

*Full Length Research Paper*

# Speaking as an indicator of general proficiency in placement test

Zahra Shirinzadeh Aghdam<sup>1\*</sup> and Ali Akbar Farahani<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Payam-e-noor University, Tehran, Iran.

<sup>2</sup>University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran.

Accepted 7 August, 2012

**This study investigates whether there is a strong correlation between the speaking abilities of Iranian learners of English and their general proficiency as reported in placement tests. Thirty intermediate learners from three English conversation classes at an English language Institute in Tabriz participated in the study. A standardized 300 D test of Nelson English Test was used to determine their overall English language proficiency. In addition, an oral interview was conducted to test their speaking ability. The scoring criteria for assessing the oral interview were pronunciation, vocabulary, and fluency. The results obtained were used as indicators of learners' English proficiency levels and their oral abilities. A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to determine the strength of the correlation between the accuracy rates drawn from the Nelson Test and those from the oral interview. Data indicated that there was a statistically significant correlation between the two types of testing indicating that learners' general proficiency shown in the Nelson placement test could be easily achieved by evaluating their speaking ability.**

**Key words:** Speaking, general proficiency, oral interview, placement test, communicative competence.

## INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive and technological world, students need to develop effective skills in the English language in order to communicate ideas, concepts, scientific and technological findings successfully. One of the most important abilities to develop is the oral proficiency. Oral proficiency testing has become one of the most central topics in language testing and with the advent of communicative language teaching the role of speaking ability has become more important. According to Burns and Joyce (1997), speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning, which involves the receiving, processing, and production of information. It is a social activity because it is enacted for the purpose of communicating certain thoughts to the listener to make himself understood. The speaker must hold the listener's attention with ease and fluency. Thus, tests of speaking attempt to determine whether the examinees have the ability to communicate accurately and effectively in real-life situations.

Speaking ability can be tested indirectly and directly. Indirect measures such as talking about pictures, transforming statements, following commands, retelling, explaining, giving short talks, and role playing are performed through quasi-realistic activities, while direct tests are based on activities that aim to duplicate the setting and the operation of real-life circumstances. The most common direct measure of speaking is the oral interview test (Hughes, 2003).

As is true for other language skills, speaking plays important roles in language learning. Being aware of these roles will enable teachers to attend to them all and to see speaking as one important element in developing each language skill and conveying cultural knowledge (Chastain, 1988).

Speaking is used in many ways and for many reasons, therefore serving many purposes and different environments such as formal and informal settings. For this reason, effective speaking or fluency takes time and practice. This is an even harder task when the spoken language is not our native language. The process of learning to speak a second language is quite different from learning a first language; it involves the knowledge

\*Corresponding author. E-mail: [zshirin@yahoo.com](mailto:zshirin@yahoo.com).

and competence of many aspects in the targeted language. Anyone who wishes to speak a second language must learn grammar and vocabulary and master the pronunciation or auditory system. Also, a person has to think and plan what to say, in a way that his/her spoken words form a coherent stream of sentences, which are produced naturally and automatically to be considered fluent. An effective speaker opens and closes conversations properly and manages topic changes correctly. The speaker also understands other cultural and social aspects of the language such as turn taking and appropriate ways to address people in different circumstances. The correct use of language helps us maintain appropriate roles and relationships with others (Fulcher, 2003).

Researchers in the field of language teaching and testing put emphasis on the fundamental role that speaking plays in second language assessment. As Knight (1992) asserts the significant role that speaking skill plays in SLA learning and teaching has been frequently supported in oral language assessment research. Speaking skill is an important part of the curriculum in language teaching, and this makes it an important object of assessment as well.

Speaking skill can serve the improvement and enhancement of other language skills. It should be vital to test learner's speaking ability directly if it is important to recognize whether a learner can speak a second language or not. Speaking is an important section of the language syllabus in communicative language teaching. In a general English curriculum, speaking is a significant channel of communication. Therefore, oral proficiency testing has become one of the most central topics in language testing and with the advent of communicative language teaching the role of speaking ability has become more important (Nakamura, 1997).

Language proficiency as defined by Bachman (1990) is the ability in language use. Language proficiency is not a single unitary ability, but it is made up of several distinct but connected constructs as well as a general construct of language proficiency. It ranges from zero to native-like proficiency. The zero is not absolute because the second language learner as a speaker of at least another language, his first language, knows language and how it functions.

She also asserts that hardly ever do second language learners reach the complete competence in the language they are dealing with. Therefore one of the problems which is open to research is why and how to assess language proficiency. Whether a relationship exists between speaking ability and language proficiency is also of paramount importance.

