



THE FOREIGN LANGUAGES FORUM

Mastering the Speaking Component in English Language Assessment

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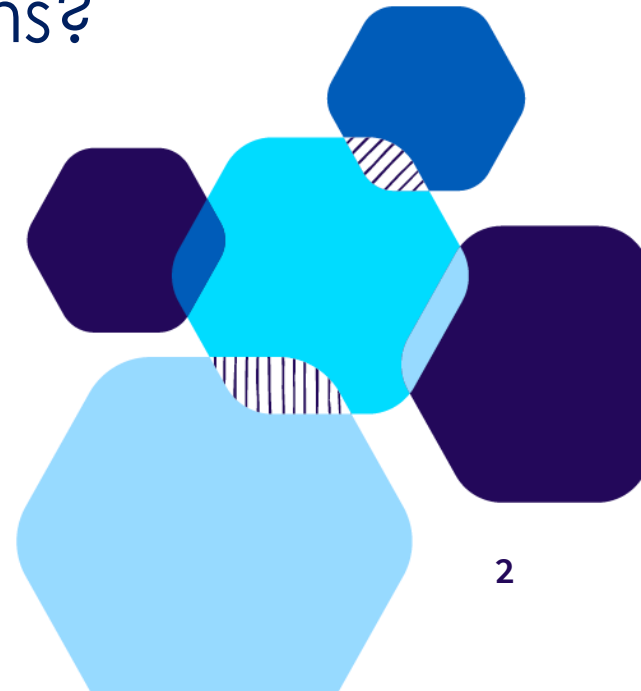
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THE FOREIGN LANGUAGES FORUM

What is the greatest challenge YOU face when preparing students for oral exams?



Goal Sessions

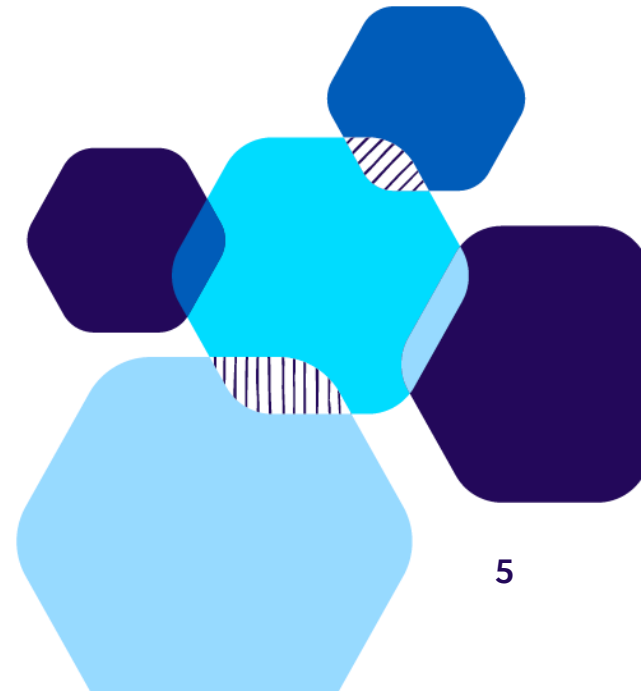
1. **The Diversity** of Oral Exams
2. **Improving** Oral Communication Skills
3. **Analysis** Speaking Test – B2 Level

The Diversity of Oral Exams

- Both Educators and Students must be fully aware of the format and the key criteria
- Consult Practice Test books
- Contact Exam Provider
- Attend Seminars/Webinars

