ASSESSMENT ON SPEAKING SKILLS IN ENGLISH AT SENIOR SECONDARY LEVEL THROUGH A TASK- BASED APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with the mode of Assessment and its objectives and the strategies followed on Speaking Skills in English at Senior Secondary Level. In the Teaching Learning Process, Assessment is the final step where the learners get feedback of what they have been taught and how much they have learned. Assessment on Speaking involves both Comprehension and Production. As Cutler (2005) observed, Productive Language Processing in many respects mirrors receptive processing. Skills of speaking include both fluency and correctness. Therefore Grammar, Vocabulary and Pronunciation form a part of assessment along with conversational discourse. The objective of the study is to show the current approach of assessing students' English speaking skills (i.e) (i) The pupil uses appropriate words in the right context, (ii) uses the correct sentence pattern, (iii) pronounces words correctly, (iv) modulates his voice according to the situation, (v) speaks at reasonable speed, (vi) arranges ideas in a logical sequence, (vii) uses proper gesture etc., at Senior Secondary level and how for this approach helps students develop the language skills. The study has been conducted among 60 students of a CBSE affiliated Senior Secondary School located in Mysore City. The Design used is Non Testing (i.e) Observation Technique. Speaking Tasks of different kinds have been used as Tool. Speaking performances have been assessed by employing the Rating Scale, sometimes referred to as a Scoring Rubric. The study concludes that the process of assessment signals the pupil to improve his / her performance in speaking as per the requirements to face the World outside the Class Room.

Key Words: Assessment, Observation Technique, Rating Scale, Rubrics.

In the Teaching Learning process, Assessment is the final step where Learners get feedback of what they have been taught and how much they have been learned. Assessment on speaking involves both comprehension and production. As Cutler (2005) observed 'Productive Language processing in many respects mirrors receptive processing'. Assessments are like

interruptions. For example 'Most interruptions are actually competent forms of Feedback or Reinforcement' (Kennedy & Camden.1983). Skills of speaking include both fluency and appropriateness. Therefore Grammar, Vocabulary and Pronunciation form a part of assessment along with conversational discourse. In assessing students in a class several methods have to be employed (Spitzberg & Hurt, 1987a). At senior secondary level, the oral skills in English are to be assessed in order to make the students to speak error free English with others. Students, after having finished senior secondary level and getting into the outside world either for higher studies or any job, they need to have strong and proper communication skills in English which is considered as survival skill. Hence, in this study, carefully selected tasks & topic based speaking activities have been assigned to students and their speaking skills have been evaluated by controlled testing methods (i.e.) Observation Technique and also employing a Rating Scale which includes the following criteria: Range, Accuracy, Fluency, Interaction and Coherence, Articulation, Confidence, Pitch and Volume, Body Language, Eye Contact, Accent, Gesture, etc. Huve (1990) found consistently high reliabilities for the Rating Scale Components.

Objectives:

Testing on the Speaking Assessment provides the following opportunities to students:
1. To speak intelligibly using appropriate word stress, sentence stress and intonation patterns
2. To adopt different strategies to convey ideas effectively according to purpose, topic and audience
3. To narrate incidents and events, real or imaginary, in a logical sequence
4. To present oral reports or summaries and make announcements clearly and confidently
5. To express and argue a point clearly and effectively
6. To take part in group discussions, showing an ability to express agreement or disagreement to summarize ideas, to elicit the views of others and to present own ideas
7. To express and respond to personal feelings, opinions and attitudes
8. To convey messages effectively in person or on telephone
9. To frame questions so as to extract the views of others, and respond appropriately to questions
10. To participate in spontaneous spoken discourse in familiar social situations

Need and Importance of Speaking Assessment:

Proper testing is necessary in skill development because without testing, the process of achieving competence remains incomplete. Testing makes students sincere enough to learn things properly. Unless proper Assessment is done, students do not get proper feedback of whether they use correct English or not. Speaking Assessment is equally important like the other skills. Most teachers would accept that "If you want to encourage oral ability then test

oral ability" (Hughes 44). If the students know, they have to present something or give an oral test in English at the exam and their success in language will depend on their performance, they will be serious enough to develop their speaking skills.

Assessment Design:

A variety of Speaking Tasks have been selected and assigned to the students and their task performance has been assessed through **Observational Techniques.**

Tools used for Assessment:

Rating Scales of 3 - point, 4 – point and 5 – point have been constructed as Tool to assess the students in the performance of Speaking Task.

