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Self- and Peer-Assessment of Speaking Skills: Students' Use of a B2 Level Assessment Grid

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INTRODUCTION

Speaking is the verbal use of a language in order to communicate with other people for several purposes (Fulcher, 2003: 23). As it is possible to observe, these words highlight the importance of speaking and its role in our society: we speak in order to communicate with other speakers and, in particular, to express ourselves, our needs and our knowledge of the world.

Therefore, the ability to speak in a foreign language, in this case in English, is surely the best example of the ability to use a foreign language. As a consequence, it is absolutely essential for every EFL student to be a good speaker, but, at the same time, it is important to note that speaking is "an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing and receiving and processing information" (Florez, 1999: 1). In this regard, even though the importance of speaking in English is clear, it is fundamental to consider that this communicative competence is very complex and it takes a long time to develop. Moreover, EFL students should know that there are different approaches to speaking and that, consequently, oral skills represent the combination of different linguistic aspects (i.e. 'grammar', 'vocabulary', 'content', 'pronunciation', 'fluency', 'coherence and cohesion', 'interaction') and subaspects of equal importance. Therefore, all these different aspects need to be considered with a view to testing oral skills in order to promote EFL students' autonomy through self- and peer-assessment.

Although a considerable amount of literature has been published on self- and peer-assessing of speaking skills, most of it tends not to provide EFL students with specific assessment grids for both self- and peer-assessment. In light of this, relying on previous studies, the dual aim of this dissertation is to emphasise the importance of self- and peer-assessment of speaking skills, as well as to show the effectiveness of students' use of a B2 level assessment grid in order to promote their autonomy in learning and, in particular, in improving their speaking skills.

As regards the first chapter, it will explore the fundamental concept of 'speaking' and provide an overview of the role of oral skills in EFL learners. Furthermore, it will take the main aspects of speaking skills into account and describe them. Last but not least, it will introduce terminology which will be necessary for the

understanding of this dissertation, such as 'linguistic competence', 'communicative competence', 'strategic competence', 'language knowledge', and 'meaning-making'.

The second chapter will be devoted to the testing of EFL learners' speaking skills and, in particular, it will analyse the role of self- and peer-assessment in promoting EFL learners' autonomy. First, a definition of 'test' will be provided in order to understand what the components of a test are and, subsequently, the concept of 'test usefulness' will be introduced with a view to considering the different qualities of a test and the 'washback effect'. Moreover, the distinction between 'norm-referenced' and 'criterion-referenced tests' will be noted, as well as the one between 'discrete-point' and 'integrative-testing' methods. At the same time, particular attention will be devoted to 'communicative language-testing' tasks and the different test types. Second, the concept of 'assessment' will be introduced and the different types of assessment will be defined. Third, the importance of assessing speaking skills will be emphasised taking account of the micro- and macroskills of oral production and presenting several types of speaking tests. Fourth, the notions of 'self-assessment' and 'peer-assessment' will be introduced considering some guidelines and possible tasks for these types of assessment. Finally, the importance of both autonomy and motivation in learning will be highlighted with a view to taking them into account especially with reference to self- and peer-assessment.

With reference to the third chapter, a comparison between the CEFR and my self- and peer-assessment grid (B2 level) on speaking skills will be made. First, a definition of the notion of CEFR will be provided; second, the CEFR self-assessment grid (B2 level) on speaking skills will be taken into account. Third, my self- and peer-assessment grid (B2 level) on speaking skills will be presented with a view to analysing the descriptors of the different aspects (i.e. 'grammar', 'vocabulary', 'content', 'pronunciation', 'fluency', 'coherence and cohesion', 'interaction') and the reason why they are of considerable importance. Finally, a comparison between the CEFR and my self- and peer-assessment grid will be drawn in order to reveal the similarities and the differences between the two.

The last chapter will be devoted to an in-depth analysis of my project on the use of my self- and peer-assessment grid (B2 level) on speaking skills. First, the project and its objectives will be described; second, the data collected will be reported. Finally, an analysis of the data will be conducted and some observations will be offered with a

view to considering the effectiveness of this type of project even for future studies on self- and peer-assessment of speaking skills.

CHAPTER 1: SPEAKING SKILLS IN EFL LEARNERS

This chapter will explore the fundamental concept of speaking and provide an overview of the role of speaking skills in EFL[1] learners. Furthermore, it will take the main aspects of speaking skills (i.e. grammar, vocabulary, content, pronunciation, fluency, coherence and cohesion, interaction) into account and describe them. Last but not least, it will introduce terminology which will be necessary for the understanding of this dissertation, such as 'linguistic competence', 'communicative competence', 'strategic competence', 'language knowledge', and 'meaning-making'.

1.1 What is speaking?

Speaking, writing, listening and reading are the four language skills studied in language teaching. Language generated by the learners, either spoken or written, is considered productive, whereas language directed at the learners, such as listening or reading, is defined receptive (Savignon, 1991). Moreover, another central feature of these skills is their modality, namely the medium of the language that can be oral or written. For this reason, speaking is the productive, oral skill, but it is important to consider that one skill cannot be performed without another and, consequently, it is impossible to speak in a conversation without listening as well. Therefore, learners' ability to listen to English effectively is extremely significant since good listening represents a considerable step towards good speaking.

Furthermore, speaking is the verbal use of a language in order to communicate with other people for several purposes (Fulcher, 2003: 23). In fact, as noted by Bailey and Nunan (2005: 2), the act of speaking is based on the production of systematic verbal utterances in order to convey the meaning. Moreover, according to Florez (1999: 1), speaking is "an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing and

[1] Throughout this dissertation, the abbreviations ESL and EFL will be considered synonyms. As defined by the *Oxford Learner's Dictionaries*, English as a Second Language (ESL) means that it is "a language that somebody learns to speak well and that they use for work or at school, but that is not the language they learned first". Conversely, according to the *Oxford Learner's Dictionaries*, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) refers to "the teaching of English to people for whom it is not the first language".

receiving and processing information". It is "often spontaneous, open-ended, and evolving" (ivi: 1-2), but sometimes it can be predictable.

At the same time, as revealed by Biber (1988) and Halliday (1989), speaking differs from writing in a number of aspects even though speech is language and, for this reason, it is governed by the same syntactic and semantic rules used in writing. When we speak, for example, our vocabulary is less formal than when we write, we use repairs, repetitions and more conjunctions instead of subordination. Moreover, it is crucial to consider that speech is organised in specific ways since it is characterised by openings and closings of topics, turn taking, the presence of questions-answers and different types of interaction (e.g. greetings, offers, invitations, apologies).

Thanks to Halliday's (1989: 43-46) contribution to the literature on spoken language, it is possible to sum up the main linguistic features of speaking (Flowerdew, 2013: 27-28):

- Phonological contractions and assimilations;
- Hesitations, false starts and filled pauses;
- Repetition;
- Sentence fragments rather than complete sentences;
- Structured according to prosodic features rather than clauses;
- High incidence of discourse markers (e.g. 'anyway', 'as I say', 'so', 'well') at the beginning or end of tone groups;
- Relatively frequent use of questions and imperatives;
- First- and second-person pronouns;
- Deixis (reference outside the text – this, that, here, there).

In addition, the language used in speaking can depend on the context of the talk and, in particular, on the formality/informality of the situation, the social status of each speaker and other contextual elements (Fulcher, 2003: 24). In particular, according to Hymes (1972), the social and situational context in which the talk happens influences the speech and, for this reason, he suggests a framework that forms the acronym SPEAKING with a view to summarising the different factors that could influence speech (Luoma, 2004: 24-25):

Situation: The physical (e.g. a classroom), temporal and cultural setting and the nature of the event (e.g. an oral test);

Participants: Speaker, interlocutor and audience (e.g. two examinees and an assessor);
Ends: Purposes, goals and outcomes of the event, if any (e.g. accomplishing the task may be the goal of the event);
Act sequence: The form, the content and sequential arrangements of the speech acts, in particular the content of what is said, the way it is said and the sequence of acts in the discourse;
Key: Tone, manner and spirit of act (e.g. formal, informal, impersonal, friendly, serious, supportive, humorous);
Instrumentalities: Channel or mode (e.g. spoken, written), but also forms and styles of speech (e.g. registers, dialects, accents and different varieties used);
Norms: Norms of interpretation and norms of interaction (e.g. right/responsibility to introduce a topic, ask questions, ask for clarification, express different points of view, explain, elaborate);
Genre: The kind of speech act or event (e.g. interview, instruction, joke, description, lecture, storytelling, presentation).

Furthermore, according to Bygate (1987), speaking is a real-time phenomenon since it has to be planned, created and articulated with remarkable speed that is influenced by different factors, such as the speakers' control over the structure of the language, their lexical range, their ability to use formulaic expressions (e.g. 'Thanks a lot', 'I know', 'excuse me') and their ability to monitor the effect of speech on the listener. Moreover, it is possible to notice that this type of process has become automatic and it does not involve conscious attention. As explained by Fulcher (2003: 24), automaticity in speaking is likely to be related to some factors: the complexity of the message communicated by the EFL learners, their familiarity with the topic, the speed at which the speech takes place, the degree of accuracy required in the context and the possibility of getting something wrong.