The Diversity of Oral Exams

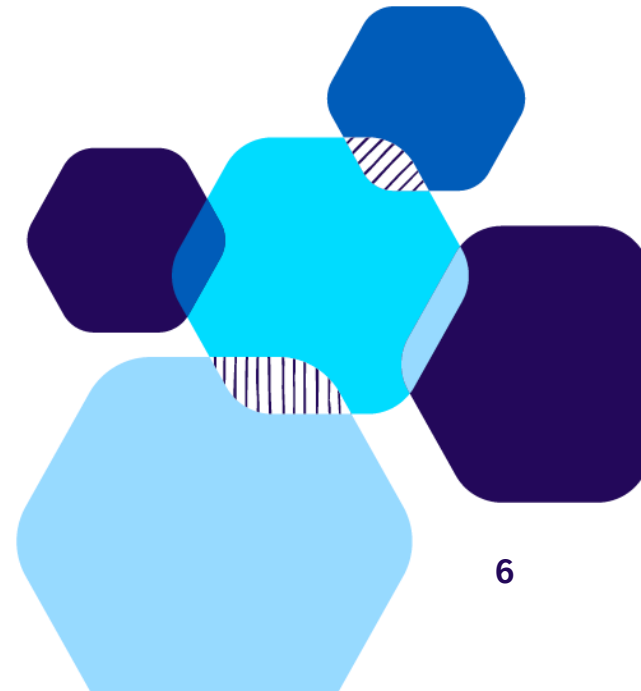
- Multiple Universities and Colleges
- Multiple Levels
- Variety of Test Formats
- Marking criteria varies
- Single or Pair Test Taking



The Diversity of Oral Exams

Multitude of Tasks

- Monologue/Dialogue
- Description of a photo
- Description of an event
- Problem Solving
- Expressing Preference
- Role Play
- Supporting an argument



So... What criteria are we supposed to focus on?

Grammar Range & Accuracy

Fluency & Coherence

Comprehension

Pronunciation

Sociolinguistic Appropriateness

Task Completion



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Criteria 1: Grammatical Range & Accuracy

- The ability to use a wide range of structures
- Production of error-free sentences with only occasional inappropriacies or basic nonsystematic errors
- Level of Range & Accuracy reflects exam level



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Criteria 2: Fluency & Coherence

- Speaks fluently with occasional repetition or self-correction
- Hesitation is usually content-related and only rarely to search for language
- Develops topics coherently and appropriately
- Level of Fluency and Coherence reflects exam level



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Criteria 3: Comprehension

- The ability to convey ideas clearly
- Proper use of vocabulary and lexical structures
- Potential to sustain a conversation



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Criteria 4: Pronunciation

- Effectiveness of sounds
- Accuracy of Pronunciation
- Expressiveness



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Criteria 5: Sociolinguistic Appropriateness

- Appropriateness of Language
- Body Language - Gestures
- Politeness and Formality
- Intonation Patterns for Pragmatic Effect



Criteria 6: Task Completion

- Topic nomination
- Maintenance and Termination
- Relevance to topic (on/off topic)
- Detailed expansion of task

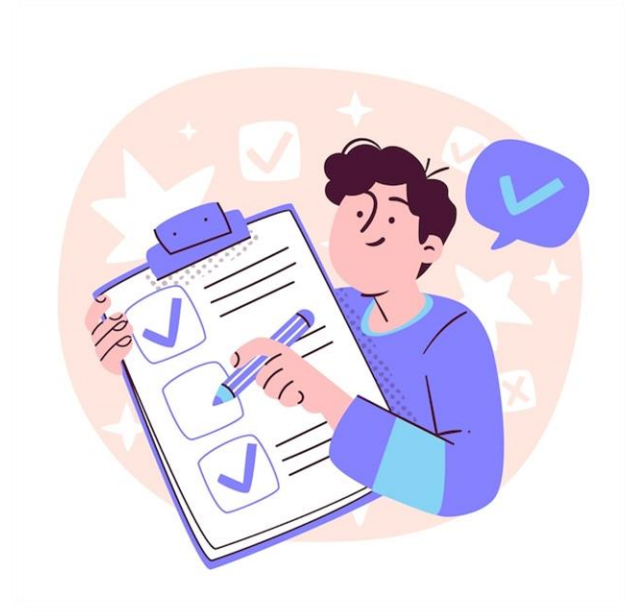


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Assessing Candidates

- Recording the Interview
- How many Examiners?
- Interlocutors and Assessors?
- Evaluators?

