

The Role of Grammar in Speaking Proficiency: Exploring the Need for Spoken Grammar

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The purpose of this study was to examine the role of the assessment of grammatical competence in an oral proficiency test. Three raters assessed the oral proficiency of 59 recorded narratives based on a set of assessment criteria among which grammar competence and overall comprehensibility were analysed. Subjects were divided into beginner group and advanced group. Findings show that the raters' assessment of grammatical competence, the actual grammatical errors and raters' assessment of overall comprehensibility were all highly correlated for both groups. However, rater reliability for the beginner group turned out to be lower than that of the advanced group. In light of the strong relationship between grammatical competence and overall comprehensibility, it is strongly recommended that spoken grammar be developed and included in the curriculum for speaking lessons in order for learners to achieve a higher level of oral proficiency.

[spoken grammar/oral proficiency/grammatical
competence/comprehensibility/rater reliability/회화용 문법/회화 능력/문법
능력/이해도/평가자신뢰도]

I. INTRODUCTION

With a growing emphasis in communicative proficiency in the field of English education, tools to assess learners' oral proficiency have grown to constitute an important part of foreign language assessment tests. Tests developed overseas such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and the

International English Language Testing System (IELTS) offer speaking tests to test-takers as do tests developed domestically such as Test of English Proficiency developed by Seoul National University (TEPS). Popularity of such tests is growing as test scores play an important role in getting into prestigious schools, studying overseas and in the employment market. Each test has its own set of criteria to assess the test-takers' performance. IELTS, for example, breaks down oral performance into the following categories: fluency and coherence, lexical resource, grammatical range and accuracy, and pronunciation. TOEFL assesses linguistic resources (grammatical accuracy, grammatical complexity, vocabulary), phonology (pronunciation, intonation, rhythm), and fluency. TEPS has six criteria: pronunciation, fluency, grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, and overall comprehensibility. The criteria, although expressed in slightly different terms, basically share common grounds with one another. This study will focus on one of the components of the assessment criteria: grammar. Despite controversy whether to include grammar in the classroom, be it for written language instruction or oral/aural instruction, a criterion that measures grammatical competence exists in most tests of oral proficiency, and this warrants close examination on the role of grammar, its educational implications and value in the classroom. This study aims to find answers to the following questions:

1. Do the raters' assessment of the speakers' grammatical competence predict the speakers' actual grammatical competence?
2. What is the relationship between rater's comprehensibility and raters' assessment of grammatical competence in an oral proficiency test?
3. What relationship exists between rater's comprehensibility and actual grammatical accuracy in an oral proficiency test?
4. Does the relationship between grammatical accuracy and overall comprehensibility differ among different levels of oral language proficiency?
5. Can inter-rater reliability be ensured in the assessment of grammar competency in an oral proficiency test?
6. What kind of grammatical features do learners face most frequently while speaking?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Is Grammar Important?

It is widely agreed that language proficiency consists of a variety of underlying skills, the ability to speak, comprehend, read and write, but there is less agreement on the content and boundaries of this underlying competence (Il-Suk Lee, 2006). According to ACTFL (American Council on Teaching of Foreign Languages) Guidelines (1999), "proficiency" is largely regarded as communicative growth. Communicative competence has become the buzzword in the field of English education nowadays and, as a result, recent trends in English education have focused greatly on the communicative competence of English learners. However, there are also voices being raised for the need for grammatical accuracy and working knowledge of grammar in the spoken language.

The pervasive notion of communicative competence has all too often been translated in terms of an instructional goal as minimum communicative competence. The second language learner who is actually preparing to function at a relatively high level of sophistication in the target language culture is not benefited by reliance on paralinguistic strategies, a large vocabulary at the expense of grammar skills, or the aid of a sympathetic listener. (Higgs & Clifford, 1982, p. 18)

As pointed above, knowledge of grammar is important when learning a foreign language, because lack of grammatical knowledge and the inability to construct grammatically correct content will lead to failed communication and/or lack of sophistication in the use of language. Swain (1985) also showed that high levels of grammatical proficiency cannot be acquired through sufficient exposure to meaningful content alone.