Speaking is also synonym for making choices due to the fact that, in this case, learners must choose how to express themselves and establish social relationships through speech. In addition, it is absolutely essential to make the right choices for the context, understanding what level of formality is required, how the speaker should address the other interlocutor and if interrupting is permitted. There are both internal and external choices; the first ones are referred to language and processing, whereas the

second ones are related to context and the interaction with other speakers. Of course, as emphasised by Fulcher (ivi: 25), the choices that EFL learners make are going to be influenced by their understanding, their personal and cognitive abilities, linguistic competence, speech situation and the person or people they are communicating with.

1.2 Speaking as a process

As reported by Luoma (2004: 103), the "speaking-specific model of reference" is Bygate's (1987: 50) model of speech as a process. This model is more individually than socially oriented and it considers learners' speech as a process. According to Bygate (ibid.), the features of spoken language result from two sets of conditions under which people speak: processing and reciprocity. With reference to processing, speaking requires simultaneous action since the words are being pronounced as they are being thought and as they are being understood. Moreover, speakers have to adapt to their listeners and adjust what they say according to their interlocutors' reactions considering reciprocity conditions.

Bygate (ibid.) sees speaking as a "speaker- internal process" and, for this reason, his first level of analysis consists of three processing stages: 'planning', 'selection' and 'production'. In addition, he distinguishes between 'knowledge', that is what enables learners to talk, and 'skill' representing the active component that is involved in oral interaction. Additionally, the British linguist highlights the importance of skill practice, but, at the same time, he recognises that both knowledge and skill are needed when learners speak. *Figure 1.1* summarises Bygate's (1987:50) model of speaking as a process.

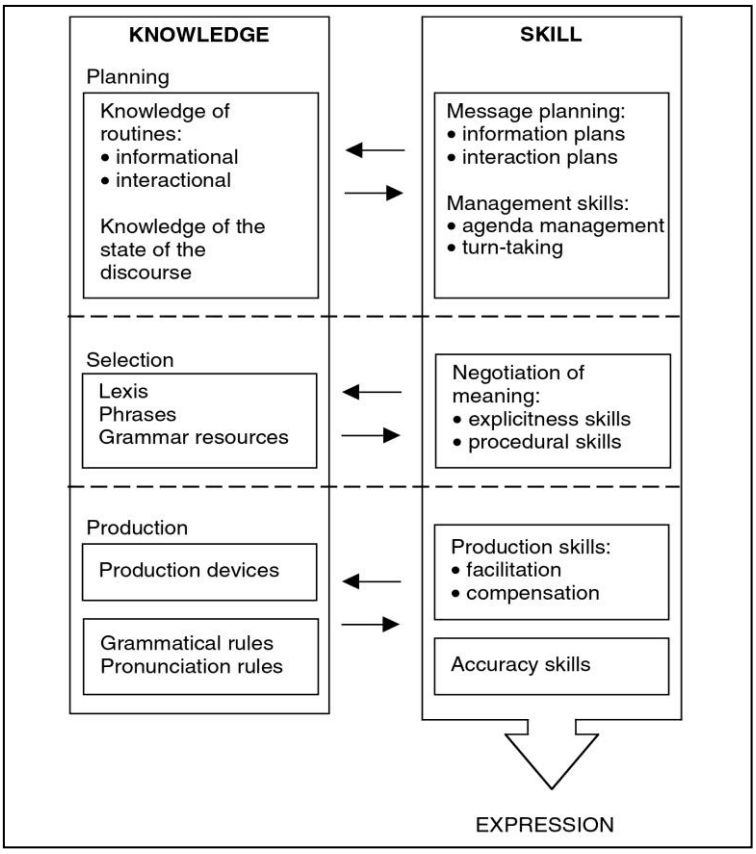


Figure 1.1: Bygate's model of speech as a process (1987: 50)

According to Bygate (ivi: 50-51), learners need to know and consider information and interaction routines, and they need to have an image of the ongoing conversation in their minds in order to be able to plan an interactive speaking situation. As described by Luoma (2004: 104), 'information routines' are frequent information structures (e.g. stories, comparisons, descriptions), whereas 'interaction routines' are typical turn structures that are specific to different contexts (e.g. service encounters, conferences, telephone conversations, lessons). The skills that speakers need in order to use this knowledge are called 'message planning skills' and 'management skills'. In the first case, the knowledge of routines permits learners to predict what might happen and pre-plan their speech, while, in the second case, management skills are divided into 'content-focused agenda management' and 'interaction-focused turn-taking'.

With reference to the selection stage, learners use their knowledge of lexis, phrases and grammar resources with a view to choosing how to formulate what they want to say. In this case, according to Bygate (1987: 50-51), the skills have to do with 'negotiation of meaning'. In particular, 'explicitness skills' permit learners to choose their

expressions in view of what they think the hearer may know, whereas 'procedural skills' help them consider that understanding takes place through emphasis, repetitions, or asking for clarification. Moreover, the combination of the planning and selection activities can be defined 'interactional skills' since they describe how speakers relate to other participants in conversation.

As explained by Luoma (2004: 105), production activities refer to the time-bound nature of speaking. Articulation and the speaker's knowledge of grammatical and pronunciation rules are typical of the knowledge required here, and their related skills are 'facilitation' and 'compensation'. Thanks to facilitation skills and, especially, the use of simplified structures, ellipsis, formulaic expressions (e.g. 'I'm very sorry', 'I don't know'), fillers (e.g. 'Okay', 'Actually', 'I mean') and hesitation devices, learners can facilitate their speech production. As regards compensation skills, speakers use them when something has gone wrong in their talk. Compensation skills are based on the use of self-correction, formulaic expressions, rephrasing, repetition via expansion or reduction and hesitation. Using these expressions speakers sound more fluent even if they might perceive that the speaking situation is quite challenging and they have to work a lot to perform effectively in it.

As stated by Bygate (1987), learners need special strategies with a view to compensating for gaps in their knowledge and skills despite the fact that the processing and reciprocity conditions of speaking are the same for first and second language speakers. Taking Faerch and Kasper's (1983) model into account, Bygate divides learner communication strategies into 'achievement' and 'reduction'. Learners, for example, might use achievement strategies in order to compensate for language gaps finding a substitute, guessing, paraphrasing, borrowing words and phrases from other languages they know or even engaging the listener in 'collaborative meaning-making' (Luoma, 2004: 106). At the same time, thanks to reduction strategies, speakers can change what they originally wanted to say according to their language resources. Therefore, these strategies make learner communication effective and their presence in learner performances shows that they are actively involved in meaning-making.

However, as recognised also by Bachman and Palmer (1996) in their model of language ability, Bygate identifies that strategies work on a different level from the

knowledge and skills required for speaking and, for this reason, strategies are not included in Bygate's model of speech as a process (see *Figure 1.1*).

1.3 The importance of speaking English

The English language plays a crucial role in our society since it permits us to communicate more effectively with people around the globe and to understand different cultures. Furthermore, English is a language closely involved in international business and associated with economic and social modernization and industrial development (Crystal, 2007: 31). The ability to speak in a foreign language, in this case in English, is surely the best example of the ability to use a foreign language. Moreover, through our spoken performance in English, we can express our personality, our thoughts and, as explained by Luoma (2004), our knowledge of the world. For this reason, the goal of many EFL learners is the act of communicating with other learners, their friends, their colleagues and even strangers.

Even though the importance of speaking in a foreign language is clear, it is fundamental to consider that this communicative competence is very complex and it takes a long time to develop. EFL learners, for example, must master the sound system of the English language and its grammar patterns, use appropriate vocabulary to accurately define the context of their utterance and the typical collocations (e.g. 'Have an experience' and not 'do/make an experience', 'heavy rain' instead of 'thick rain'). Moreover, according to the British linguist Graddol (1997), the English language is characterised by different varieties (e.g. British English, American English, Canadian English, Australian English, Indian English) and, for this reason, learners should be aware of this relevant feature in order to understand and speak correctly.

1.4 Different approaches to speaking

Until the 1960s, 'linguistic competence' (i.e. learners' control over the grammar, words, and sounds of the English language) was thought to be the basis for

communication. Then, between the 1970s and the 1980s, international developments in linguistics and pedagogy, but also sociolinguistic research (primarily in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the U.S.), changed our idea of language learning (Bailey and Nunan, 2005: 3). Furthermore, due to the substantial increase in the number of refugees and immigrants resettling in English-speaking countries, linguists, scholars and language teachers understood that linguistic competence was not enough to be able to speak English well and get along in society. After that, in the mid-1970s, some linguists started talking about 'communicative competence' in reaction to highly grammar-focused theories of language competence, and Savignon (1991: 264) described it as "the ability of language learners to interact with other speakers, to make meaning, as distinct from their ability to perform on discrete-point tests of grammatical knowledge". In addition, it is fundamental to observe that this type of competence emphasises EFL learners' use of language for communication and "requires an understanding of sociocultural contexts of language use" (ivi: 267).