### Current study

Oral proficiency testing has become one of the most central topics in language testing and with the advent of

communicative language teaching the role of speaking ability has become more important (Nakamura, 1997). The reason behind performing a research on the relationship between speaking and language proficiency is the focus of almost all language institutes in Iran on improving oral abilities, that is, listening and speaking. This emphasis directs one's mind to the point that whether speaking can be really an indicator of language proficiency or not. If the findings of the research reveal a strong relationship between speaking and language proficiency, then it may be logical to emphasize so much on oral abilities and if not, in a country like Iran where there is not much need to be able to communicate in English, it is preferred to put emphasis on other language skills like reading and listening comprehension, since they are urgently required for the learners in their higher education.

The present study was an attempt to probe whether the oral interview test can be utilized as a suitable, parallel choice for evaluating general proficiency in English or not. In other words, the purpose of the present research was to examine the correlation between speaking ability and general proficiency of Iranian EFL students, that is, the investigation of the correlation between the students' scores on the Oral Interview Test and their scores on the Nelson test.

To conduct this study from an empirical perspective, answer to the following major question was sought:

Is there any relationship between speaking and English language proficiency of Iranian EFL students?

## METHODOLOGY

### Participants

The participants of this study were 30 lower-intermediate female students studying English at an English Language Institute in Tabriz. They were selected based on the results of their performance on Standardized Proficiency Test of PET (See Appendix A) out of 55 students who took the test. The learners whose scores fell one SD above and below the mean were selected to take part in the study. This ensured that all the participants were homogeneous and in the intermediate level. The participants also were between the ages of 18 to 30 years old. When the data of the present study were collected, most of these learners had been learning English as Foreign Language for two years. None of them had ever been to an English speaking country and they had little opportunity to use English for communicative purposes outside their classrooms.

The participants started their learning English from the first semester of institute and at the end of each semester they were supposed to get 70 from 100 to be allowed to go to next semester. 47 students who were in Sixth semester (intermediate level) were invited and agreed to participate in PET test and actually competed to be selected for the present study. As students, they had six hours of English each week during which they practiced all four skills equally (that is, listening, speaking, reading, and writing).

In fact, they responded enthusiastically to the opportunity. They were told that the test and task they would complete were for the purposes of research but were not told the precise purpose and

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics.

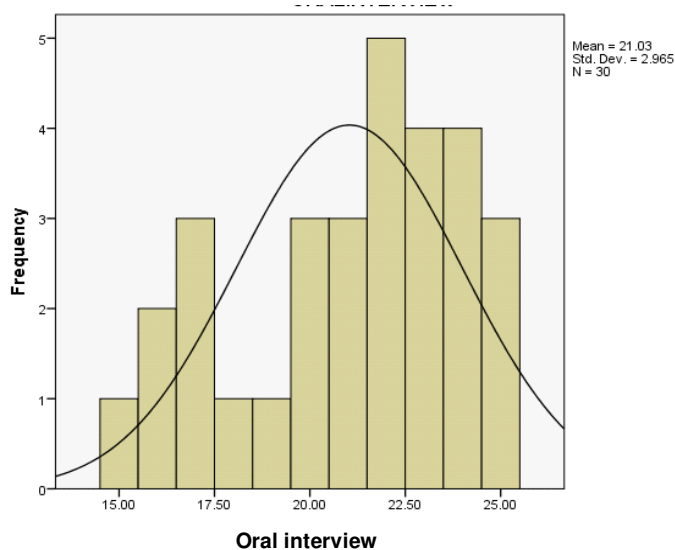
<b>Oral interview test</b>			
Oral interview test	N	Valid	30
		Missing	0
	Mean		22.6000
	Median		22.00
	Mode		22.00
	Std. Deviation		1.94049
	Variance		3.766
	Skewness		-0.55
	Std. Error of Skewness		0.43
	Normality Test for Skewness		-1.28
	Kurtosis		-0.80
	Std. Error of Kurtosis		0.83
	Normality Test for Kurtosis		-0.96
	Minimum		15
	Maximum		25
<hr/>			
Nelson test	N	Valid	30
		Missing	0
	Mean		41.7333
	Median		43.00
	Mode		43.00
	Std. Deviation		6.64848
	Variance		44.202
	Skewness		-0.75
	Std. Error of Skewness		0.43
	Normality Test for Skewness		-1.75
	Kurtosis		-0.61
	Std. Error of Kurtosis		0.83
	Normality Test for Kurtosis		-0.73
	Minimum		29
	Maximum		50

they were assured that the information collected would have a decisive effect in their semester final scoring.