Research on the importance of the grammar component in the assessment of spoken language supports these claims. In a study that looked at the relationship between global score and five analytic scales (grammar and expression, intelligibility, appropriateness, comprehension, and fluency), McNamara (1990)

reported grammar and expression as the strongest factor to determine the oral proficiency of learners. Adams (1980) produced similar results where oral interviews were assessed and analyzed to examine the relationship between global speaking score and five factors (accent, comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, and grammar). Results showed that vocabulary and grammar played the most important role in determining the speakers' proficiency level.

There is also opinion that different factors contribute differently to overall language proficiency at different levels (Higgs & Clifford, 1982). According to the Relative Contribution Model (RCM), grammar and vocabulary appeared to be consistently important across all levels of proficiency while the importance of pronunciation, fluency, and sociolinguistic factors increased as the proficiency level went up. Magnan (1988) attempted to see whether different types of grammatical errors were made among different proficiency levels. Results showed that the types of errors differed considerably among levels and that learners at the higher level tended to make more complex errors. With the exception of Magnan (1988) who analyzed the transcripts of interviews, most studies examining the relationship between grammar and speaking proficiency used quantitative data, i.e., assessment scores rendered by raters, thus relying on assessment which did not include actual grammatical errors made by the speakers. In this study, actual spoken data was analyzed so that a comparison between the raters' assessment and actual grammatical errors could be made.

2. Can We Ensure Inter-rater Reliability?

One important question that is often raised in the assessment of spoken language proficiency is "How do raters reach a consensus when making assessments?" or "Can they reach a consensus at all?" It is assumed that raters, with proper amount of training and a well devised assessment grid, will be able to reach similar conclusions, and thus inter-rater reliability is secured. However, studies show that such assumption is called into question. Douglas and Selinker (1993) found that raters may arrive at similar ratings but for different reasons. Douglas (1994) found very little relationship between the scores on the test and the language actually produced by the subjects. Although there is research that

shows the merits of rater variation in that it provides enough variability to allow probabilistic estimation of rater severity, task difficulty, and test-taker's ability (Weigle, 1998), rater variation is a threat to the reliability of the test and is an issue that must be addressed in order for a test to be administered to test-takers from a wide range of backgrounds. This study will include an analysis of rater reliability and see whether it is secured across different levels.

3. Is There a Need for Spoken Grammar?

The question of whether to include or exclude grammar in a foreign language classroom, especially in a speaking class, is either met with enthusiasm or outrage depending on one's educational stance in language acquisition. To some, introducing grammar in a speaking class means reverting to the grammar-translation days or revisiting the audiolingual classroom. One of the reasons why grammar in the classroom is viewed with suspicion is because the grammar is based on the written language and thus the speaking is 'corrected' based on grammar for the written, not the spoken, language.

The rejection of the idea of introducing grammar in the speaking classroom is justifiable if the grammar is based on the written language, not the spoken, language. Surely, the objective of the English speaking classroom would hardly be to produce "speakers who can only speak like a book" (Rings, 1992). It would be questionable to base a writing skills course on grammatical statements based only on informal spoken data (Carter & McCarthy, 1995). Likewise, spoken grammars have uniquely special qualities that distinguish themselves from written ones (McCarthy & Carter, 2001).

Some achievements in the area of developing a criteria for grammar for the spoken language have been made in recent years. In an analysis of mini-corpus of conversational English, Carter and McCarthy (1995) identified four grammatical features in the spoken language: ellipsis, left dislocation and topical information, the tail slot, and indirect speech. A follow-up study (McCarthy & Carter, 2001) attempted to establish ten criteria for the spoken grammar; Establishing core units of a spoken grammar, phrasal complexity, tense/voice/aspect and interpersonal and textual meaning, position of clause elements, clause-complexes, unpleasing

anomalies, larger sequences, comparative criterion, metalanguage, and native and non-native users. However, the criteria were devised based on conversations of native speakers and it would be difficult and unrealistic to adopt these criteria face-value in the English classroom for non-native speakers, since English learners are still struggling with conveying the message and thus do not have the luxury of dwelling over the intricacies of language usage. Nonetheless, the need for grammar specifically geared towards improving oral proficiency is well grounded and more attention should be paid in spoken grammar as English is rapidly becoming a 'world language,' used not only among native speakers but also speakers of English from all corners of the world.