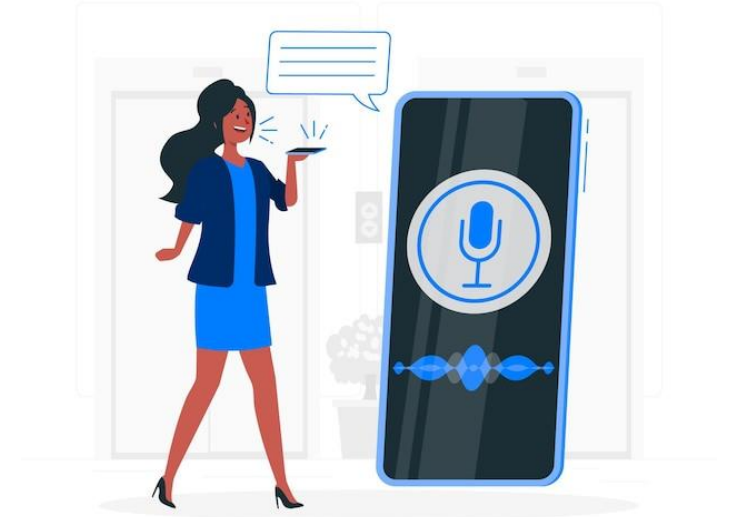


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		Overall Communicative Effectiveness	Language Control & Resources	Delivery/Intelligibility
Stage 1		Unscored		
Stage 2 & 3		① ② ③ ④ ⑤	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
Stage 4	Question #1	① ② ③ ④ ⑤		
	Question #2	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
	Question #3	① ② ③ ④ ⑤		

Body Language

- Body Posture and Gestures
- Aspects of communication
- Exudes confidence
- Reinforcement of ideas
- Chewing Gum
- Eye contact – sign of respect
- Hand gestures



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Pausing and Evaluation

- Pauses are accepted to allow test taker to evaluate
- Some tests allow specific time for this
- Extended time in many cases is not allowed
- During speech, a few instances of pausing are allowed
- Fluency and intelligibility suffer when speech pattern is inconsistent



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Clarification

- Didn't hear clearly (ask the examiner to repeat)
- Didn't understand (ask the examiner to rephrase)
- Unknown word(s) – explanation allowed?
- Still can't understand - panic ensuing?
 - *Examiners are trained to deal with this*



Reciting

- The Examiner is assessing your ability to communicate – NOT RECITE
- Automated responses are unnatural
- They can't be used everywhere
- Rote Learning the answers from students who have already taken the test
- Memorized Personal Presentation for Stage 1



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Rote Memorization and Rehearsed Answers

- Some expressions are of course welcome
 - “Just give me a second”
 - “I tend to believe that”
 - “I prefer the first picture because”
- Formulaic Expressions are a part of every language
 - “Thank you!”
 - “Nice to meet you”
 - “May I come in?”



What is a Conversation?

Dialogue NOT Monologue

- It's disrespectful towards the other candidate/examiner
- Speaking longer DOES NOT MEAN you'll get extra points
- In some cases, you'll get a lower mark!

What about being polite?

- If for any reason your partner doesn't stop, raise your hand gently and look at your partner or examiner)

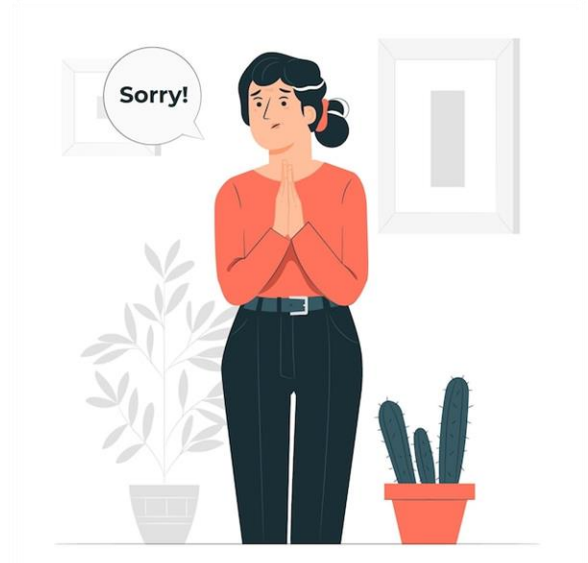


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Interrupting the flow

Commenting – even interrupting politely – are elements which are examined and marked

“excuse me...”

