ASSESSING SPEAKING COMPETENCE IN NON-LINGUISTIC ACADEMIC FIELDS: CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

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ABSTRACT Communication skills are always necessary in many professions, including those that are not language-based. Non-linguistic specialty students, such as those studying engineering, technology, and environmental science, must be able to convey concepts clearly and effectively in order to succeed professionally. However, measuring speaking skill in such courses is difficult because typical language testing methodologies may fail to address the unique demands and settings of non-linguistic learners. This article explores the challenges of assessing speaking competency for non-linguistic students and makes practical ideas for improving assessment practices.

Keywords: speaking assessment, non-linguistic students, language proficiency, communication skills, assessment challenges

INTRODUCTION

In contrast to written languages that provide clear recordings for evaluation, speech languages occur in a dynamic combination of real-time lesson interactions. Its temporary nature requires a more nuanced approach that records the sentiment spoken and at the same time provides relevant feedback to students.

It is important to check students' speech skills regularly for some persuasive reasons:

- Educators can pursue students` progress over time and identify areas of strength and debilitation. This provides a clear picture of the development of second language for each student and helps to shape effective learning strategies;

- Regular assessments encourage students to practice speech skills, leading to improved language and confidence;

- The feedback that the students get will motivate them to develop further their spoken language skills;

Speech skill assessment allows students to prepare for real communication scenarios and to express themselves clearly and safely. It can also reveal cases of foreign languages that students can freeze or fight from fear or tension in order to communicate effectively.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In the last two decades, studies have increasingly incorporated technological advancements and alternative assessment approaches. Jason Fan and Xun Yan's 2020 article, "Assessing Speaking Proficiency: A Narrative Review of Speaking Assessment Research Within the Argument-Based Validation Framework," examined empirical studies on speaking assessment in depth. They conducted a systematic analysis of 104 articles from important language assessment journals and classified their findings using an argument-based validation approach [1]. Sumardi, Rohmatul 'Adzima, and Andik Nur Wijaya's 2020 study, "Digital Video Project: An Authentic Assessment to Assess Students' Speaking Skills," looked into the use of digital video projects as an authentic assessment tool for measuring the speaking abilities of non-English major university students. The study involved 25 students enrolled in an English course at University of Slamet Riyadi Surakarta. The study used a qualitative content analysis approach to evaluate students' recorded speaking performances against a content, delivery, and creative rubric. Open-ended questionnaires were used to collect data, and these performances were then analyzed. The findings revealed that digital video project work improved students' abilities to create appropriate introductions, maintain adequate voice volume and expression, and foster creativity in generating compelling videos [2].

RESULTS

While teaching a language to the students of non-linguistic academic fields, there is a high probability of facing the following challenges:

- Various language backgrounds. Non-linguistic courses captivate students from different language backgrounds and lead to different language skills in a single classroom. This makes it difficult to develop standardized assessment measures that are fair and effective for all learners.

- Motivation for inadequate language learning. Non-linguistic students prefer technical skills compared to language acquisition and can consider language courses to be targeted for support in the main research. This approach can lead to a lack of interest in participating in speaking exercises and may affect exam performance. Motivation in learning is a dynamic appendage formed by internal and external influences. Students are more connected and effective when their learning environment promotes inclusion, relevance, and attainable challenges. Creating a supportive environment in which scholars feel appreciated and connected improves their willingness to contribute and overall engagement [3].

- Limited exposure to target language which may limit the development and effectiveness of effects on assessment

- Fear and psychological barriers. Speaking tests can cause great fear, especially among students who are unfamiliar with public speaking or who do not speak with confidence by speaking. Such anxiety can be disadvantageous and can make it difficult to maintain a fair measure of students' actual speaking ability.

DISCUSSION

Several ways can be used to improve the evaluation of non-linguistic students' speaking ability. One useful strategy is contextualized evaluation, in which speaking tasks are designed to cover students' areas of specialization. This makes language assessment more meaningful and applicable to their own academic and professional lives. Another prominent strategy is the employment of technology in oral exams. To develop their communication abilities, technology-enabled technologies such as language learning software and AI platforms provide students with low-stakes practice and immediate feedback. Formative assessment and constant feedback are equally important tools for skill improvement. Continuous, low-stakes testing enables students to monitor their progress, discover areas for growth, and gain confidence without the stress of high-stakes testing.

Finally, supporting peer learning environments is one strategy for students to overcome speech fear. Peer evaluation and collaborative work provide an environment that encourages students to communicate more in an interactive and stimulating sequence. These approaches, when combined, make speaking tests more successful and relevant for non-linguistic students.

CONCLUSION

Evaluating speaking abilities in non-linguistic fields requires a careful approach that considers the specific challenges encountered by these learners. Consequently, speaking assessments are enhanced through tasks that are grounded in context, the use of technology, ongoing feedback, and collaborative learning environments. This enhances the validity of the assessment and fosters the development of essential communication skills for non-linguistic students, which are crucial for their success.

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