The models of communicative competence that are commonly used in language education are usually based on Hymes's (1971: 3-24) theory of language use in social life. As revealed by the American linguist and sociolinguist, there are four relevant levels of analysis in order to understand regularities in speakers' use of language. The first level is devoted to what is possible with reference to the language code and this can be considered as the grammatical level. The second one is focused on what is feasible for a learner to produce or understand, taking account of the time and possible processing constraints. At the next level, the situational and social dimension of what is appropriate in different language-use contexts is introduced. Finally, thanks to the fourth level, it is possible to shape language use by what is actually done through habit and convention. Moreover, according to Hymes (1972: 269-293), each of the dimensions is controlled by a set of rules of use that native speakers learn, even though mainly subconsciously. At first his theory had been thought to analyse children's first language acquisition and development, but later it was applied even in second and foreign language contexts. Since this theory is based on a high level of abstraction, it was often considered through a more concrete theoretical model.

It is important to notice that there are two important models of communicative competence (see *Figure 1.2* and *Figure 1.3*) and both Canale and Swain's model (1980)

and Bachman's one (1990) include 'sociolinguistic competence' (i.e. the ability to use language appropriately in different contexts) which, in turn, involves 'register' (degrees of formality and informality), 'appropriate vocabulary', 'style shifting' (i.e. a style more or less formal) and 'politeness strategies'. Moreover, in Canale and Swain's model of communicative competence there is a further element and this is called 'strategic competence', namely the learner's ability to adopt language strategies to compensate for different gaps in skills and knowledge (Bailey and Nunan, 2005: 3). This means that, when a speaker does not know or remember a specific word, he/she can paraphrase in order to express the meaning of it. Besides sociolinguistic and strategic competence, in Bachman's model there is also 'discourse competence', the forth component of communicative competence, which describes "how sentence elements are tied together" and includes both 'cohesion' and 'coherence' (Lazaraton, 2001: 104). In particular, cohesion is 'the grammatical and/or lexical relationship between the different parts of a sentence' (Richards, Platt and Weber, 1985: 45), including references, repetitions and synonyms, whereas coherence is defined as "the relationships that link the meanings of utterance in a discourse" (ibid.) and it shows how a text is structured.

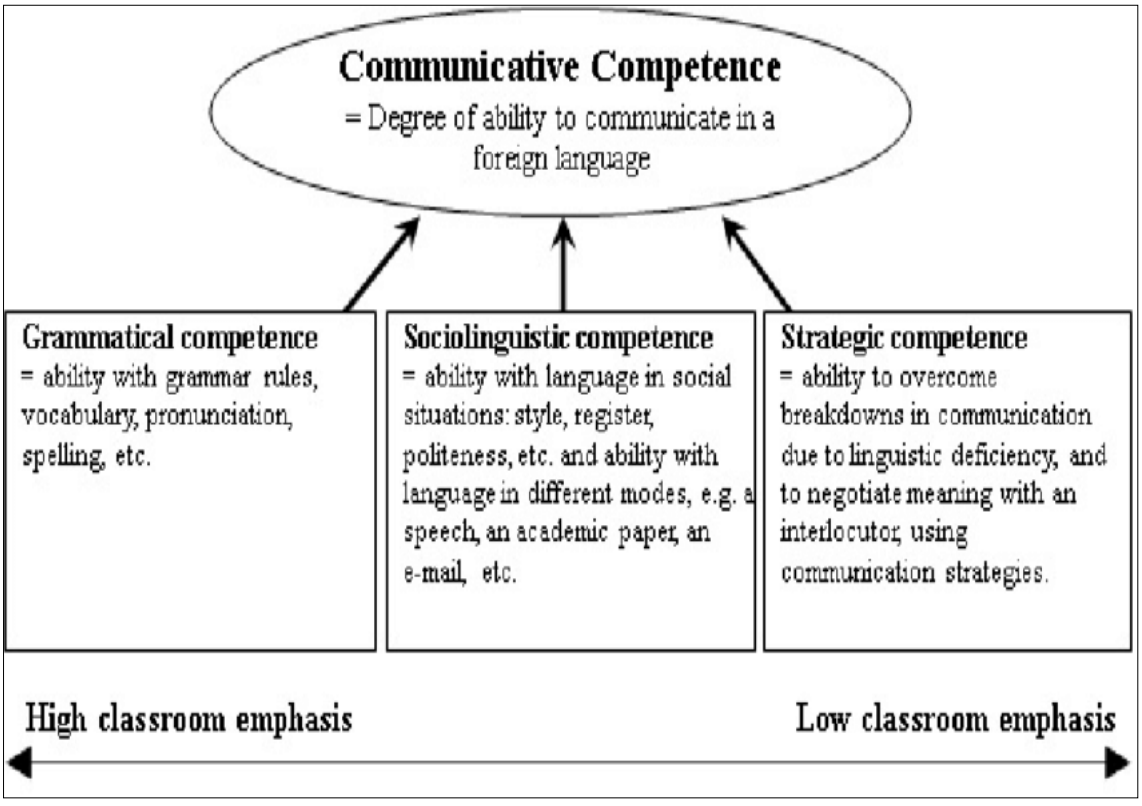


Figure 1.2: Canale and Swain's model of communicative competence (1980)

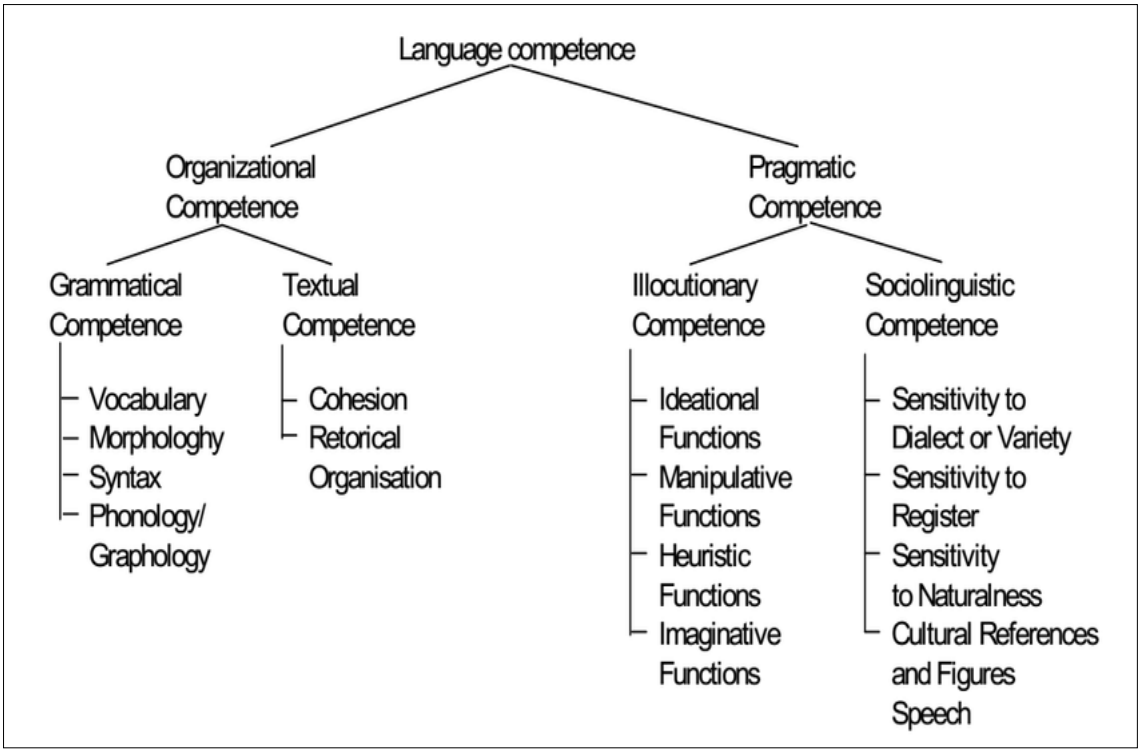


Figure 1.3: Bachman's model of Communicative Language Ability (1990)

As explained by Luoma (2004: 97-98), today the most frequently used communicative model in language testing is Bachman and Palmer's (1996: 63) model of language ability (see *Figure 1.4*), which is a further development of Bachman's (1990) Communicative Language Ability (CLA) model. According to Bachman and Palmer (1996), 'language use' is the interaction between language users and their context, and this phenomenon involves five components: 'language knowledge', 'topical knowledge', 'personal characteristics', 'strategic competence' and 'affective factors'. Language knowledge considers different kinds of knowledge about language in the speaker's memory. Topical knowledge refers to the user's knowledge about different topics, whereas personal characteristics are influenced by strategic competence, which indicates the speaker's metacognitive organisation and control of the situation, and affective factors, which include the user's emotional responses to the context. As illustrated in *Figure 1.4*, the 'individual language user' is in the centre of the image and it is represented by the second-largest, bold circle, but also the interaction between the individual and the context of language use is present (Luoma, 2004: 99).