“may I add something?”

“I see your point”

“wouldn't it be better though if...”

“you do have a point”

“I apologize, but I tend to disagree”



Asking for Clarification

Unable to understand the other?

“could you please repeat that?”

“I didn’t quite catch that”

“what exactly do you mean?”

“can you further elaborate?”

“I kind of lost you there”

“So, you’re saying that...”

Disagreeing Politely (NOT Condemning)

- How not to seem cruel or egotistic
 - “I understand your concerns, however,”
 - “Great idea but how about”
 - “I appreciate you giving it some thought but we should also consider”
 - “Sounds interesting but what if we”



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Time Limits

- Each test has different restrictions
- Under the time limit
 - Examiner urges candidate to continue
 - Nothing left to say? Be Honest!
- Surpassing it
 - Insistence on continuing
 - **PLEASE DON'T!**
 - Delays
 - Negative Mark



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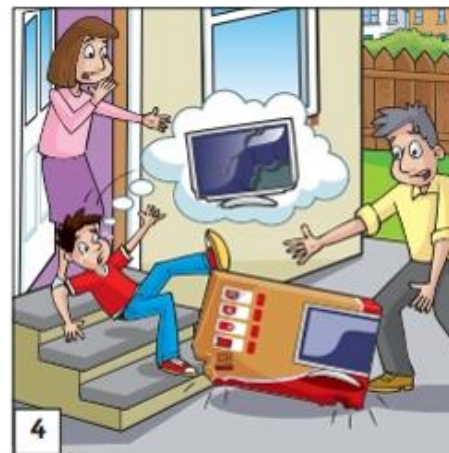
Classifying Oral Skills – What to Practice

- Provide Personal Information
- Give Instructions (recipe, pet-care)
- Offer Directions
- Describe Something-Someone -> Show & Tell
- Play Apps/Board Games (critical thinking, bargaining, interaction)
- Narrate a Story



Narrating a Story

- Role play the narrative
- Assign different roles
- Ask for specific vocabulary/grammar
- Allow them to express themselves



Conducting Oral Mock Tests

- Record their oral mock test
- Have them hear it afterwards
- Share feedback with them
- Focus on elements which need attention
- Offer recommendations for enhancement
- During first test, it's okay to interrupt and offer guidelines as regards its format



Context Over Correction

Student: “The girl **she** is...

“The girl **she** is wearing a beautiful blue dress. She looks happy.”

“The girl **she** is wearing a beautiful blue dress. She looks happy.”

Recast, Expansion, Clarification

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Context Over Correction

Over-correcting grammar kills fluency.
Use recasts instead.

Student: “He don’t like coffee.”

Teacher: “Oh, he **doesn’t** like coffee?”

→ **Implicit correction** reinforces correct grammar without interrupting natural speech.



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Freepik*

Context Over Correction

Expansion (Building on What the Student Said)

Student: “I buyed a book.”

Teacher: “Oh, you **bought** a book? Nice!

What’s it about?”

→ The teacher subtly introduces the correct form while engaging with the content.

Context Over Correction

Clarification Requests (Prompting Self-Correction)

Student: “Yesterday, she go to the market.”

Teacher: “Sorry, yesterday she...?”

→ This nudges the student to rethink the grammar without directly saying it's wrong.



Implicit Correction is More Effective for Fluency than Direct Correction

✘ **Direct correction** (e.g., “No, that’s wrong. Say it like this...”) can be discouraging and interrupts fluency.

✔ **Implicit correction** (e.g., “Oh, you mean she goes to the store?”) maintains the conversation flow while reinforcing correct grammar naturally.

→ The **brain learns best** when **mistakes are noticed in context**, rather than through abrupt interruptions.

→ **Overcorrection makes students hesitant**, reducing their willingness to take risks in speaking.