Sample Selected for the Assessment:

60 students of +2 level from a senior secondary school in Mysore have been selected as sample for testing the Speaking Assessment.

Methodology:

Five Selected speaking Tasks such as **1. Description of a Person, 2. Picture Description prompt, 3. Making Choices, 4. Role Play, and 5. Problem Solving** have been assigned to students to perform. Students have been asked to do the job assigned individually, pair or in group as per the nature of the Task.

Task Implementation and Assessment

Task-1: Description of a Person:

In this competitive world, we have to be the best. We do need inspiration to achieve results. Keeping this in mind, describe a role model who inspires you the most.

Mode of Performance   :   Individual
Approx. Time for Preparation   :   5 – 10 minutes
Approx. Time for Speaking   :   5 minutes
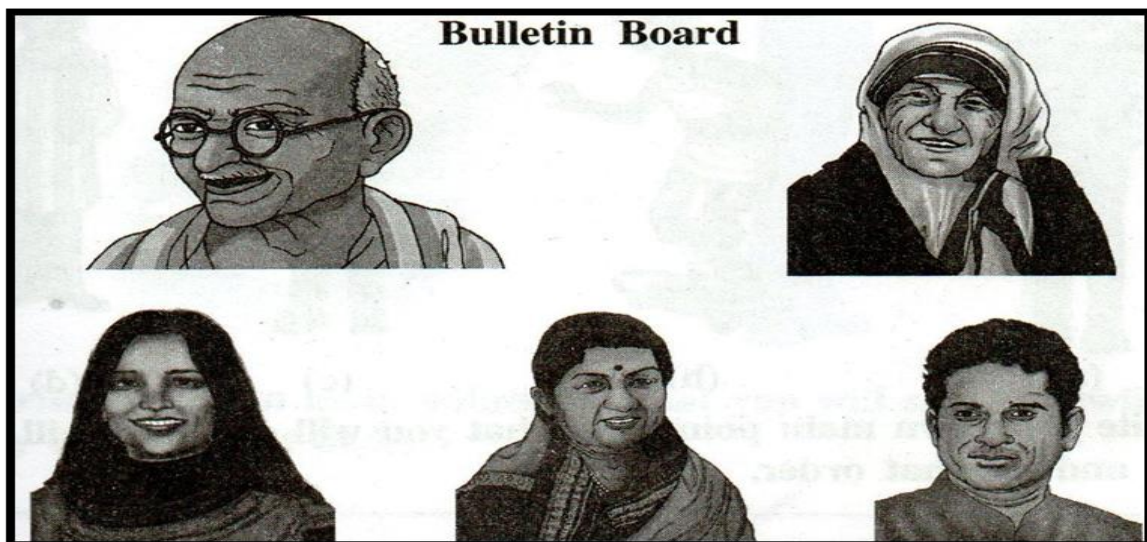Assessment Criteria: A Zero to Four Point rating scale

Assessment Sheet

4 – Superior, 3 – Above Average, 2 – Average, 1 – Below average, 0 – Week

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Sl. No.	Name of the student	Speaking Range					Accuracy					Fluency					Coherence					Creativity				
		4	3	2	1	0	4	3	2	1	0	4	3	2	1	0	4	3	2	1	0	4	3	2	1	0
1.	A																									
2.	B																									
3.	C																									
4.	D																									
5.	E																									

Task-2: Picture Description Prompt:

Observe the pictures of Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Teresa, Sachin Tendulkar, Kalpana Chawla, Lata Mangeshkar that are on the bulletin board. Choose any 2 leaders and elaborate upon the qualities of these personalities which make them great.

Bulletin Board

Mode of Performance   :   Individual
Preparation for the Task   :   3 minutes
Time Allotted for Speaking   :   3 minutes
Assessment Criteria   :   5 point rating scale

Assessment Sheet

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5 – Very Good, 4 – Good, 3 – Fair, 2 – Poor, 1 – Very Poor

Sl. No.	Name of the student	Range					Vocabulary					Pronunciation					Discourage Competence					Content				
		5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
1.	A																									
2.	B																									
3.	C																									
4.	D																									
5.	E																									
6.	F																									
7.	G																									
8.	H																									

Task-3: Making Choices:

Look at the following picture that shows people in the different professions. Choose anyone you would like to be and give convincing reasons for not choosing the others.

