

Chapter 6 Assessing Speaking

Questions to consider before reading this chapter:

1. How do you assess speaking?
2. Can you remember how your speaking was assessed when you took a foreign language in school? Was it a good system of assessment? Why or why not?
3. What do you think are three to five challenges in assessing students' speaking ability?
4. What do you know about the speaking component of a major standardized exam? (You could discuss the TOEFL® or any other type of standardized exam.)
5. Can you think of how assessing speaking might be different in these three stages: pre-instruction, during instruction, and post-instruction?

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After the chapter:

Activity 1. Matching Objectives with Assessment

In earlier chapters of the book, we discussed our learners' needs and objectives. Briefly explain the connection of these objectives to assessment.

Activity 2. Assessment during the Three Stages

Discuss the three stages of assessment. Give examples of appropriate assessments for each stage. Which stage(s) is easiest for most teachers to conceptualize?

Activity 3. Achievement Assessment

Define achievement assessment as it relates to speaking. Give an example.

Activity 4. Direct versus Indirect Assessment

Define direct and indirect assessment as it relates to speaking. Give examples of both. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each?

Activity 5. Proficiency Assessment

Define proficiency assessment as it relates to speaking. Give an example.

Activity 6. Challenges in Achievement Assessment

In pre-reading question #3, you made a list of three to five challenges in assessing students' speaking ability. Based on what you have read in this chapter, how accurate was your list? Were there any items on your list that were not in the chapter that you believe should be included in the chapter?

Activity 7. Speaking Assessment

Having read and discussed the contents of this chapter on speaking assessment, what are three to five of the most difficult challenges in conducting good speaking assessment?

Activity 8. Speaking Assessment

Having read and discussed the contents of this chapter on speaking assessment, analyze the speaking component of a major standardized examination such as TOEFL® or TSE®. Point out what you consider to be strengths and weaknesses of the exam.

Activity 9. An Experienced Teacher: The Practical Side

Interview (live or online) an experienced teacher about assessment. Ask specific questions about how the teacher would like to do speaking assessment in an ideal world and how he or she has had to modify assessment due to practical, real-world considerations.

Activity 10. An Experienced Teacher: The Cultural Side

Interview (live or online) a teacher who has taught in a foreign country (EFL). Ask specific questions about how speaking assessment is done in that part of the world. Are there certain cultural considerations that present challenges or obstacles in conducting speaking assessment?