

**ASSESSING SPEAKING SKILLS**

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Annotation. *This article discusses the significance, principles, and methods of assessing speaking skills in English language teaching. It highlights the main challenges teachers face in evaluating oral performance and provides practical techniques for reliable and fair assessment. The paper also explores types of speaking tests, rating criteria, and the importance of communicative competence in modern language assessment.*

Аннотация. *В статье рассматривается значение, принципы и методы оценки навыков говорения при обучении английскому языку. Подчеркиваются основные трудности, с которыми сталкиваются преподаватели при оценке устной речи, и предлагаются практические методы надежной и справедливой оценки. Также анализируются виды тестов по говорению, критерии оценивания и значение коммуникативной компетенции в современной языковой оценке.*

Annotatsiya. *Ushbu maqolada ingliz tili o'qitish jarayonida og'zaki nutqni baholashning ahamiyati, tamoyillari va usullari haqida so'z yuritiladi. Unda o'qituvchilarning og'zaki nutqni baholashdagi asosiy qiyinchiliklari hamda adolatli, ishonchli baholash uchun amaliy tavsiyalar keltirilgan. Maqolada shuningdek, turli xil nutq testlari, baholash mezonlari va zamonaviy ta'limda kommunikativ kompetensiyaning o'rni tahlil qilinadi.*

Keywords: *speaking assessment, oral performance, communicative competence, fluency, accuracy*

Ключевые слова: *оценка говорения, устная речь, коммуникативная компетенция, беглость, точность*



Kalit so‘zlar: *nutqni baholash, og‘zaki nutq, kommunikativ kompetensiya, ravonlik, aniqlik*

Introduction. Speaking is one of the most essential skills in learning a foreign language, as it directly reflects learners’ communicative competence and real-life language use. However, assessing speaking is often considered one of the most complex aspects of language evaluation. Unlike reading or writing, speaking is spontaneous, interactive, and influenced by various external factors such as stress, topic familiarity, and the interlocutor’s response.

In recent years, the focus of language teaching has shifted from grammar-based to communication-based learning, which makes the assessment of speaking ability even more important. Accurate speaking assessment allows teachers to measure learners’ progress, identify weaknesses, and provide meaningful feedback for improvement.

1. The Importance of Assessing Speaking Skills

Assessing speaking is crucial for several reasons:

- It helps determine learners’ communicative proficiency and ability to use English in real-life situations.
- It provides diagnostic information for teachers to plan future lessons.
- It encourages learners to develop confidence and fluency in oral communication.
- It ensures that the learning process is balanced across all four skills — listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Without regular and valid assessment, teachers cannot accurately track students’ oral development or provide targeted feedback.

2. Challenges in Speaking Assessment

Evaluating speaking is not as straightforward as checking written answers. Several challenges may arise:

- **Subjectivity:** Different teachers may assign different scores for the same performance.
- **Time limitations:** It takes time to assess each learner individually.



- Performance anxiety: Students may perform worse in testing situations due to nervousness.
- Cultural and linguistic differences: Accent, background, or personality can affect results.

Thus, speaking assessment must be conducted systematically, with clear criteria and rubrics to ensure fairness and reliability.

3. Principles of Effective Speaking Assessment

For assessment to be meaningful, it should follow several key principles:

1. Validity: The test should measure what it is intended to measure — the ability to speak in English.
2. Reliability: The results should be consistent across different times, raters, or contexts.
3. Authenticity: The tasks should resemble real-life communication situations.
4. Practicality: The test should be easy to administer and not too time-consuming.
5. Fairness: All learners should be given equal opportunities regardless of background or personality.

Teachers should balance these principles to design effective speaking tests.

4. Types of Speaking Assessment

There are various ways to assess speaking, depending on the context and goals. The most common types include:

a) Informal Assessment

Occurs naturally during classroom activities. Teachers observe students' performance during discussions, role-plays, or group work and give immediate feedback.

b) Formal Assessment

Planned and structured evaluation, such as oral tests, interviews, or presentations, with predetermined criteria.

c) Performance-Based Assessment



Students perform real-life tasks such as giving directions, describing a picture, or expressing opinions on a topic. This type measures functional language use and fluency.

d) Self and Peer Assessment

Students assess their own or their classmates' speaking using checklists or rubrics. This approach develops critical thinking and reflection skills.

5. Criteria for Assessing Speaking

To make scoring objective, teachers use analytic rubrics that break speaking into separate components. Common criteria include:

6. Techniques for Speaking Assessment

Some practical classroom techniques for evaluating speaking include:

- Oral interviews: Individual or pair conversations between teacher and student.
- Picture description: Students describe what they see, practicing vocabulary and structure.
- Role-plays: Learners act out real-life situations such as ordering food or asking for help.
- Group discussions: Students share opinions on topics, testing interaction skills.
- Presentations: Individual or group talks to assess fluency, organization, and pronunciation.

These techniques make assessment communicative and engaging rather than intimidating.

7. The Role of Feedback

Feedback is a crucial part of speaking assessment. It helps students understand their performance and guides them toward improvement. Effective feedback should be:

- Immediate (given soon after the activity),
- Specific (focusing on what was done well and what needs work), and
- Constructive (motivating students to improve, not discouraging them).



Teachers can use positive reinforcement — for example, *“You spoke clearly and used good expressions, but try to use more linking words next time.”*

8. Technology in Speaking Assessment

Digital tools have transformed the way teachers assess speaking. Platforms like Flipgrid, VoiceThread, and Duolingo English Test allow students to record their speech and receive online feedback.

Artificial intelligence-based systems can analyze pronunciation and fluency automatically, making the process more efficient and objective.

Technology also provides opportunities for self-assessment and practice outside the classroom, which is particularly valuable in blended and online learning environments.

9. Teacher’s Role in Speaking Assessment

The teacher plays multiple roles:

- **Evaluator:** Objectively measures speaking proficiency.
- **Facilitator:** Encourages communication and reduces test anxiety.
- **Feedback provider:** Helps learners understand their progress.
- **Motivator:** Builds students’ confidence and interest in speaking English.

By combining empathy with professionalism, teachers can turn assessment into a positive learning experience rather than a stressful test.

Conclusion. Assessing speaking skills is an essential part of English language teaching that requires careful planning, clear criteria, and a communicative approach. Effective speaking assessment goes beyond grammar and pronunciation; it measures a learner’s ability to use language meaningfully, appropriately, and confidently in real situations.

When assessment is fair, valid, and motivating, it not only measures progress but also promotes language development. Therefore, teachers should integrate regular, well-designed speaking assessments into their lessons to help students become confident and competent English speakers.



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