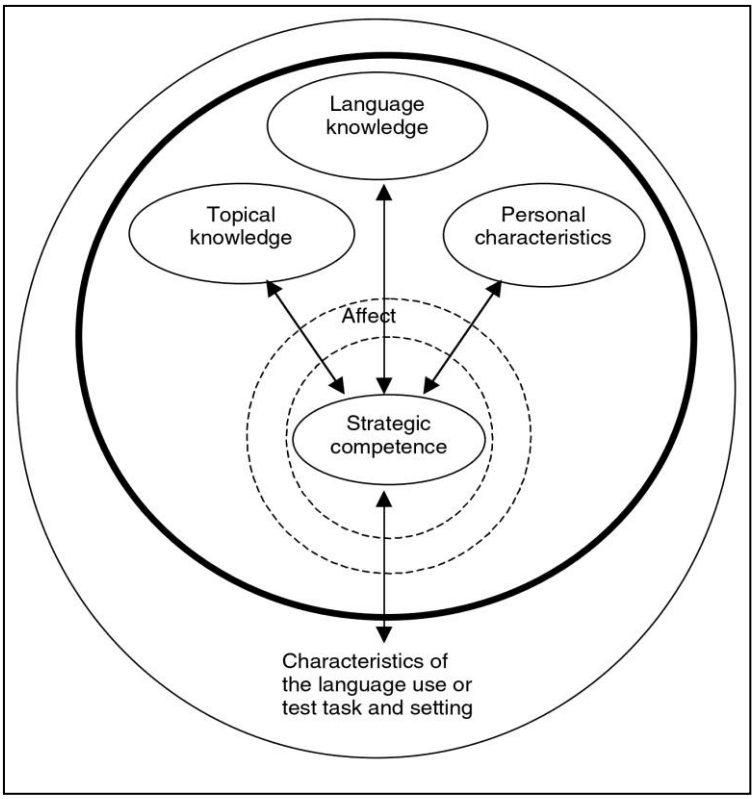


Figure 1.4: Bachman and Palmer's model of language ability (1996: 63)

Language knowledge and strategic competence are the two parts that constitute Bachman and Palmer's (1996) notion of 'language ability'. In particular, language knowledge is componential and static, whereas strategic competence is active and dynamic since it individuates key factors in the interactions. In addition, strategic competence has three metacognitive components, namely:

- 'goal setting' that indicates what the speaker is going to do;
- 'assessment' that aims at evaluating the situation and the speaker's resources to cope with it;
- 'planning' that is based on deciding how to use what the speaker has.

It is important to notice that Bachman and Palmer's (1996) analysis of language knowledge derives from previous theories about communicative competence and from a 'multitrait-multimethod study' (Bachman and Palmer, 1982: 449-465); in this case, the researchers used tasks to test grammatical, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence through a number of different test methods. Thanks to this study, they discovered that the results were more influenced by the competence tested than the test method applied. As observed by Bachman and Palmer (ibid.), 'grammatical competence' (i.e. syntax and

morphology) and 'pragmatic competence' (i.e. vocabulary, cohesion and coherence) were closely related, while 'sociolinguistic competence', that is sensitivity to register, cultural references and naturalness, was more independent. *Figure 1.5* shows how the components of language knowledge are organised.

Organisational knowledge
(how utterances or sentences and texts are organised)

Grammatical knowledge
(how individual utterances or sentences are organised)
Knowledge of vocabulary
Knowledge of syntax
Knowledge of phonology/graphology

Textual knowledge
(how utterances or sentences are organised to form texts)
Knowledge of cohesion
Knowledge of rhetorical or conversational organisation

Pragmatic knowledge
(how utterances or sentences and texts are related to the communicative goals of language users and to the features of the language-use setting)

Functional knowledge
(how utterances or sentences and texts are related to the communicative goals of language users)
Knowledge of ideational functions
Knowledge of manipulative functions
Knowledge of heuristic functions
Knowledge of imaginative functions

Sociolinguistic knowledge
(how utterances or sentences and texts are related to the features of the language-use setting)
Knowledge of dialects/varieties
Knowledge of registers
Knowledge of natural or idiomatic expressions
Knowledge of cultural references and figures of speech

Figure 1.5: Areas of language knowledge (Bachman and Palmer, 1996:68)

As described by Luoma (2004: 99-100), the two main categories of language knowledge are 'organisational knowledge', which focuses on how utterances, sentences and texts are organised, and 'pragmatic knowledge', which refers both to the relationship between the forms of language (i.e. utterances, sentences and texts) and the speaker's communicative goals and the setting of language use. Moreover, according to Bachman and Palmer (1996: 68), organisational knowledge comprises 'grammatical knowledge', that is vocabulary, syntax, phonology and graphology, as well as 'textual knowledge', which includes cohesion and rhetorical or conversational organisation. At the same

time, 'functional knowledge' refers to the set of functions that people achieve speaking; this component identifies ideational, manipulative, heuristic and imaginative functions of language use. According to Halliday's (1976) model, utterances, sentences and texts that have an ideational function express speakers' everyday experiences. In contrast, those that aim at influencing the world around them have a manipulative function and those with a heuristic function expand people's knowledge of the world. As regards the imaginative function, it consists of creative language use for aesthetic and humorous intentions. Finally, the 'sociolinguistic knowledge component' is centered on the relationship between language forms and the language-use context, in view of the language speaker's knowledge of dialects and varieties, registers, idioms, cultural references and figures of speech.

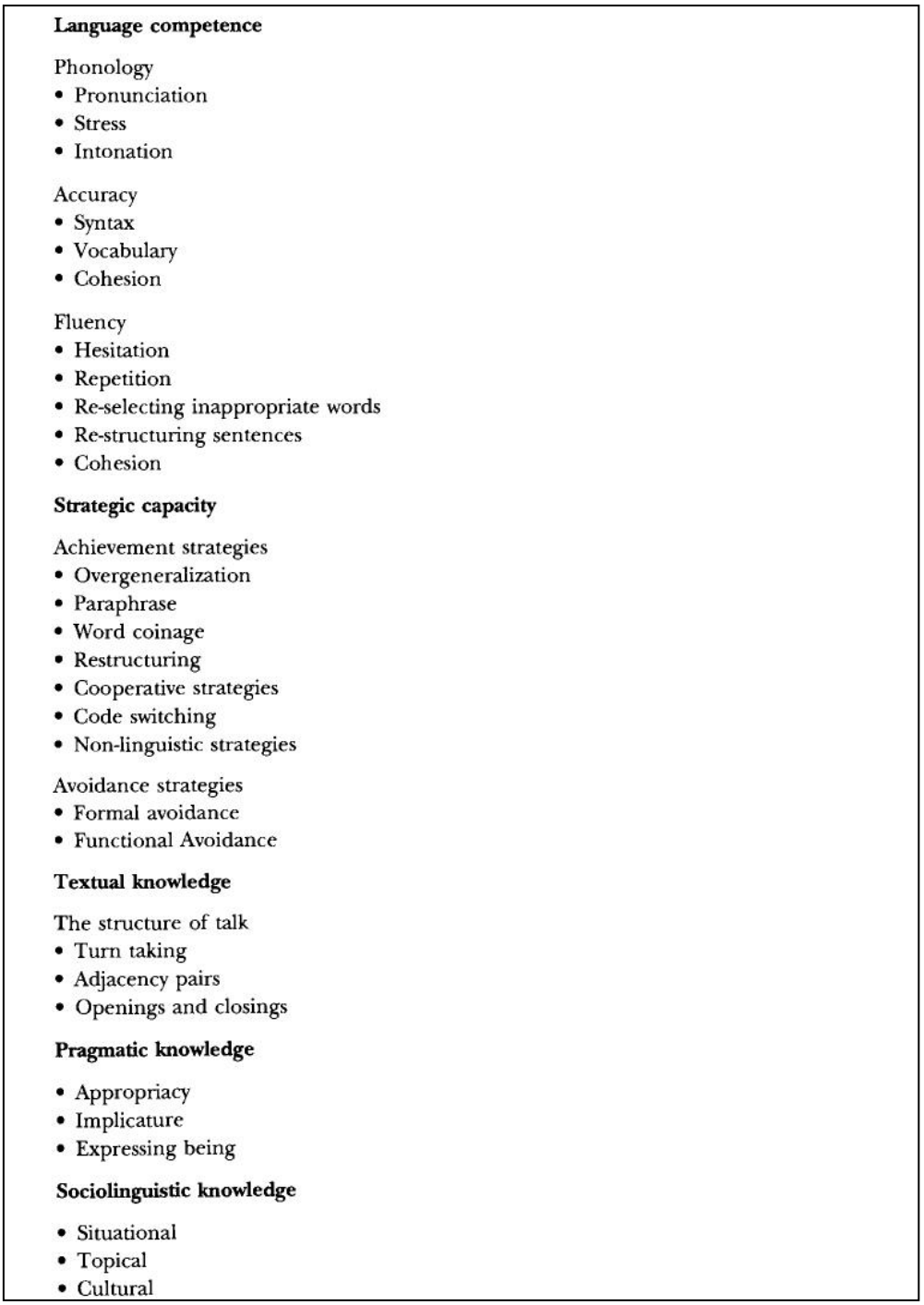
It is important to notice that, according to Bachman and Palmer (1996), speaking, writing, listening and reading are not skills and, consequently, they should be considered 'language use activities'. In addition, their idea of language knowledge refers to components of knowledge that are relevant to all modes of language use and, for this reason, the different types of knowledge and strategies presented in the language ability model could be appropriate for all kinds of speaking situations (Luoma, 2004: 101).