### Instruments

The data collection instruments employed in the present study included the following:

1. A language proficiency test (PET) to homogenize the prospective students for the study. The PET employed in the study was a standard one released by Cambridge University Exam Center and was accounted as a standard test (Appendix A).
2. A standardized 300 D test of Nelson English tests was administered to the participants, so as to decide their overall English language proficiency (Appendix B). The subtests included reading comprehension, grammar and written expressions, and vocabulary (See Appendix B).
3. An oral interview test in which the interviewees were asked to answer, in 15 to 20 min, some general and personal questions, for example, about their homes, families, jobs, studies, interests, and a range of similar topic areas. The reliability of this speaking test was

**Figure 1.** Oral interview test.

calculated as 0.56 based on Kr-21 method which is an acceptable reliability index. Rating scale from the known source for the purpose of assessing students' oral proficiency skill was also used. The oral interview was tape recorded during each individual administration of the test.

### Procedure

As mentioned earlier, the purpose of this study was to find out the relationship between speaking and general proficiency of Iranian students. So, in order to achieve this goal, a placement test of Nelson Test was first administered to the participating students, so as to decide their overall English language proficiency. The subtests included reading comprehension, grammar and written expressions, and vocabulary. To test the speaking ability of the subjects, it was also arranged an interview. The grading criteria for assessing the interview were pronunciation, vocabulary, and fluency, to all of which equal points were assigned. After administrating the placement test and conducting the interview, the results of different parts of the test and the interview were used as an indicator of each student's estimated English language proficiency and speaking score respectively. Then the coefficient of correlation between two sets of scores was calculated.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collection tools comprising the Nelson test, and oral interview test were administered to the participants and the results were inputted to some statistical procedures to arrive at answer to the research question. The descriptive statistics of the administered tests are tabulated in Table 1.

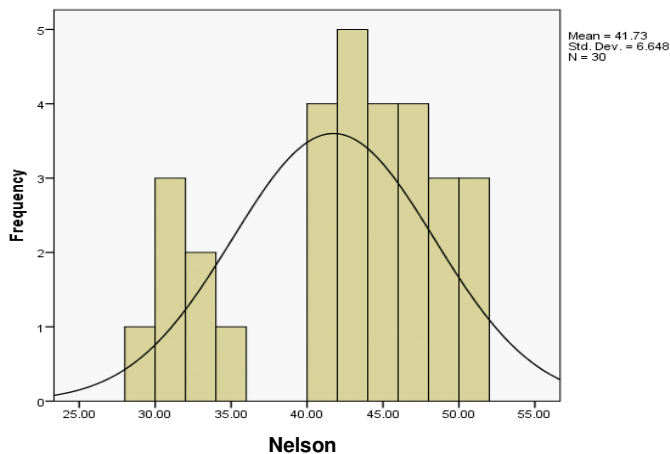
Figures 1 and 2 displays the distribution of the scores on the oral interview and Nelson tests. As the indices of normality indicate (Table 1), none of the figures show severe departures from a normal distribution.

Having collected the data pertaining to the participants'

**Table 2.** Correlation coefficient between Oral interview test result and Nelson test score.

Test		Oral interview test	Nelson test
OIT	Pearson Correlation	1	0.950**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.0	0.000
	N	30	30
Nelson test	Pearson Correlation	0.950**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.0
	N	30	30

\*\*Significant at 0.01 level.

**Figure 2.** Nelson test.

performance on the Nelson test, and the oral interview test, the researcher used the Pearson Product-moment formula to estimate the correlation coefficient between the obtained test scores. The result of correlational analysis is reported in Table 2.

The value for the correlation between the oral interview and Nelson tests is  $r=0.95$ , significant at  $P<0.01$ . The correlation coefficient between scores on the oral interview test and scores on the Nelson test is positive, significant and strong ( $r=0.950$ ;  $P<0.01$ ). Therefore, considering these results it could be suggested that the oral interview test could be used as an alternative to the Nelson test to indicate EFL students' general English proficiency. So, it is possible to make valid predictions of EFL students' general English proficiency by using the oral interview test.

The following Scatter plot is obtained by plotting the points that show the total students' scores on the oral interview test and their scores on the Nelson test. It shows that the data of the study appear to be approximated by a straight line. Thus, a linear relationship exists between the variables. In such a case, the students' scores on the oral interview test tend to increase as the scores on the Nelson test increases. This

correlation is considered as positive or direct correlation.