III. METHOD

1. Data

A total of 59 university students (Male: 22, Female: 37) participated in the study. The students were divided into two groups, beginner group (Male: 9, Female: 21) and advanced group (Male: 13, Female: 16). The students were assigned to a group based on the results of a brief one-on-one interview in English. The interview was held once and lasted about 3~5 minutes each, talking about topics related to their daily lives, such as "Which courses do you enjoy the most?" "What are your plans after graduation?" "What kind of extracurricular activities are you involved in?" The criteria applied in the assessment of the interview were based on the Assessment Grid for Speaking Proficiency used in TEPS (See Appendix A).

2. Task

Each group was given a comic strip consisting of eight scenes (pictures, no words included) that depicted an incident (See Table 1 and Table 2). Students were given one minute to prepare and one minute to speak. The speeches were recorded into mp3 files for analysis.

Table 1

Description of the Comic Strip (Beginner Group)

Scene	Contents
1	A young man and a woman prepare for a trip and pack bags.
2	The man and the woman leave for the airport by bus.
3	The man and the woman wait in line at the check-in counter.
4	The woman discovers she forgot to bring her passport.
5	The woman calls home and an old lady picks up the phone.
6	The old lady finds the passport in a drawer.
7	The old lady takes a taxi to the airport with passport in hand.
8	The man and the woman bid farewell to the old lady with passport in hand.

Table 2

Description of the Comic Strip (Advanced Group)

Scene	Contents
1	A woman and a girl are driving in a car in the country.
2	The car suddenly shakes violently.
3	The woman finds the car has a flat tire.
4	The woman tries to call for help on her cell phone.
5	The cell phone's battery is dead. The girl looks worried.
6	The woman takes out a spare tire from the trunk.
7	The woman changes the tire. The girl is sitting beside her.
8	The woman and the girl are driving again. The girl gives the woman a thumb's up.

3. Raters

Three independent raters assessed the oral performance of both groups. The raters were provided with an assessment grid used in TOP (Test of Oral Proficiency in English) administered by the Seoul National University (See Appendix A). Background information of the raters is shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Summary of Rater Background

Rater	Yrs. of Teaching Experience	Nationality
1	2	United States
2	7	Canada
3	4	United States

4. Method of Analysis

Speech files were transcribed and analyzed in order to identify which grammatical errors were committed most often, and whether the types of grammatical errors differ depending on the learners' English proficiency level. A total of 59 mp3 files have been collected and transcribed for this aim.

While much emphasis has been made on the need for grammar teaching in spoken language, specific criteria for instruction are hard to come by. The criteria set forth by McCarthy and Carter (2001), for example, was devised for native speakers and lacks applicability for English learners. Ellis (2002) has introduced the importance of guided opportunities for 'noticing', with the hope that this awareness will help learners notice target forms and eventually internalize these forms as implicit knowledge. As to the kind of elements teachers should look at to facilitate the process of noticing, no specific guidelines have been presented. Celce-Murcia (1991) also points out the need for teachers to go beyond the sentence-level grammar instruction and begin paying more attention to grammar within context, using meaningful and purposeful communicative approaches. Again, the kinds of grammar to be looked at are largely left for the instructors to decide upon. Therefore, this study will look at the most basic and commonly made grammatical errors by English learners; subject-verb agreement, verb usage, article, tense, preposition, subject, and noun usage. The following are examples of grammatical errors:

A. Subject-Verb Agreement

- I and my husband was packing to go to our honeymoon.
- She takes a taxi and then give it to her.