However, as underlined by Luoma (ibid.), componential models of communicative competence have some limitations that have to do with their emphasis on the language features of the language-use context and their static view of communication. As shown in *Figure 1.4*, language knowledge is only one component of language ability, but it is of considerable importance. As a result, the other knowledge types and their interactions in communication are likely to receive less emphasis since they happen inside the speaker's head and they are not based on direct observation.

1.5 The different aspects of speaking

Since oral skills are a combination of different linguistic aspects of equal importance, it is fundamental to analyse them separately with a view to understanding the complexities EFL learners face during their oral performance. The main aspects of speaking skills are grammar, vocabulary, content, pronunciation, fluency, coherence and

cohesion, and interaction, but, in some cases, there are also some subaspects that better define the several features of the speaking process. *Figure 1.6* shows a possible framework for describing the different aspects of oral skills, considering Bachman and Palmer's (1996) model.



Language competence

Phonology
- Pronunciation
- Stress
- Intonation

Accuracy
- Syntax
- Vocabulary
- Cohesion

Fluency
- Hesitation
- Repetition
- Re-selecting inappropriate words
- Re-structuring sentences
- Cohesion

Strategic capacity

Achievement strategies
- Overgeneralization
- Paraphrase
- Word coinage
- Restructuring
- Cooperative strategies
- Code switching
- Non-linguistic strategies

Avoidance strategies
- Formal avoidance
- Functional Avoidance

Textual knowledge

The structure of talk
- Turn taking
- Adjacency pairs
- Openings and closings

Pragmatic knowledge

- Appropriacy
- Implicature
- Expressing being

Sociolinguistic knowledge

- Situational
- Topical
- Cultural

Figure 1.6: A framework for describing the different aspects of oral skills (Fulcher, 2003: 48)

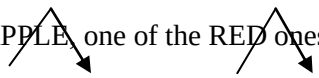
1.5.1 Pronunciation and intonation

As stated by Fulcher (2003: 25), "the outer manifestation of speech is sound". First, the speakers must organise their ideas and decide what they want to say; second, they must be able to articulate the words properly and, finally, create the physical sounds that are aimed at carrying meaning. Therefore, EFL learners need to know the English language if they want to speak it, they should understand the phonetic structure of the language considering the individual word and, at the same time, they need to focus on intonation.

With reference to 'word pronunciation', EFL learners usually find difficult to distinguish between sounds in English that do not exist in their native language or in other foreign languages they already know. In English, for example, learners could have problems differentiating the vowel sounds (e.g. the vowel sounds in the words 'alive' /əˈlaɪv/ and 'car' /kɑː(r)/) and the initial or final consonant (e.g. the initial consonants in the words 'July' /dʒuˈlaɪ/ and 'chain' /tʃeɪn/ and the final consonants in the words 'think' /θɪŋk/ and 'thing' /θɪŋ/). According to Fulcher (ibid.), it is important to notice that problems with pronunciation at the level of the word could distract the listener, but they do not lead to misunderstanding or miscommunication.

When levels above the word are considered, it is possible that opportunities for miscommunication increase since, at the level of utterances, stress has a layer of meaning in addition to the words. As explained by Brazil (1997), stress can be described as the increased volume on a syllable and, as a consequence, this syllable is perceived longer than the others. Moreover, stress normally occurs on the most meaningful words in an utterance. Imagine a situation in which a boy goes into a greengrocer's and asks for a red apple (see *Example 1*).

Example 1: Can I have an APPLE, one of the RED ones, please?



In this case, the stress falls upon the words 'apple' and 'red' since they are the words that carry the meaning. Moreover, as described by Fulcher (2003: 26), stressed syllables also carry information on tone (i.e. voice movement) and key (i.e. voice pitch) that are usually associated with intonation. In *Example 1*, for instance, a rise-fall tone is

used on both stressed words in order to emphasise that this is the important information and, in addition to this, it is new information for the listener.

If the greengrocer took a green apple, the boy would say to him/her as follows in *Example 2*:

Example 2: Sorry, I wanted a RED apple.

Here, as explained by Fulcher (ibid.), the stress falls on the word 'red' since it is the most meaningful word of the message. In *Example 2*, the word 'red' is pronounced in a slightly higher key than the rest of the words and, consequently, it indicates contrast. Moreover, 'red' is spoken with a falling tone with a view to underlying that it is new information for the listener. It is important to notice that if the boy used a mid key, that is using the same pitch as what has gone before, and a fall-rise tone in order to indicate information to be shared with the greengrocer, the utterance would indicate that the speaker is exasperated by the inability of the greengrocer to understand his request. Therefore, at this level of communication EFL learners might cause misunderstanding when they speak to other people, whereas it does not occur at the level of single word pronunciation.

1.5.2 Accuracy and fluency

When EFL learners speak, they need to balance accuracy and fluency since a proficient speaker is both fluent and accurate. In this context, 'accuracy' refers to the ability to speak correctly, selecting the proper words and expressions to convey the intended meaning, as well as using the grammatical patterns of the English language. 'Fluency', on the other hand, is "the capacity to speak fluidly, confidently, and at a rate consistent with the norms of the relevant native speech community; speaking rapidly and smoothly, but not necessarily grammatically" (Hammerly, 1991: 12). It is important to notice that, while learners are still developing their proficiency, fluency and accuracy often work against each other since applying the rules and searching for the right words can be laborious mental processes for them. Similarly, as observed by Bailey and Nunan

(2005: 5), sometimes EFL learners tend to speak quickly, without hesitating to apply the rules they have already learned, and, as a consequence, the number of errors they make in speaking could increase considerably.

As explained by Clahsen (1985), it is interesting to notice that the distinction between accuracy and fluency is also referred to as that between 'norm-oriented' and 'communicative-oriented' learners. In particular, the first expression refers to EFL learners who focus on grammatical rules and aim at speaking grammatically at the expense of fluency, whereas the second one refers to those EFL students who concentrate on speaking fluently, sacrificing accuracy. According to Fulcher (2003: 26-27), accuracy and fluency are usually seen as being at opposite ends of a continuum in which at extremes speech is considered as accurate and not fluent or, on the contrary, inaccurate and fluent.

As regards accuracy, ELF learners usually make errors when speaking and according to Brazil (1995: 11):

> Our 'experience of speaking', to use Halliday's term, is of something that begins, continues, and ends in time: it happens. As speakers, we know that causing it to happen is not always without its problems: our ability to put together what we want to say may not always be equal to the pressure to keep up with ourselves, so to speak, in the delivery of our message.

It is crucial to note that some of these errors could interfere with communication or even impede it, but others do not. As explained by James (1998), the technical term 'error gravity' is commonly used with a view to taking the seriousness of errors into account. In *Example 3* and *Example 4*, for instance, it is possible to consider two sentences in which there are some errors.

> *Example 3*: Mary play the piano every evening.
> *Example 4*: Every evening the piano play.

In *Example 3*, the speaker does not add the -s morpheme to the verb 'play', typical feature of the third person singular of the present simple. In this case, this is defined as an error of agreement between the subject (i.e. 'Mary') and the verb (i.e. 'play'). The listener could notice this error, but it is unlikely to impede comprehension since it is clear who plays the piano every evening and, for this reason, the gravity of the

error seems to be low. On the contrary, in *Example 4* there are several errors that can cause misunderstanding. Firstly, the sentence has no subject and this is something unacceptable since in English the subject is always required. Secondly, the verb 'play' is at the end of the sentence, after the object 'the piano', although in English the verb must come before the object of the sentence. However, the movement of 'every evening' to the beginning of the sentence is not an error as phrases like this, namely 'adjuncts', have more freedom of movement in English. As demonstrated in *Example 4*, errors of accuracy like these seriously interfere with communication since they break the rules of word order and remove information that is fundamental for understanding. In this case, the gravity of the errors is very high.