In case speaking ability is a true indicator of general language proficiency, then there may be little room for language institutes to assess learners on other language skills. English private institutes might employ the results of "speaking assessment" as a placement test, placing students at appropriate language levels. This indication may be helpful to the English Departments in redesigning some parts of the present curriculum, emphasizing on the speaking skill more than before. The material developers also might employ the findings of the research to develop tasks pertaining to enriching learners' speaking ability. This way the real needs and capabilities of the students would be focused on within the framework of the second language learning programs in advance. English teachers can be benefitted from the findings of the present research to design their lesson plan and process-based syllabuses the way that they could cover the true needs of the learners.

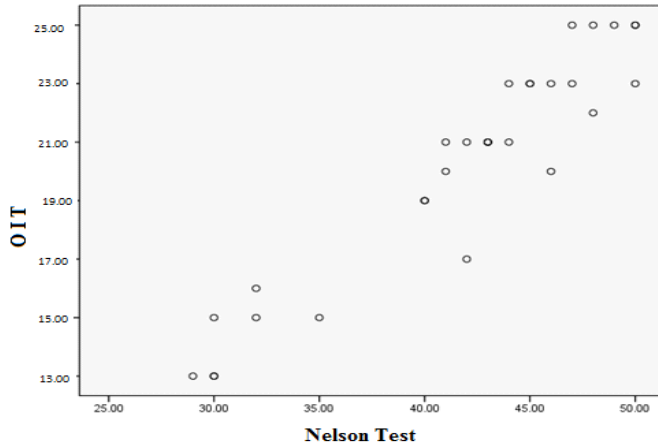
### Answer to the research question

A Pearson correlation is run to probe any significant relationship between the Oral Interview and the Nelson test of the Iranian EFL students. The R-observed value is 0.95 ( $P = 0.000 < 0.05$ ). This amount of R-value is higher than the critical value of 0.38 at 28 degrees of freedom. Based on these results it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between the Oral Interview and the Nelson test of the Iranian EFL students. Thus the null-hypothesis as there is no relationship between speaking and English language proficiency of the Iranian EFL students is rejected.

The results of this study are both statistically significant and meaningful. Based on the criteria developed by Cohen (1988; Cited from Filed: 2005) a Pearson R-value of 0.50 and above is considered as strong.

### Conclusion

The present study aimed at investigating the possibility of using speaking test as a predictive tool of students'



**Figure 3.** Scatter plot: Nelson test with Oral Interview Test. Positive relationship ( $r=0.95$ ,  $p<0.01$ ).

general English proficiency in a desired placement test. The results of the present study show that the oral interview test correlates positively and significantly with the Nelson test. The correlation coefficient between scores on the oral interview test and scores on the Nelson test is positive, significant and strong ( $r=0.950$ ;  $P<0.01$ ). Therefore, considering these results it could be suggested that the oral interview test could be used as an alternative to the Nelson test to indicate Iranian EFL students' general English proficiency in placement test.

Thus, speaking can be used to make valid predictions of the Iranian EFL students' general English proficiency. This is in accordance with the results reported in a number of previous studies and it could be claimed with confidence that these two measures reveal an interesting pattern of interrelationships, as can be seen in Figure 3.

#### REFERENCES

- Bachman L (1990). *Fundamental considerations in language testing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Burns A, Joyce H (1997). *Focus on Speaking*. Sydney: National Centre for English. Language Teaching and Research. Retrieved January 12, 2012, from [education.arts.unsw.edu.au/staff/anne-burns-1097.html](http://education.arts.unsw.edu.au/staff/anne-burns-1097.html)
- Chastain K (1988). *Developing second-language skills: Theory to practice* (3rd ed.). Chicago: Rand McNally College Publishing Company. pp. 270-271.
- Fulcher G (2003). *Testing second language speaking*. Great Britain: Pearson Education Limited. pp. 152-154.
- Hughes A (2003). *Testing for language teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Knight B (1992). *Assessing speaking skills: A workshop for teacher development*. *ELT. J.* 46(3):294-302.
- Nakamura Y (1997). *Development of an English speaking test-establishing validity through multi-trait multi-method (MTMM) Analysis*. *Educ. Stud.* 39:141-167.

## APPENDIXES

### Appendix A: Standardized proficiency test of PET

#### Reading part 1

Look in the text in each question (1-5). What does it say?

Drivers: reduce speed now  
Lorries turning onto this road 400 m ahead.  
Lorry drivers should slow down within the next 400 m  
Drivers can avoid slow traffic by turning onto another road in 400 m  
Drive more slowly as Lorries are joining the road 400 m ahead.