B. Verb Usage

- She finded it out.
- Before he leaved the airport..
- She knews he forgot passport.
- So she called to her mom.
- Tom found out he wasn't passport.
- Tom and Jane is going to traveling.

- Suddenly the car was started to shake.

C. Article

- I was going to United States. (missing 'the' in front of 'United States')
- We took a airport bus. (a→an)
- My daughter and I started to drive a car again. (a→the)

D. Tense

- So she took out the spare tire and put it back on herself. Finally she can go on like nothing happened. (can→could)
- She's decided to call any repair shop nearby but remembered that the phone was out of battery. ('s decided→decided)

E. Preposition

- One day mom and I went to the camping. (→went camping)
- She wants to pick me up to school. (to→at)
- She took a taxi by the airport. (by→to)

F. Subject

- Before entering the gate she found didn't take the passport. (→she found she didn't...)
- Mom had to find in the tire in the trunk and he fixed it for herself. (he→she)

G. Noun Usage

- Two person made package. (Two person→Two people)
- grandmom (nonword)
- Tom and I are planning to go oversea trip. (→go overseas or go on a trip)

H. Others

- She called she's mother. (→her)
- She took passport took a taxi to give passport to daughter. (→took the passport and took a taxi)
- And so even though it was difficult for her to do alone... (→do it alone)

The following, however, were not categorized as errors since they did not contain any grammatical errors.

A. Factual errors

Factual errors (but grammatically correct) were not counted as grammatical errors.

- She took a bus. (→ She took a taxi.)
- The man suddenly realized he forgot to bring the passport. (→ The woman forgot to bring her passport.)
- The grandmother finally found his passport under the desk. (→ she found it in the drawer.)

B. Incorrect word choice

Incorrect usage of nouns that were grammatical was also excluded in the analysis.

- passport card (→ passport)
- The woman called his grandmother to look after his passport. (→ look for his passport)
- She needed to pass the customer. (→ customs)
- exchange the flat tire. (→ change)

IV. RESULTS

1. Descriptives

The followings are the descriptive statistics of grammatical competence and comprehensibility assessed by the raters. The advanced group achieved higher scores on both grammar and comprehensibility (See Table 4). The minimum score and maximum score for both criteria were 1 and 10, respectively.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics

		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Beginner	Comprehensibility	30	4.00	8.00	6.5444	1.04674
	Grammar	30	4.00	7.83	6.1833	.90587
Advanced	Comprehensibility	29	5.17	10.00	7.6264	1.22689
	Grammar	29	4.00	9.67	7.3103	1.31741

Table 5 and Figure 1 show the number of grammatical errors made by the

speakers. The beginner group made more errors in all error types than the advanced group.

Table 5
Grammar Error Type and Frequencies

	Beginner Group		Advanced Group	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Subject-Verb Agreement	26	12.2	9	17.6
Verb Usage	26	12.2	11	21.6
Article	49	23.0	10	19.6
Tense	65	30.5	12	23.5
Preposition	26	12.2	7	13.7
Subject	12	5.6	1	2.0
Noun Usage	6	2.8	0	0
etc.	3	1.4	1	2.0
Total	213	100.0	51	100.0

