simultaneously as he / she speaks. Because of the usually excessive number of examinees in addition to the difficulty of simultaneous evaluation of speech involving different skills needing assessment, recording the examinee's performance with video equipment, stands as a prerequisite for efficient and credible evaluation. The advantage of video-taping is two-fold: it offers the examiner the possibility to play and re-play the material until every skill is assessed; and it offers the examinee the possibility of feedback; he can see himself speaking and, in the process, detect with the help of the teacher the weaknesses that should be corrected. As recording facilities are not always available to the teacher especially in the underdeveloped countries, the teacher needs to devise an evaluative instrument that can be used during the student's speech, away from subjective judgmental evaluation which relies exclusively on memory after the speech.

EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

The acquisition of adequate oral skills involves the acquisition of two main skills which are speaking and listening comprehension. These two skills are not only difficult to teach but can be accomplished through a number of testing activities, the most appropriate of which to the Algerian context include the following: also difficult to evaluate. The evaluation of spoken skills, which is the subject of this paper,

1. Integrated Skills Testing: This type of testing combines at least two skills, often listening and speaking. In this test the learners are required to listen to an event, either authentic or simulated, and to take notes which they can use to present an oral account. In evaluating the student's performance, the teacher takes into consideration the learner's ability to understand the material as well as the way he expresses his/her ideas.

2. Interaction Testing: This involves two or more learners who are asked to perform tasks in situations which are relevant to his/her world. The participants in this activity are required to take different positions on a given issue which means creating an "opinion gap". Each participant available to the other participants is also given information which is different from the information which is that is an "information gap" is created. This type of activity sometimes depends on the role played by what is known as the "catalyst" whose role is to direct the interaction by introducing new points into the activity in order to test the participant's ability to handle unfamiliar situations.³(Peterson). The participant's performance is recorded to be played back for assessment on the different categories.
3. Personal Interview: This testing activity should be conducted as naturally and as informally as possible. In conducting this activity, the examiner is neither supposed to rely on continuous queries expecting monotonous answers nor to direct the whole conversation as it is the case of in traditional interviews. The examinee is to be put at total ease to talk without inhibition but at the same time his/her speech should not be allowed to be presented as a monologue. Accurate evaluation of the learner's oral performance requires the interview to last at least 30 minutes. As a testing activity, the personal interview involves primarily a conversation on a given topic or situation and possibly a passage to be read aloud.⁵ Since the interview is to be as conversational in tone as possible, the examinee's speech must be assessed on the basis of fluency, accuracy, command of communicative skills, and efficiency of spoken language. These represent the four major categories presented in the evaluative model proposed and analysed in the following section of this paper.

THE EVALUATION MODEL

The evaluative form proposed by this model, and which is an adapted version of a series of other forms conceived by a number of educationalists in the field of English as a Foreign Language across the world, comprises –as shown in the table below– four major categories which are "Fluency," "Exactness" (or accuracy), "Scope," and "Efficiency." Each of these categories has its own specific criteria; and there are 10 criteria in all. The examiner uses the space available at the bottom of the form to write down his notes about the examinee's performance regarding each category. Such notes might include mispronounced words, major grammatical errors, word order...and so on.

The first criterion to take into consideration while evaluating Fluency is related to starts, whether right or false, and pauses, whether natural or unnatural (1). The second criterion is eloquence which means the smoothness of speech (2).

In evaluating Exactness (or accuracy), the examiner takes into consideration the learner's command of grammatical structures both basic and complex (3), mastery of vocabulary both basic and specialized (4), the command of pronunciation: i.e. stress, intonation, rhythm, and pitch (5).

The third category Scope deals with the learner's command of skills for different interactions (6), in addition to knowledge (7).

Efficiency, which is the fourth category, involves spontaneity: i.e. the ability to cope with unexpected situations (8), in addition to Clarity (9) and Organization: i.e. leading statements, development of ideas, and concluding statements.

The evaluation model proposed in this paper is relevant to the numerical marking converted to a mark over 20 by simply multiplying it by 2 and dividing it by 5. This is to make it more congruous with the local administrative requirements. system which is used in Algerian universities. This evaluative instrument grants a maximum of 5 marks to each criterion, making the possible total score 50 marks. This score can be.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

The following guidelines and recommendations - which are drawn from the author's own experience of both teaching Oral Expression and evaluating oral performance, whilst of course building on the works and experiences of other researchers in the field, are deemed of both interest and relevance to the endeavour to minimize subjectivity in the evaluation of oral performance. Taking into account such guidelines, the author believes, would render evaluation of oral skills both workable and efficient:

1. The shape, which the evaluative scheme takes, should be determined by both the content and the objective of the Oral Expression course. Indeed, the teacher of such course should not in any way let the evaluation scheme determine the content of the.
2. The teacher should select topics and events from the real world and with which he learner is familiar, and this in order to motivate him / her.
3. The use of audiovisual aids can motivate learners to speak the target language (i.e. English) without inhibition.
4. The teacher should stimulate the learners to speak only in English both inside and outside the classroom.
5. The examiner should above all be a patient listener and avoid exerting pressure on the examinee through excessive and needless corrections.
6. This evaluation model is workable only with a reasonable number of students, preferably not more than 15 students now devoted to the course per week in a class of at least 30 students are by

7. Adequate evaluation of oral performance requires at least 30mins. This mean more time should be allotted to Oral Expression per week, as he two hours far not commensurate with the significance of the course to th teaching of English as a foreign language.
8. If recording facilities are not available, the teacher should devise a workable evaluative scheme, of the type herein proposed, to evaluate oral performance during the student's speech to avoid memory bias.
9. Evaluation of oral performance can be adequate only if the favourable physical conditions (i.e. temperature, space, noise...etc.) are fulfilled.
10. Evaluation should be planned in a way that serves the requirements of both feedback for the teacher to improve the teaching / learning process, and also the requirements of administrative grading.

CONCLUSION

Oral expression stands, therefore, as an essential activity in the learning/ teaching of English as a Foreign Language at an advanced level. It provides the learner with the possibility to put into practice the material he / she has learned through the expression of ideas spontaneously and without prior preparation. It brings together a number of skills which include grammar and pronunciation, in addition of course to the manner in which the learner communicates and organizes his / her speech. Unlike what is commonly believed, oral expression and listening comprehension stand as the most needed skills to acquire by learners of English as a Foreign Language and , by the same token, the most difficult to transmit to the recipients . They are in fact perhaps the most complex language activities to ascertain. Using an adequate evaluative tool that could enable the examiner to evaluate the learner's performance without exclusively relying on memory.

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Candidate's Name:.....

		0	1	2	3	4	5
Accuracy of Ideas (1)	Correctness of facts						
	Relevance of Information						
Diversity of Arguments (2)	Scope of knowledge						
	Mastery of topic & spontaneit						
Language Efficiency (3)	Clarity of Ideas (Proficiency						
	Eloquence and Fluency (voc./ pron./gram.)						
Presentation (4)	Starts and Pauses						
	Organization of Output (Intro./ Dev./ Conc.)						

General Comments:

Final Score over / 40 /

(1).....

(2).....

(3).....

(4).....