Only books already paid for can be taken into the bookshop café.  
Do not read our books while you are eating in the café  
Pay in the café for any books that you want to buy  
Do not take books which you haven't bought yet into the café

Weekend timetable: we apologize for delays to some trains, caused by essential engineering works.  
This weekend, some trains  
Will be canceled  
Will take a different route  
Will be late

Andrea went sightseeing in the city today after looking round the museum. Visited a wonderful castle on the way to the beach yesterday. Back Friday.  
Andrea went sightseeing after she went to the beach yesterday  
Andrea visited the museum before she went sightseeing  
Andrea went to the beach before she visited a castle

Kitchen product: tell us if our products ever fall below the quality you expect  
We will inform you if our kitchen products take longer to deliver than expected  
We are continuing to improve the quality of our kitchen products  
We need to know if there is something wrong with our kitchen products

#### Reading part 2

The people (6-10) all want to spend their holidays camping in the UK. Decide which campsite would be the most suitable for the following people.

##### *Campsites in the UK – top choices*

Valley camping: This campsite is in a peaceful location, within minute of a safe, sandy beach, and an hour from a pretty market town. Inland, there are castles and churches to visit. Valley camping has a swimming pool and supermarket on site.

Sea view Camping: Sea view has beaches. Caves and islands to explore a short distance away. There is a lake for fishing and children can feed the ducks. The swimming pool has exciting waterslides and under 5 s can use the nursery pool. Sea view has an ice cream café and juice bar on site.

Lake side Camping: This luxury campsite offers something for everyone.ans even has some fields for tents away from the main site which are less busy .there are countryside views, pony rides and a soccer camp for children. The lake offers canoe hire and water –skiing lessons, with a separate area for fishing an evening bus service goes to the nearby town with its many bars and restaurants.

The two fountains: this is an inexpensive riverside campsite a short walk from a busy ferry port. The town is lively during the day with pavement café and souvenir shops however there are few cultural attraction and little choice of evening entertainment.

Karl and Matthias are studying English at University. They want a cheap holiday swimming and sunbathing with some nightlife they want to stay away from busy town.

- a) Valley camping      b) sea view camping      c) Lake side      d) the tow fountains

Carlos and Ana would like a relaxing holiday at a quiet campsite with beautiful scenery. They are both good swimmer, and want to learn other water sports. They don't want to cook for themselves every day.

- a) Valley camping      b) sea view camping      c) Lake side      d) the tow fountains

Mike and Jackie are interested in visiting historic buildings. Their nine years old son Steven likes looking after animals and playing on the beach.

- a) Valley camping      b) sea view camping      c) Lake side      d) the tow fountains

Angela enjoys walking in the countryside. And wants to try climbing in a group. As she will be in the open air all day. She needs to buy food to take with her.

- a) Valley camping      b) sea view camping      c) Lake side      d) the tow fountains

The DuPont family wants a seaside camping where their children aged five and eight, can join in organized activities, while the parents go walking in the countryside.

- a) Valley camping      b) sea view camping      c) Lake side      d) the tow fountain

### Reading part 3

Read the text about collection postcards. For the following sentences (11-20) check yes if the sentence is correct or no if the sentence is incorrect.

#### ***Collecting picture postcards***

It is thought to be second only to stamp collecting as a collector's interest. And each year in August the biggest show of its kind worldwide takes place in London. Collecting postcards is a growing market, with fans all around the world, thousands of whom will be in England for this year's picture postcard show. There will be exhibition of a wide range of postcards and many will be on sale from the 120 UK and international traders who will also be there.

Postcard collecting is growing very fast says Harry Taylor , who collects postcards of ships and as chairman of the Postcard Traders' Association , has been one of the organizers of the London show for the last ten years. The price is one of the reasons why collectors are attracted to Postcards.

Postcards that appeared between 1900 and 1918 are the ones that attract the most attention. At that time, the cost of sending a letter or postcard was less than a penny. They emptied the boxes every hour in London and the post would sometimes be delivered seven times a day. Says Paul Marshall, who works at Asquith's Auctioneers, which holds three postcard sales a year. Picture postcards, but it was no until the 1890s that they were accepted by the Post Office .in 1902 Mr., Marshall says, the rules were changed again, allowing both message and address to be put on the same side. Before that, the message had to be written beside the picture.

Collection postcards are generally believed to be more popular than collecting stamps.

- a) Yes      b) No

Visitors will be able to buy postcards from 120 different traders at the picture postcard show.

- a) Yes      b) No

Harry Taylor has helped to run the picture postcard show for ten years.

- a) Yes      b) No

People choose to collect postcards partly because they are affordable.

- a) Yes      b) No





He did not like the ice  
 It made him feel healthier  
 He enjoyed swimming up and down

What do you think the writer would say to his friend?  
 My doctor has advised me not to go swimming there.  
 It's amazing how the pool stays clear of ice all winter,  
 I really enjoyed my early morning swim at the outdoor pool.  
 I was surprised at the number of people in the pool- they must be crazy.