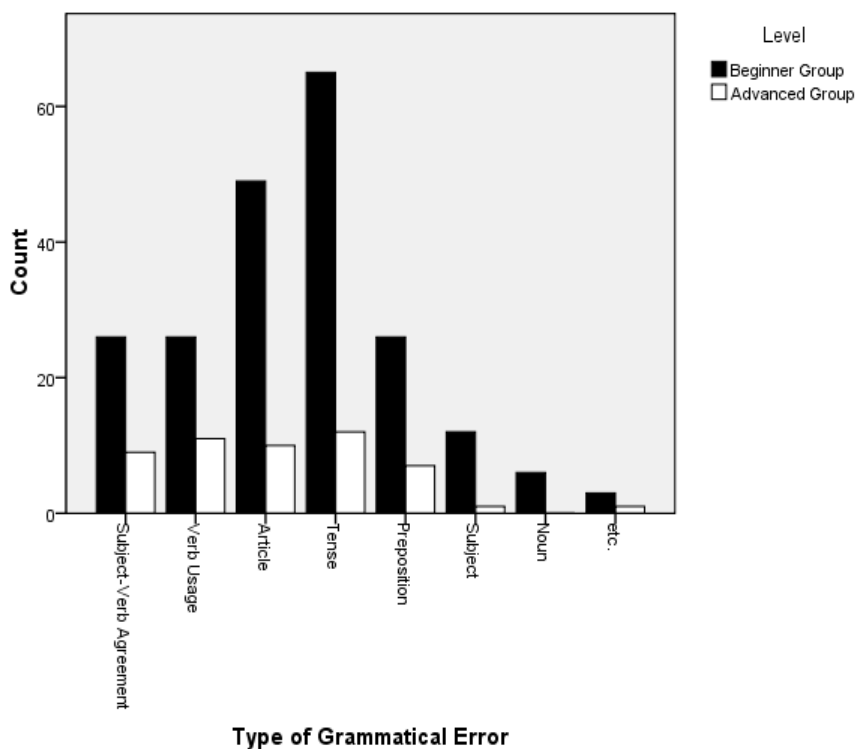


Figure 1. Number of grammatical errors by error type.

2. Inter-rater Reliability

Data was rated by three independent raters. Inter-rater reliability was calculated using the Cronbach's Alpha formula (See Table 6).

Table 6

Summary of Inter-rater Reliability

		N	Cronbach's Alpha
Beginner	Comprehensibility	30	.527
	Grammar	30	.521
Advanced	Comprehensibility	29	.762
	Grammar	29	.829

The summary shows that achievement levels, both in comprehensibility and grammar, were high in the advanced group. While the inter-rater reliability for the advanced group was high, that of the beginner group was low. One reason behind such low reliability for the beginner group might stem from the fact that their teaching experience was different. In other words, the longer the length of teaching experience, the more ease the rater felt with the foreign accent among English learners. Thus the rater could concentrate more on the grammatical features of the speech rather than being distracted by other features such as pronunciation or fluency. Also, the errors which did not contain any grammatical errors, but were nonetheless errors of other sorts (i.e., factual errors, sociolinguistic, discourse errors), appeared more frequently in the beginner group, thereby distracting the attention away from grammatical errors.

3. Relationship between Raters' Assessment of Grammar Competence and Actual Grammatical Errors

The correlation between grammar competence rated by the raters and the actual number of grammatical errors made by the speakers was higher for the advanced group than for the beginner group. In other words, raters were able to rate grammar proficiency more accurately with the advanced group. As mentioned above, the reason behind the discrepancy between the two groups may arise from the fact that the beginner group displayed deficiencies in other areas as well as grammar while the advanced group made relatively fewer mistakes overall, which

made it much easier for the raters to catch grammatical errors (See Table 7).

Table 7

Grammar Scores and Actual Grammatical Errors: Correlations

		Rater1	Rater2	Rater3
No. of Grammatical Errors	Beginner Group	-.232	-.398*	-.363*
	Advanced Group	-.484**	-.674**	-.623**

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

4. Relationship between Comprehensibility and Raters' Assessment of Grammatical Competence

The raters' assessment of grammatical competence was highly correlated with the overall comprehensibility of the speech. The correlation was higher in the advanced group (See Table 8 and 9).

Table 8

Grammar Score and Comprehensibility: Correlations (Beginner Group)

Grammar	Comprehensibility	Rater1	Rater2	Rater3
	Rater1	.857**		
	Rater2		.565**	
	Rater3			.489**

** $p < 0.01$

Table 9

Grammar Score and Comprehensibility: Correlations (Advanced Group)

Grammar	Comprehensibility	Rater1	Rater2	Rater3
	Rater1	.901**		
	Rater2		.602**	
	Rater3			.957**

** $p < 0.01$

5. Relationship between Comprehensibility and Actual Grammatical Error

Table 10 shows that the actual grammatical errors had little relationship with the overall comprehensibility in the beginner group, while they did have a significant relationship in the advanced group.