According to Fulcher (1993), when EFL learners speak, they usually make errors concerning word order and omission, pronouns and relative clauses, tense, and prepositions. However, errors are a sign of learning and, consequently, they should not always be considered as negative because they may indicate that a learner is at a more advanced stage of learning the English language.

As regards errors in word order and omission, this type of errors interferes with communication in a considerable degree. In English, for example, the sentence 'Every evening the piano play' is very difficult to understand since it does not respect the typical word order. Moreover, as noted by Fulcher (2003: 28), it is important to observe that in English the omission of the subject causes a problem with cohesion and, as a consequence, the listener does not understand who the speaker is talking about. Therefore, word order and omission errors are always high gravity even though EFL learners usually correct these errors very early in their learning process.

At the same time, the incorrect use of pronouns or relative pronouns can cause misunderstanding between the speaker and the listener, but this type of errors are not as problematic as word order ones. In *Example 5*, for instance, it is possible to observe that sometimes learners do not mark gender correctly.

Example 5: My friend John is wearing a green jumper. I like her jumper.

Example 5 shows an error of reference that it is likely to cause a problem with cohesion, as the speaker uses the femenine possessive determiner 'her' instead of the

masculine one 'his' in order to refer to the male friend's jumper. In addition, it is fundamental to be aware of the fact that learners with little command of the English language usually tend to avoid complex sentence structures, in particular the use of relative clauses.

According to Fulcher (2003: 29), tense selection seems to be the most common problem in speech production with reference to the English language. However, the use of an inappropriate tense (e.g. the use of the present simple instead of the past simple with a view to talking about an event in the past) does not impede the listener's comprehension of what the speaker says.

Example 6: Yesterday I visit my grandparents.

In *Example 6*, the EFL learner uses a present tense instead of a past tense, but this type of error is considered of low gravity as it does not interfere with communication.

With reference to prepositions, mis-selection of them is very common in English (ibid.). In this case, the listener is able to understand what the speaker means and, for this reason, such errors are not considered to be very serious. In *Example 7*, for instance, the EFL learner uses a wrong preposition (i.e. 'on' instead of the preposition 'about'), but the meaning of the sentence is clear.

Example 7: I'm thinking on staying at home tonight.

As explained by Fulcher (ivi; 30), "speech is sometimes described as disconnected or having incorrect rhythm". Moreover, he emphasises that the concepts of accuracy and fluency respond to the notion of automaticity and, therefore, an EFL learner can be considered fluent when his/her speech becomes more automatic. However, fluency seems to be a more complex concept than accuracy and, for this reason, it is quite difficult to find clear speech phenomena that can be markers of fluency and disfluency. According to Fulcher (1996), the following phenomena could be considered with a view to defining fluency or lack of it:

- Presence of hesitations consisting of unfilled pauses (i.e. silence) or filled ones (e.g. 'erm');
- Repetition of syllables and/or words;
- Change of words;
- Correction of cohesive devices, in particular pronouns;
- The beginning of a sentence could predict what comes next, but, at the same time, the speaker may decide to change the structure of the utterance.

Moreover, it is essential to note that all speakers, even native ones, usually pause as they speak with a view to planning what they want to say. Finally, as stated by Fulcher (2003: 31), both accuracy and fluency are connected with automaticity of performance and the influence that it has on the listener's ability to understand the utterance. For this reason, the quality of EFL learners' speech must be considered in terms of the gravity of the errors made or their distance from forms and sounds of the English language.

1.5.3 Strategies for speaking: Achievement and avoidance strategies

According to Canale and Swain (1980: 31), strategic competence means coping if a speaker has difficulty in communicating due to a deficiency in grammar, vocabulary or sociolinguistic competence. As defined by Bachman (1990: 106), strategic competence is "a general ability, which enables an individual to make the most effective use of available abilities to carry out a given task" and, as a result, it is considered more than a way of coping with problems since it represents "a more general cognitive capacity to manage communication" (Fulcher, 2003: 31). As a consequence, it is crucial to understand which practical approach should be used to define strategy and, according to some linguists (Faerch and Kasper, 1983; Yule and Tarone, 1997), this approach is the 'analysis of speech'.

EFL learners, for example, could use 'achievement strategies' when they want to express themselves but they find it difficult as they lack the knowledge of grammar or vocabulary in order to communicate. Therefore, EFL learners may overcome their lack of knowledge adopting the following achievement strategies (Fulcher, 2003: 32):

- Overgeneralisation/morphological creativity: If learners need to use expressions and lexical items that they do not control, they will probably transfer knowledge of the English language system onto these items and expressions. In this case, as observed by Fulcher (ibid.), if a learner knows that the morpheme /-ed/ is a past tense marker and he/she wants to use the past tense of the verb 'say', he/she will say 'sayed' instead of 'said';
- Approximation: If learners do not know a specific term, they will use a more general word (e.g. using 'book' for 'handbook') or exemplification (e.g. 'parents' and 'grandparents' for 'relatives');
- Paraphrase: If a learner cannot remember a lexical item immediately, he/she can paraphrase using a near synonym for the word needed. At the same time, the learner could use circumlocution to express himself/herself;
- Words coinage: Sometimes learners invent a new word since they do not know the word needed (e.g. 'theoric' for 'theorist');
- Restructuring: If a learner says something and realises that his/her explanation is not clear enough, he/she begins again in order to communicate the same message with different words and expressions;
- Cooperative strategies: In face-to-face communication, a learner who is having difficulty in communicating could be helped by the listener;
- Code switching: If a speaker is speaking to a person with whom he/she has a language in common, a lexical item taken from the common language could be used to overcome his/her communication difficulty;
- Non-linguistic strategies: In most cases, speakers usually share the same physical environment and, as a consequence, they can combine gestures and mime with verbal communication in order to express themselves.

However, in contrast to achievement strategies, 'avoidance strategies' are usually used by EFL learners who want to avoid using lexical items or grammatical structures that they cannot control. As a consequence, as observed by Fulcher (ibid.), these speakers communicate only those messages that they are able to convey thanks to the linguistic means that they already have. Moreover, it is important to note that avoidance strategies are classified into 'formal avoidance' and 'functional avoidance'. As regards formal avoidance, if learners do not use part of the language system, it tends to be

difficult to detect. According to Fulcher (2003: 33), for instance, if a learner does not use the passive voice, this means that he/she overuses the active voice since the absence of something does not always mean that is really avoiding it. On the other hand, functional avoidance is more serious than formal avoidance as it can determine 'topic avoidance' and even 'abandoning conversations'. There is also a less serious form of avoidance, namely 'semantic avoidance', in which a learner continues with the topic, but he/she tends to avoid unknown lexis and overuses delexicalised words (e.g. 'thing') that give a sense of vagueness.

1.5.4 Structuring speech: Turn taking, adjacency pairs, openings and closings

As explained by Morrow (1979) and Fulcher (2000), speaking is a highly structured activity and participants usually take turns in order to speak. Moreover, according to Anderson and Lynch (1988), 'interactional competence' defines how speech is structured and, in particular, its sequential organisation, turn taking and repair.

Although sometimes EFL learners experience the difficulty of gaining and holding the floor (Flowerdew, 2013: 119), in spoken interaction they usually gets the chance to speak and, therefore, it is interesting to understand how participants know when they are speakers and when they are supposed to become listeners. As revealed by Brazil (1997), for example, a speaking turn normally ends with a 'transition relevance place' (TRP) and these places can be easily recognised since speaking is usually structured in 'adjacency pairs', namely pairs of contributions that occur adjacent to each other. Furthermore, even syntax, intonation and pragmatics can indicate a change in speaking turn (Brazil, 1995). As explained by Flowerdew (2013: 119), turns are made up of turn construction units (TCUs) and these consist of "various linguistic units which include sentential, clausal, phrasal and lexical constructions". Moreover, a turn may be considered complete only if it represents a syntactically complete unit (i.e. a sentence, a clause, a phrase or a lexical item), whereas a TCU may be recognised as complete according to its intonation or if it represents a recognisable pragmatic or social action (Flowerdew, 2013: 119).

The person who is the current speaker in a conversation assumes a great deal of power and, if he/she wants, he/she can pass on the turn asking a question and specifying who the next speaker is. If the speaker does not choose the next speaker, any other participant could start speaking. Listeners, on the contrary, are able to notice transition relevance places and, therefore, they can observe if a new speaker starts speaking before that the previous one has finished. Furthermore, sometimes small overlaps between speakers may occur and these underline the listener's ability to predict the transition relevance place (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974). Moreover, according to Fulcher (2003: 35), it is important to note that if two people start speaking after a turn, it is usually the person who starts first who continues the conversation and, for this reason, it is possible to affirm that there are some rules that speakers observe when taking turns. As explained by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974: 13), the following rules for the allocation of turns follow the 'principle of transition relevance':

1. At the transition–relevance place of a turn:

A. where the next speaker is selected by the current speaker:
the current speaker must stop talking and the next speaker must take over.