**Reading part 5: read the text and choose the correct word**

**Jacque Swift**

Jacque swift has worked as journalist for newspapers, a music magazine and TV programmes. At the .....26....., she is writing for a music website .....27..... Started last month.I .....28..... to write for the Internet because this is where you find the very latest information about bands. I love the speed of the internet. I can write a piece in the morning and see it .....29..... On the website in the afternoon. The same story won't be in the newspapers.....30..... the next day. It may .....31..... up to six weeks before you see it in some magazine. I am a .....32..... Of a team. We have to work fast and mustn't make any .....33....., so it can be stressful. But we all get along .....34..... with each other. I find it really exciting to think that our work .....35..... read all round the world.

- |            |              |             |             |
|------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| a) period  | b) time      | c) moment   | d) date     |
| a) which   | b) what      | c) who      | d) when     |
| a) thought | b) persuaded | c) imagined | d) decided  |
| a) show    | b) appear    | c) attend   | d) display  |
| a) over    | b) during    | c) toward   | d) until    |
| a) take    | b) last      | c) stay     | d) remain   |
| a) worker  | b) colleague | c) member   | d) person   |
| a) faults  | b) mistakes  | c) accident | d) failures |
| a) good    | b) strongly  | c) well     | d) happy    |
| a) is      | b) will      | c) has      | d) does     |

**Writing part 1: answer the question below write 35 -45 words in the text.**

Dan, an American student who is staying with you, wants to go to the cinema tonight with you and your friends. Write a not to leave for Dan in your not you should

Tell Dan which cinema you are going to  
 Say what film you plan to see  
 Suggest what time you will meet Dan

**Writing part 2:**

This is a part of letter you receive from some English friends. Write a letter answering your friend question  
*For our next holiday, we want to visit your country. Is it best time to spend our time in a city or in the countryside? Which would you recommend and why?*

Listening part: you will hear a young man called Toby Wood talking on the radio about what it's like to work in the kitchen of a famous chef

Toby says that working in Oliver Rix's restaurant kitchen was  
 a) Very enjoyable                      b) too hard                                      c) very amusing

What was one of the Toby's problems in the kitchen?

- a) He made too much noise      b) he couldn't find anything      c) He prepared too many vegetables

What is important to Oliver about the biscuit?

- a) Learning to cook them      b) making them look good      c) checking they taste nice

Oliver becomes angry when

- a) The customers complain      b) his cook throw food away      c) Food isn't ready on time

What do the kitchen staffs say about Oliver?

- a) He should pay them more      b) he is wrong to shout at them      c) He teaches them many times

Oliver encourages his young cooks to

- a) Continue working for him      b) train with other chef      c) Learn from each other

Listening part 3: you will hear someone talking to passengers on a boat from England to France. For each Q, fill in the missing information in the numbered space.

Voyage from Portsmouth to St Malo

Time voyage takes .....42.....hours. Weather forecast .....43..... in emergency, go to longue .....44..... Food: lunch and dinner in Ocean Grill.....45..... and drinks in Captain's Café. At 3; 30 in children's play center, there's a .....46.....show. Buy stamps in.....47.....

Listening part 4: look at the 6 sentences for this part. You will hear a conversation between a girl, Charlotte, and her father about what she's going to study next year. Check yes or no answer

Charlotte wants to study Spanish because she thinks Spanish grammar is easy.

- a) Yes      b) No

Charlotte's grandmother was born in England.

- a) Yes      b) No

Charlotte's father is sorry he can't speak Chinese.

- a) Yes      b) No

Charlotte's father is keen on her study in China.

- a) Yes      b) No

Charlotte plans to go to China alone.

- a) Yes      b) No

Charlotte and her father agree that mother wants to visit China.

- a) Yes      b) No

## Appendix B: Standardized 300 D test of Nelson English Tests

### Choose the correct answer

My wife's mother was taken ill two days ago so my wife had to go and look after her. Before...1... my wife said, "I had better tell you where everything is or you ..2.. know what to do. But my train is leaving in half an hour's time and I must get to mother's house as soon as I ..3..." ".4..," I said. "I can look after myself."

Now I realize that I ..5.. for a map of the house. If I...6.., I would have found all the food I needed.

But when my wife ...7... back tomorrow, she won't have any dirty dishes to wash up because I ..8.. in restaurants since she went away.