Table 10

Correlations between Actual Grammar Error and Comprehensibility

		Rater1	Rater2	Rater3
No. of Grammatical Errors	Beginner	-.040	-.075	.051
	Advanced	-.449*	-.385*	-.601**

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

V. DISCUSSION

Based on the results of this study, we found the following:

1. Raters' assessment of learners' grammatical competence in an oral proficiency test had a significant relationship with actual grammatical errors made by learners.
2. Overall comprehensibility assessed by the raters had a significant relationship with the learners' grammar competence assessed by raters.
3. Overall comprehensibility assessed by the raters had a significant relationship with the actual grammatical errors made by the advanced learners, but not beginning learners.
4. The relationship between actual grammatical errors and comprehensibility was different among levels of oral proficiency; advanced level showed a stronger relationship than the beginner level.
5. The reliability among raters was low for the beginner level while reliability for the advanced level was high.
6. Grammatical errors commonly made by learners while speaking are concentrated in subject-verb agreement, verb usage, article, tense, preposition, subject, and noun usage.

On the surface, it appears that grammatical competence has relatively less

importance for the beginner level. However, such results could be interpreted in a different way in that the raters had other factors to assess such as pronunciation, fluency, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence in addition to grammatical competence and overall comprehensibility analysed in this study. In other words, raters could have been distracted by errors in other areas and thus could not focus more on the grammatical aspect of the speech. On the other hand, advanced learners made significantly less errors in pronunciation, fluency, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and thus allowed raters to pay closer attention to grammatical errors. Ironically, advanced level students might benefit more from grammar instruction than their beginner level counterparts. One way to further improve and refine speaking proficiency for advanced learners is to focus on their particular weaknesses in grammar, while beginners have to tackle the more basic aspects of speaking in addition to grammar skills.

This is where the question, "What kind of grammar should we teach in a speaking classroom?" enters the scene. Proponents of the spoken grammar approach believe that spoken grammars have uniquely special qualities that distinguish them from written ones (McCarthy & Carter, 2001). One of the biggest mistakes committed in the speaking classroom is that, in a zealous attempt to faithfully follow communicative approach, lessons may prepare learners for tourist-level interaction but fail to achieve up-graded language skills. Critics have warned that deemphasizing form and concentrating only on meaning may lead to irreversible error fossilization (Higgs & Clifford, 1982).

This is not to say we should revert to the traditional grammar books that follow the pattern of the 3Ps (Presentation-Practice-Production). Rather, educators need to learn from past mistakes and offer learners opportunities to examine real data (Illustration), expose learners to discourse-sensitive activities that help interpersonal communication and the negotiation of meaning (Interaction), and encourage learners to further expand and refine their skills through exploring different grammatical options (Induction) (McCarthy & Carter, 1995).

A system for spoken grammar should be developed in tandem with an extensive comparison with the written grammar to identify the commonalities and differences of the two forms of communication. As in the written language, a curriculum should be designed to accommodate the need of learners of different learning stages and levels. Based on the differences in error types between the

beginner and advanced learners, the logical conclusion would be to devise curricula that directly address the needs of the students in improving their working knowledge of grammar. Textbook writers and developers should also take note of the need for spoken grammar in order to produce adequate and effective teaching material that reflect real spoken data rather than artificial and concocted dialogues.

VI. CONCLUSION

Although this study attempted to examine the role of grammar in oral proficiency among English learners, it is not without limitations. Narratives used in this study are only one form of many different types of speech. Other forms, such as conversations, speeches, and presentations in real-life settings, may produce additional insightful evidence.

This study also reported low rater reliability for beginner learners. Low reliability among raters in the assessment of beginner group poses a problem in the overall integrity of the test. It was speculated earlier that raters may have been distracted by other criteria that had to be assessed when rating the beginner group, while grammatical errors made by the advanced group were more noticeable in the absence of other types of errors. Interviews or surveys on the raters' perception of spoken grammar or oral proficiency assessment may also shed some light to this issue. It would also be interesting to receive feedback from native speakers who have little or no experience living in Korea in order to prevent assessment bias due to prior exposure to the Korean accent. Assessment from those not from the education profession may in fact gather the most accurate and unbiased opinions and may come closest to the real purpose of communication.