Comforting Students' Anxieties

- Explain that stress is inevitable in ALL types of tests
- Even examiners are stressed so it's okay
- We ALL make mistakes EVERY DAY
- Examiners are people like everyone else
- Many of them are also teachers 😊



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Have your students know...

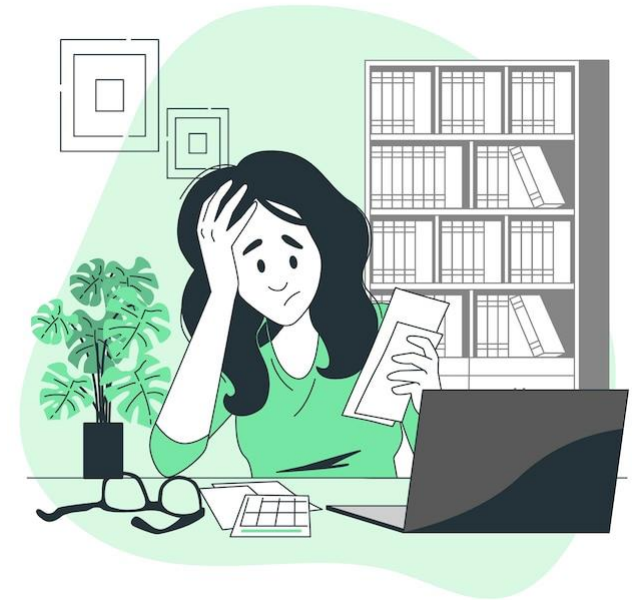
- Messing up one part isn't the end of the world
- The final score is a culmination of over a dozen factors
- The first impression we get of our performance is the one we should bear in mind. Self-doubt kicks in after we leave the exam room

PLEASE TELL your students...

Examiners can't tell you if you've passed or not – **please don't ask us**

Don't make assumptions of your mark by judging our facial expressions. **WE'RE TIRED!**

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Students with SEN's

- The test is tailored to their needs
 - time
 - elements examined
 - marking
- Contact exam centre for details and guidelines
- It's our OBLIGATION as teachers to make sure our students are offered equal opportunity to perform and shine.



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Oral Exam B2 Level Student

Breaking the Ice

- The first stage is not assessed by most exams.
- Its purpose is to help the examinee get acquainted with the examiner and relax.
- **Watch Video**



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Oral Exam B2 Level Student

Supporting an argument

- Is it better to socialize on the Internet or go out and make friends?
- **Watch Video**



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Oral Exam B2 Level Student

Supporting an argument: Evaluation

- Is it better to socialize on the Internet or go out and make friends?
- The candidate is in favor of going out to make friends
- He has no claims to support his argument
- “Face to Face is better”
- “Internet is good for the communication”
- Task goal has not been achieved
- Language use is poor **e.g. have-has**
- Linguistic Appropriateness **“this”**



Oral Exam B2 Level Student

Describing Pictures and Selecting One for a Purpose

- Describe the Picture and choose the best one for the cover of a poster promoting a holiday.
- **Watch Video**



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Oral Exam B2 Level Student

Describing Pictures and Selecting One for a Purpose: **Evaluation**

- Describe the Picture and choose the best one for the cover of a poster promoting a holiday.
- First picture was described with basic vocabulary and a few mistakes
- Second picture had inadequate description
- His choice was underdeveloped “It’s the best choice and interesting.”



Oral Exam B2 Level Student

Role Play

- Role-play based on pre-assigned prompts
- **Watch Video**



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Oral Exam B2 Level Student

Role Play: Evaluation

- Role-play based on pre-assigned prompts
- Despite grammar and lexical inaccuracies, he expressed his opinion
- The conversation was sustained and included minor details – He wanted to stay near the Eiffel Tower
- Despite these issues, he did have a comprehensive conversation

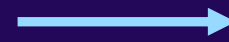


Reflect: What two things
have you learned from
this seminar?

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Thank you!

Certificate





Free Publication “The Show Must Go On”

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References

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