- |                    |                  |                     |                      |
|--------------------|------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| a. she was leaving | b. that she left | c. leaving          | d. to leave          |
| a. shan't          | b. shouldn't     | c. wouldn't         | d. won't             |
| a. A can           | b. may           | c. could            | d. might             |
| a. Not to mind     | b. Don't worry   | c. Not to import    | d. Don't matter      |
| a. had to ask      | b. ought to ask  | c. must have asked  | d. should have asked |
| a. had             | b. have          | c. did              | d. would             |
| a. comes           | b. come          | c. shall come       | d. will come         |
| a. am eating       | b. eat           | c. have been eating | d. ate               |

**Choose the correct answer**

He's .....his sister.

- a. much taller than      b. much taller that      c. much more tall than      d. much more tall that

She had three sons, all.....became doctors.

- a. of which      b. which      c. of whom      d. who

You.....go now. It's getting late.

- a. had rather      b. would rather      c. would better      d. had better

I am going to spend a few days with some .....of mine, who live in the north of Scotland.

- a. relatives      b. familiars      c. neighbors      d. companies

The .....outside the house said "No Parking".

- a. advice      b. signal      c. label      d. notice

He has no..... of winning.

- a. occasion      b. luck      c. opportunity      d. chance

Those people over there are speaking a language I don't understand. They must be.....

- a. foreign      b. Strange      c. rare      d. outlandish

I didn't write it. That is not my.....on the cheque.

- a. mark      b. letter      c. firm      d. signature

The actors have to .....before they appear in front of the strong lights on television.

- a. cover up      b. paint up      c. make up      d. do up

It's a difficult problem but we must find the answer.....

- a. by one way or other      b. somehow or other      c. anyhow or other      d. anyway or other

I want .....immediately.

- a. that this work is made      b. this work made      c. that this work is done      d. work done

He's used to.....in public.

- a. be speaking      b. the speaking      c. speaking      d. speak

You can fly to London this evening .....you don't mind changing planes in Paris.

- a. provided      b. except      c. unless      d. so far as

It's ages.....him.

- a. that I don't see      b. that I didn't see      c. ago I saw      d. since I saw

He made me .....

- a. angry      b. be angry      c. to be angry      d. that I got angry

Do what you think is right, .....they say.

- a. however      b. whatever      c. whichever      d. for all

He arrived late, .....was annoying.

- a. what      b. that      c. which      d. the which

His job is.....yours.

- a. the same that      b. as      c. alike      d. similar to

He needs a .....

- a. few days' rest      b. few days' rest      c. little days' rest      d. little days rest

Do you know.....the repairs?

- a. to do      b. how to do      c. to make      d. how to make

We usually have fine weather..... summer.

- a. at      b. on      c. in      d. while

My flat is..... the third floor of the building.

- a. by      b. at      c. in      d. on

They live ..... the other side of the road.

- a. in      b. on      c. for      d. by

He isn't.....to reach the ceiling.

- a. so tall      b. as tall      c. enough tall      d. tall enough

They treated him.....a king when he won all that money.

- a. as      b. as being      c. like      d. like he was

I've told him several times but he .....doesn't understand.

- a. yet      b. already      c. longer      d. still

.....did you go in the car this morning?

- a. How far      b. How much far      c. How long      d. How much

He'd done that before,.....?

- a. wouldn't he      b. shouldn't he      c. hadn't he      d. didn't he

.....of them understood him.

- a. None      b. No one      c. Anyone      d. Someone

It's..... mountain in the world.

- a. the more high      b. the higher      c. the highest      d. the most high

I am going to a concert tomorrow evening. So .....

- a. I am      b. am I      c. I will      d. will I

That's the firm.....

- a. what we've been dealing with      b. we've been dealing with      c. we've been treating with  
d. we've been treating with

She let the children.....to play.

- a. going out      b. that they went out      c. to go out      d. go out

It was .....that he couldn't finish it alone.

- a. a so difficult work      b. a so difficult job      c. such a difficult job      d. such a difficult work

I ..... photographs.

- a. enjoy taking      b. to take      c. amuse taking      d. amuse to take

I .....me what happened.

- a. would like you tell      b. would like you to tell      c. would like you telling  
d. would like that you tell

45 ..... he wasn't hungry, he ate a big meal.

