The Hows of Creating Measurable and Meaningful Speaking Assessments

Accessing speaking skills in both small and large classes remains an elusive challenge for many teachers because of the complexity of the speech act itself. In many classes, oral testing (if done at all) is sometimes reduced to simple one-dimensional interviews.

Thus, if we view speaking as a multidimensional / multifaceted process, then we can begin to break down the components and analyze them more effectively. Since the speech act is almost never linear (i.e., speech is often not very organized from one point to the next), our assessment process must take this into account. Furthermore, communicative competence is made of various elements that should be considered in the assessment process including:

- linguistic competence: grammar, pronunciation
- sociolinguistic competence: language appropriate for the situation
- discourse competence: logical order
- functional competence: accomplishing the assigned task
- strategic competence: questions, circumlocution
- non-verbal competence: gestures, gaze, proxemics

Because of the multi-faceted nature of speaking, a multi-dimensional approach to assessing students’ skills can be taken in the form of alternative, on-going assessment, which is discussed in this presentation:

- classroom participation
- pronunciation tasks
- weekly digital voice journals using Google Voice and digital voice recorders
- language flashcards
- the use of audio/video content

Personal Web Site: Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab (www.esl-lab.com)