Spoken grammar is by no means to impose to English speakers the 'standard English' or the 'correct English' but to offer guidelines to speakers so that Englishes around the world can continue to communicate, without falling apart and becoming separate languages. As Soon-woo Hong (2005) pointed out, we are no longer learning English with the sole purpose of communicating with native speakers of English. Rather, we increasingly find ourselves using English as a medium of communication with non-native speakers. In an age when English has become the de facto *lingua franca*, the ability to effectively convey one's

message is indeed an empowering skill. Educators should not turn a blind eye to this growing need.

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APPENDIX A

Assessment Grid for Speaking Proficiency

Pronunciation

Grade	Description
Consonants/Vowels & Pronunciation/stress/intonation	
9~10	Pronunciation and intonation approximate those of a native speaker.
7~8	Accent characteristic of non-native speakers is sometimes detected. However, the content is 100% comprehensible.
5~6	Pronunciation errors and stress/intonation flaws are detected. The content is fairly understandable.
3~4	Frequent pronunciation errors are detected. Stress/intonation flaws often impeded communication.
1~2	Due to pronunciation/stress/intonation errors, the message is incomprehensible.

Fluency

Grade	Description
	Strategic use of language, natural flow of speech, use of sophisticated expressions
9~10	Natural flow of speech approximates that of a native speaker.
7~8	Speaks naturally uses good expressions with few lapses.
5~6	Shows occasional lapses in speech but does not impeded communication.
3~4	Stammers, uses unconventional expressions which impede communication.
1~2	Frequent lapses, lack of connection, unnatural flow of speech make it all but impossible to understand the speaker.

Grammatical Competence

Grade	Description
	Practical use of grammar: Accuracy of phrases and grammatical usage
9~10	Rarely shows any grammatical errors in speech.
7~8	Makes occasional grammatical errors. However, such errors are also often exhibited by native speakers.
5~6	Makes grammatical errors. However, the errors are not serious enough to impeded communication. Overall, the structure of speech is acceptable.
3~4	The speaker has basic knowledge of grammar, but makes serious errors that impede communication.
1~2	Except for simple phrases, the speaker fails to make any grammatically correct sentences.

Discourse Competence

Grade	Description
	Logical flow of discourse
9~10	Can use conjunctions in a natural manner so that the message comes across logically.
7~8	Displays fairly competent use of conjunctions and maintains consistency in conveying the message.
5~6	Can use simple forms of conjunctions and can more or less convey the message.
3~4	Fails to use appropriate forms of conjunctions, which makes the message choppy.
1~2	Uses inappropriate forms of conjunctions or fails to use any conjunction. The message lacks consistency.

Sociolinguistic Competence

Grade	Description
	Good choice of words and phrases
9~10	Inappropriate or expressions out-of-place are rarely detectable.
7~8	Inappropriate or expressions out-of-place are sometimes detectable.
5~6	Makes errors in the choice of words or formality in speech.
3~4	Makes many errors in the choice of words or formality in speech.
1~2	The majority of the speech uses inappropriate words and expressions.

Overall Comprehensibility

Grade	Description
	Comprehensive Assessment
9~10	Shows few errors in the use of language and pronunciation. The message comes across perfectly.
7~8	Shows grammatical/pronunciation errors time to time, but the message is easily understandable.
5~6	Displays pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary errors. Shows stops and backtracking. However, overall message is communicated.
3~4	Frequent stops and backtracking. Pronunciation errors, poor choice of vocabulary, inefficient use of grammar. Overall communication is hampered.
1~2	Extremely low level of communication. Cannot provide appropriate answer to the question.

Source: TOP (Test of Oral Proficiency in English) administered by the Seoul National University.

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