- a. Although      b. In spite      c. Unless      d. Even

In this series of questions, three words have the same sound but one does not. Choose the one that does not

Example:

- |            |           |           |          |
|------------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| a. go      | b. so     | c. show   | d. do    |
| a. cleared | b. feared | c. beard  | d. heard |
| a. shoes   | b. goes   | c. blows  | d. knows |
| a. wait    | b. state  | c. great  | d. heat  |
| a. among   | b. wrong  | c. rung   | d. sung  |
| a. broad   | b. load   | c. showed | d. road  |

#### Appendix C: Questions for oral interview

Phase	Question or Request
I. Warm-up (2-4 minutes)	Hello, How are you? What's your name? How do you spell that? How has your day been today?
II. Level check (2-8 minutes)	1. Where are you from? What town are you from? 2. How well can you speak English? 3. Why do you like speaking English? 4. Do you speak English outside the classroom? Where? 5. What are your strongest or weakest points in English? 6. Can you count up to twenty? 7. Could you spell your name for me? 8. Tell me a little about your family? 9. Can you tell me the time? 10. What were you doing at this same time yesterday? 11. What do you like about the English language? 12. What kind of strategies have you used to help you learn English? 13. What is your academic major or professional interest?

- 14. What are your personal hobbies (or interests)?
- 15. Do you like reading?
- 16. What book are you reading?
- 17. Do you like it? Why?
- 18. What do you do in your free time?
- 19. Do you have a part time job?
- 20. What do you (want to) do?
- 21. Why do you want to learn English?
- 22. Have you ever been to the United States? Where?
- 23. What other countries have you visited?
- 24. What country would you like to visit next and why?
- 25. Please describe \_\_\_\_\_ to me.

(Participant describes something that is familiar to them which he/she has provided in their answers e.g. special person: an aunt, best friend or a place: your home, country, a pet or a thing: house, car).

III. Probe  
(4-6 minutes)

- 26. What are your goals for learning English?
- 27. Tell me three things you did yesterday?
- 28. Describe your academic field to me. What do you like and dislike about it?
- 29. Do you have any questions for me?
- 30. Ask me any questions about my family, job or interests.
- 31. If you could interview the governor of Tabriz what would you ask him?
- 32. What is your opinion about the global warming of earth?
- 33. Describe someone you greatly respect, and tell me why you respect that person?
- 34. If you were governor of Tabriz, what would you like to change?
- 35. Imagine you are writing an article about a topic in a magazine or newspaper (for example, global warming, economics or effects of stress). Ask me some questions about it.

IV. Wind-down & closure  
(1-2 minutes)

Did you feel okay with this interview?  
 What are your plans for the rest of your day?  
 Do you have any questions you wish to ask me?  
 It was very interesting speaking with you. Thank you for your Participation.

Sources: Underhill (1987) Cambridge University Press; Brown (2004) Pearson Education, Inc.

### Appendix D: SOT Oral Interview Rating Skill

Participant# -----

Date-----

Language skill criteria# 1: Pronunciation

#### Component descriptor

#### Intermediate

Frequent inaccurate (nonnative) 1 pronunciation.  
 Has inaccurate pronunciation that can cause speaker to be occasionally unintelligible. But in general the speaker has the capability of being understood.

Easily and correctly responds simple, direct conversations on generally predictable topics (daily, personal and academics).

4 Speaker has accent and intonation.

Sources: ACTFL Guidelines, Rubistar.com and Douglas (2004) Pearson Education.

1. Native - like: Speech that resembles that of a highly articulate, well educated English speaker.
2. Intelligible: to correctly pronounce words; articulate or capable of being understood.

Participant# -----

Date-----

Language skill criteria# 2. Vocabulary

---

**Component descriptor**

---

**Intermediate**

---

Uses isolated words or sentence fragments; with some use or help of native language.

2 Creates language by combining learned elements such as words, phrases.

3 Has limited vocabulary that allows responding to simple, direct conversations on predictable topics (daily, personal, social & academics).

4 Uses sufficient vocabulary to communicate in some social, academic and personal contexts.

---

Sources: ACTFL Guidelines, Rubistar.com and Douglas (2004) Pearson Education.

1. Native - like: Speech that resembles that of a highly articulate, well educated English speaker.
2. Intelligible: to correctly pronounce words; articulate or capable of being understood.

Participant# -----

Date-----

Language skill criteria# 3: Fluency.

---

**Component descriptor**

---

**Intermediate**

---

1 Uses phrases or simple sentences with some use or help of native language.

2 Speaker needs help to understand interlocutor, get clarification or search for words or forms. Can handle with confidence but not facility most social conversations, including introductions and casual conversations. Sometimes unable to make a response.

3 Has limited fluency that allows responding to simple, direct conversations on generally predictable topics (daily, personal, social & academics).

4 Speech is effortless and smooth, but perceptively non-native in speed and evenness.

---

Sources: ACTFL Guidelines, Rubistar.com and Douglas (2004) Pearson Education.

**Appendix E. Weighting table**

Language skill	1	2	3	4	(A)
Pronunciation	0	1	2	2	
Vocabulary	4	8	12	16	
Fluency	2	4	6	8	
Total					

(Adams and Frith, 1979: 35-38).