B. Where the next speaker is not selected by the current speaker:
any speaker may, but need not, self-select, with first speaker acquiring rights to a turn.

C. Where the next speaker is not selected by the current speaker:
the current speaker may, but need not, continue if no other speaker self-selects.

2. Whichever choice has been made, then 1. A–C come into operation again.

These rules are naturally acquired and automatically employed when interaction takes place. Furthermore, according to Hutchby & Wooffitt (2008: 51), they can be applied to different contexts, topics, number of participants, settings and sets of relationships.

However, as reported by Buck (2001), an EFL learner must be a good listener if he/she wants to become also a good speaker as listening permits him/her to decide when

it is time to speak. In addition, it is not certain that a learner who is able to speak well in his/her first language can speak well also in English and, at the same time, it is crucial to consider that the turn-taking strategies and conventions typical of Anglo-American societies are not the same in all societies.

Adjacency pairs are considered to be the most important units of conversational structure (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973) and, thanks to them, it is possible to understand how turn taking works. In particular, an adjacency pair consists of a first and a second part produced by two speakers. Moreover, it is fundamental to observe that the first part must come before the second one. As reported by Flowerdew (2013: 121), the most common examples of adjacency pairs are:

accusation–denial/confession;
announcement–response;
apology–acceptance/refusal;
assertion–agreement/dissent;
boast–appreciation/derision;
challenge–response;
closing–closing;
complaint–apology/denial;
compliment–acceptance/rejection;
greeting–greeting;
insult–response;
invitation–acceptance/refusal;
offer–acceptance/refusal;
question–answer;
request–acceptance/rejection;
summons–answer; threat–response.

Even though the first part is usually followed by the second, a speaker could select different second parts and, in addition to this, an adjacency pair can be separated by an inserted sequence called 'embedded' (Fulcher, 2003: 36-37). In this case, the embedded adjacency pairs in the conversation are considered as a preliminary to the introduction of the second part and if a second part does not exist, there must be a reason for its absence. As a consequence, listeners must be able to recognise common utterances as questions or requests with a view to understanding when transition relevance places occur and, at the same time, they must be able to respond with a second part of an adjacency pair or introducing an embedded sequence.

As regards openings and closings, these are present in all conversations and, in addition, between them there are moves from a topic to another. Openings of

conversations are usually fairly straightforward, whereas closings tend to be preceded by expressions called 'pre-closings' (e.g. 'okay', 'well', 'so') that, with falling intonation, indicate that a closing is coming next (ivi: 38). In particular, these markers give the next speakers some opportunity in order to change topic if they want. According to Levinson (1983: 316-317), the typical ending to a conversation consists of:

Pre-closing I
Checking
Pre-closing II
Closing

EFL learners must be aware of how they can end topics and conversations, but it is important to consider that sometimes, in situations of unequal social power, a speaker could end a conversation without following the normal closing process suggested by Levinson (Fulcher, 2003: 38).

1.5.5 Speaking in context: Pragmatic appropriacy, implicature and expressing being

As stated by Hymes (1972), "there are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless" and, in addition, "rules of speech acts enter as a controlling factor for linguistic form as a whole". Therefore, speaking is much more than the knowledge of the grammar or the phonetics of a language since, without the rules of speaking, EFL learners may appear rude (Fulcher, 2003: 39). Moreover, according to Wolfson (1983), it is important to observe that these rules are usually taken into account under the term 'appropriacy'.

Appropriacy describes how speakers use language following the rules of which they are hardly aware. Furthermore, on the one hand, native speakers usually do not break the rules when they communicate with other people, but, on the other hand, non-native speakers could not understand that something is inappropriate (Fulcher, 2003: 39). As explained by Thomas (2003), the rules of speaking are conventions that must be followed since a pragmatic error may have serious consequences and cause misunderstanding.

According to Grice (1975), 'conversational implicature' refers to the moment in which speakers imply something without saying it and, in particular, EFL learners might imply something that they do not want to communicate. Moreover, following the 'politeness principle' (Leech, 1983: 79-103), each speaker should "minimize the expression of impolite beliefs" (e.g. utterances like 'Do it now!', 'Can't you open the window?'). According to Leech (ibid.), indirect expressions sound more polite since they allow the hearer not to do what is requested. As regards indirect requests, they seem to be more tentative and, in general, indirectness maintains more benefit to the hearer, rather than a cost. In addition, when speakers want to make the option of refusing a request, they tend to use 'negative politeness', namely a device to avoid conflict (Fulcher, 2003: 40).

As speakers of a language usually do things with words, EFL learners must know how to do things with words in English (Fulcher, 2003: 42). Austin's (1962) 'speech act theory' describes how speakers do things with words and, in addition, he defines 'performative sentences' as those sentences that perform actions (ex. 'I do' in a wedding ceremony). At the same time, it is important to consider that different languages perform similar speech acts differently.

Furthermore, social contexts must be taken into account with a view to explaining why people speak the way they do in specific situations. According to Labov and Fanshel (1977), for instance, the social context of speech plays a crucial role in understanding how to be things with words. Moreover, speakers always adopt and play roles when they use the language and, for this reason, it is possible to affirm that speakers are things through words since they can define their role and status using speech. Nevertheless, when EFL learners speak in English, they are different people as they communicate in a different language than their native one.

1.5.6 Interactional competence

'Interactional competence' refers to how speakers organise speech, its sequential organisation and turn-taking rules (Fulcher, 2003: 44). According to Markee (2000: 54), the concept of interactional competence coincides with Canale and Swain's (1880) and

Bachman's (1990) sociolinguistic notions of communicative competence. Moreover, as explained by McNamara (1997: 447), there is both a psychological and a social/behavioural interaction since interaction is considered to be an ability within an individual. At the same time, as observed in social/behavioural interaction, speakers collaborate and help each other in order to convey the message properly.

As seen in this chapter, speaking is a complex process and, as a consequence, oral skills represent the combination of different linguistic aspects of equal importance for EFL learners. For this reason, in the next chapter, these aspects will be considered with a view to testing oral skills in order to promote EFL learners' autonomy through self- and peer-assessment.

CHAPTER 2: TESTING SPEAKING SKILLS TO PROMOTE EFL LEARNERS' AUTONOMY THROUGH SELF- AND PEER-ASSESSMENT

This chapter will be devoted to the testing of EFL learners' speaking skills and, in particular, it will analyse the role of self- and peer-assessment in promoting EFL learners' autonomy. First, a definition of 'test' will be provided in order to understand what the components of a test are and, subsequently, the concept of 'test usefulness' will be introduced with a view to considering the different qualities of a test and the 'washback effect'. Moreover, the distinction between 'norm-referenced' and 'criterion-referenced tests' will be noted, as well as the one between 'discrete-point' and 'integrative-testing' methods. At the same time, particular attention will be devoted to 'communicative language-testing' tasks and the different test types. Second, the concept of 'assessment' will be introduced and the different types of assessment will be defined (i.e. informal/formal, formative/summative, and traditional/alternative assessment). Third, the importance of assessing speaking skills will be emphasised taking account of the micro- and macroskills of oral production and presenting several types of speaking tests. Fourth, the notions of 'self-assessment' and 'peer-assessment' will be introduced considering some guidelines and possible tasks for these types of assessment. Finally, the importance of both autonomy and motivation in learning will be highlighted with a view to taking them into account especially with reference to self- and peer-assessment.

2.1 What is a test?

According to testing expert Oller (1979: 186):

> Instead of trying to construct a language test that will 'representatively' or 'rationally sample' the universe of 'language', we should simply construct a test that requires the language learner to do what native speakers do with discourse (perhaps any discourse will do). Then the interpretation of the test is related not to the particular discourse that we happened to select, nor even to the universe of possible discourses in the sense of sampling theory. But thus it is related to the efficiency of the learner's internalized system in processing the discourse. The

> validity of the test is related to how well it enables us to predict the learner's performance in other discourse processing tasks.

Oller's position on language testing stresses the importance of requiring examinees to process natural discourse, namely a complex organisation of "sequences of classes of elements and hierarchies of them" (Oller, 1979: 24), and getting them to relate language to contexts outside of language. Moreover, as emphasised by Bachman (1990: 2), it is fundamental to relate language testing to the contexts in which it takes place since it almost never takes place in isolation and, furthermore, it is thought for a particular purpose and in a specific context.