Hint: I would like to be a _____ because …

Mode of Performance   :   Individual

Preparation for the Task   :   5 minutes

Time Allotted for Speaking   :   5 minutes

Assessment Sheet

Rating Scale   :   5 point rating scale

1 – Inadequate, 2 – Fair, 3 – Adequate, 4 – Good, 5 – Excellent

Encircle the single most accurate response for each behaviour.

Name of the student	1	2	3	4	5		Speaking Rate (Neither too slow nor too fast)	
	1	2	3	4	5		Fluency	
	1	2	3	4	5		Articulation	
	1	2	3	4	5		Vocal Confidence	
	1	2	3	4	5		Posture	
							Total	

Task – 4: Role Play

A tourist guide takes undue advantage of the tourist by driving her round and round in Delhi, only to discover that the tourist was a Delhite. Enact this scene with interesting dialogues.

Mode of Activity   :   Two

Preparation Time Given   :   3 - 5 minutes

Presentation Time   :   5 minutes

Assessment Sheet / Role Play Rubric

Name: _____   Date: _____

Activity: _____   Role Play: _____

Assessment done by: _____

Criteria   Rating: 5 – point scale

	5	4	3	2	1
Speech was clear with appropriate volume					
Role was played in a convincing consistent manner					
Arguments and viewpoints expressed fit, role played					
Costumes and props were effectively used					
Role play was well prepared and organized					
Role play captured and maintained audience interest					

Task-5: Problem Solving:

Look at the picture and interact each other how to solve the problem depicted in the picture.
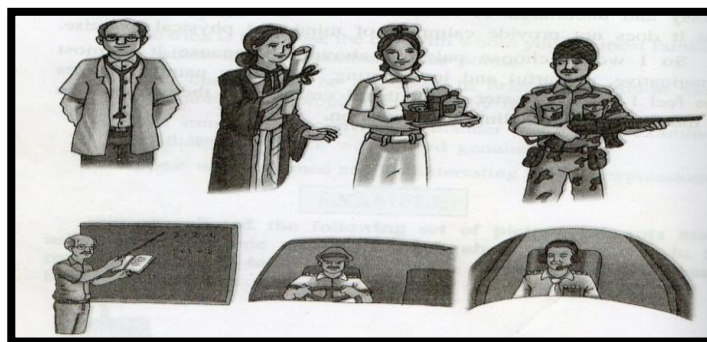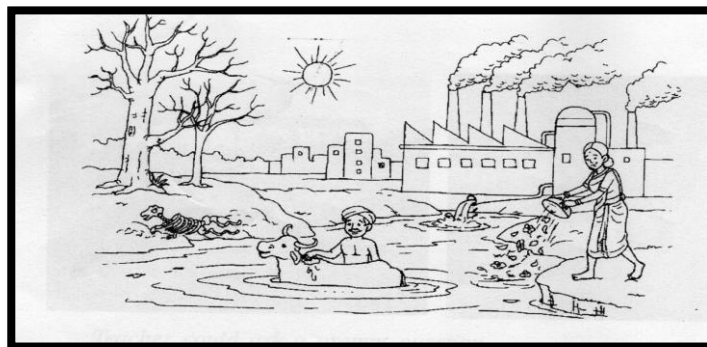
Mode of Activity   :   Pair interaction

Preparation Time   :   2 – 4 minutes

Presentation Time   :   4 – 6 minutes

Speaking Assessment Sheet

Rating Criteria: 4 Point Scale

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Sl. No. & Class	Candidate Name	(IC-5) Interactive Communication	F(5) Fluency	P (5) Pronunciation	LA(5) Language Accuracy	Total Marks (20)
1 A (XII)						
1 B (XII)						
2 A (XII)						
2 B (XII)						
3 A (XII)						
3 B (XII)						

Findings:

After having tested the speaking task in the senior secondary level students, it is found that students in general got aware of the flaws in their speaking situations. Assessment provides an opportunity to improve their speaking performance as per the need of the situation specially to use language effectively, to express ideas / thoughts clearly, to develop confidence in speaking, to understand pronunciation pattern, to present information in a clear and organized manner to involve themselves in group discussions, use vocabulary appropriately, develop the ability to make oral presentation in the class, etc.

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