However, if learners hear the word 'test' in educational context, they will probably associate it with negative and unpleasant thoughts since it could be considered an anxiety-provoking experience. Nevertheless, as defined by Brown (2004: 3), a test is "a method of measuring a person's ability, knowledge, or performance in a given domain". Thanks to this definition, it is possible to capture the essential components of a test. First, a test is a method, that is a set of techniques, procedures, or items, and it requires the participation of the test-taker. Moreover, the method must be explicit and well-structured (e.g. an oral interview based on a question script and a checklist of possible answers to be filled in by the tester). Second, a test is used to measure both general abilities (e.g. through a multi-skill proficiency test) and specific competencies (e.g. a quiz on recognising the correct use of the present perfect). Third, a test aims at measuring an individual's ability, knowledge or performance and, for this reason, it is essential that testers know who their test-takers are and, in particular, what their background is with a view to understanding if the test is properly matched to their abilities. Moreover, as explained by Balboni (2002: 122), a test measures learners' performance and, in particular, their competence to perform language speaking, writing, listening or reading. Nevertheless, it is also common to find tests designed to tap into test-takers' language knowledge (e.g. reciting a grammar rule, defining a vocabulary item, identifying a rhetorical feature in written discourse). It is important to notice that performance-based tests aim at sampling the learner's actual use of language, but, at the same time, the assessor may be able to deduce a certain level of general competence from these samples. Finally, as revealed by Brown (2004: 4), a test measures a specific domain and, for this reason, the assessor should not include other factors unintentionally

since a test must measure the desired criterion. A test on pronunciation, for example, could be a test of only a limited number of phonemic minimal pairs.

Furthermore, according to Carroll (1968: 46), a test is "a procedure designed to elicit certain behaviour from which one can make inferences about certain characteristics of an individual" and this means that a test is a measurement instrument designed with a view to eliciting a specific sample of a learner's behaviour. Since no given sample of language will enable the test user to make inferences about a specific ability, language tests are of central importance. Moreover, language testing provides the means for focusing on the language abilities that are of considerable interest and, as a consequence, language tests can be considered the best way in order to assure that the sample of language obtained is adequate for the intended measurement purposes (Bachman, 1990: 21).

2.1.1 Test usefulness: Qualities of language tests

As proposed by Bachman and Palmer (1996: 17), the most important quality of a test is its usefulness and, for this reason, it is crucial to understand what makes a test useful. However, according to Underhill (1982), for example, the qualities of reliability and validity are in conflict and, as maintained by Morrow (1986), it is impossible to design test tasks that are both authentic and reliable. Then, according to Hughes (1989), test developers should recognise the complementarity of the different test qualities instead of emphasising the tension among them.

According to Bachman and Palmer (1996: 18), usefulness can be defined in terms of six test qualities, namely reliability, validity, authenticity, interactiveness, impact, and practicality. It is important to note that these six qualities cannot be seen separately from each other since all contribute to test usefulness and, at the same time, they must be considered with respect to specific tests and not in terms of abstract theories or statistical formulae. Therefore, the relative importance of these different qualities can considerably differ from a testing situation to another and, as a consequence, test usefulness can be evaluated only for particular testing situations. At the same time, as asserted by Bachman and Palmer (1996: 18-19), no quality should be

ignored at the expense of the others and, for this reason, test developers need to strive in with a view to achieving an appropriate balance of the qualities, taking account of the purpose of the test, the features of the target language use domain (i.e. the context in which the EFL learner will be using the language outside of the test itself) and the test takers and, last but not least, the construct (i.e. what a test measures).

As regards 'reliability', according to Bachman and Palmer (ivi: 19-20), it can be defined as "consistency of measurement" and, in contrast, inconsistency is variation in test scores that depends on factors different from the construct that will be measured. Moreover, it is important to notice that the characteristics of test tasks are the only ones that can be controlled since, in designing language tests, test developers tend to minimise variations in the test task characteristics that are not motivated considering the construct and the target language use tasks. Likewise, it is essential to estimate the effects of unmotivated variations on test scores in order to understand if sources of inconsistency of measurement have been successfully minimised.

'Construct validity', as described by Bachman and Palmer (ivi: 21-22), refers to "the meaningfulness and appropriateness of the interpretations" made on the basis of test scores. Furthermore, the validity of these interpretations must be demonstrated as "test validation is the ongoing process of demonstrating that a particular interpretation of test scores is justified, and involves providing evidence justifying that interpretation" (ivi: 39). Therefore, evidence of construct validity is the justification that must be provided with a view to demonstrating that the test score indicates the area of language ability that will be measured.

As regards 'authenticity', it is defined as "the degree of correspondence of the characteristics of a given language test task to the characteristics of a target language use task" (ibid.). In addition, authenticity is an important quality for language tests since, according to Bachman and Palmer (ivi: 23-29) and Weir (2005: 20), it can provide a link between test performance and the target language use tasks and domain, and, at the same time, the way test takers perceive the relative authenticity of test tasks could facilitate their test performance. Therefore, as explained by Brown (2004: 28), authenticity may be present in a test when the language is as natural as possible, items are contextualised rather than isolated, topics are meaningful for EFL learners, some

thematic organisation to items is provided (e.g. through a story line or episode) and tasks tend to be real-world tasks.

With reference to 'interactiveness', as revealed by Bachman and Palmer (1996: 25-29), it is important to notice that this is an essential test quality as it refers to the degree to which the constructs that are to be assessed are completely involved in completing the test task. Moreover, interactiveness plays a crucial role even in many current views of language teaching and language learning as it is a "function of the extent and type of involvement of the test taker's language ability (language knowledge plus metacognitive strategies), topical knowledge, and affective schemata in accomplishing a test task" (ivi: 39). Furthermore, since both authenticity and interactiveness are relative, it is possible to speak of 'relatively more' or 'relatively less' authentic and interactive. As emphasised by Bachman and Palmer (ibid.), it is crucial to consider the characteristics of the test takers, the target language use domain and the test task in order to determine the relative authenticity or interactiveness of a test task.

'Impact', as noted by Bachman and Palmer (ivi: 29-35), is connected with the different ways in which test use affects society, an education system (e.g. school or university) and the individuals within these contexts. As a consequence, test developers and test users must always take account of the societal, educational and, at the same time, individual value systems that have an influence on test use. Moreover, it is essential to consider what may happen after having used a test for a clear purpose as impact operates at two levels: a macro level, with reference to the societal or educational system in general, and a micro level that regards the individuals who are affected by the particular test use (ivi: 39). In this respect, it is important to notice that the 'washback effect', which refers to either positive or negative results that a test can have on students or teachers' actions, has been of deep concern in language testing and it can be seen taking account of different aspects of impact.

In contrast to the first five qualities of language tests (i.e. reliability, validity, authenticity, interactiveness and impact), which are connected with the uses that are made of test scores, 'practicality' is directly related to the ways in which the test is used in a specific situation, or whether the test is implemented at all. According to Bachman and Palmer (ivi: 35), practicality can be defined as the relationship between the resources that are required in the design, development and consequent use of the test,

and the set of resources that is available for these activities. Furthermore, it is fundamental to note that the design, development and use of a practical test do not require more resources than the available ones. The three 'types of resources' are human resources, material resources and time. As regards the specific resources required, they vary from one context to another in the same way as the resources that are available. Therefore, as revealed by Bachman and Palmer (ivi: 40), "practicality can only be determined for a specific testing situation" and, in addition, it does not make sense to say that a test or a test task is more or less practical than another. Moreover, considerations of practicality seem to affect test developers' decisions at every stage in the process of test development and use with a view to reconsidering and even revising some of their earlier specifications. In this regard, it is important to note that for a particular testing situation the optimum balance among the qualities of reliability, construct validity, authenticity, interactiveness and impact should be achieved, taking account of the resources required to achieve this balance and of those that are available.

2.1.2 Washback

As defined by Hughes (2003: 1), 'washback' is "the effect of testing on teaching and learning" and, in particular, the 'washback effect' refers to either positive or negative effects that a test can have on students or teachers' actions. In addition, according to Brown (2004: 28-29), in large-scale assessment "washback generally refers to the effects the tests have on instruction in terms of how students prepare for the test". At the same time, as stated by Brown (ibid.), washback can include the effects of an assessment on teaching and learning in preparation for the assessment itself.

As a consequence, the challenge to teachers is to create tests that can be used as learning devices with a view to achieving washback. In this regard, for example, EFL students' incorrect responses can offer several insights into further work, whereas their correct responses have to be praised. Moreover, teachers can suggest specific strategies in order to help their students improve their language skills, taking account of the number of basic principles of language acquisition that washback enhances, namely

intrinsic motivation, autonomy, language ego, self-confidence, interlanguage and strategic investment (Brown, ivi: 29-30).

Furthermore, it is essential to observe that a generous and specific comment on test performance is the first step in order to enhance washback since, as revealed by Hughes (2003: 3), letter grades and numerical scores give no information of intrinsic interest to the student and, in addition, they simply foster competitive, not cooperative, learning. Therefore, according to Brown (2004: 29), it is fundamental to "give praise for strengths as well as constructive criticism of weaknesses". Moreover, strategic hints on how a student could improve certain aspects of performance might be very helpful and "make the test performance an intrinsically motivating experience from which a student will gain a sense of accomplishment and challenge" (ibid.).

At the same time, as explained by Brown (ivi: 30), washback also means that EFL students can access to their teachers to discuss the feedback and evaluation they have given since an interactive, cooperative, collaborative learning implies an atmosphere of dialogue between students and teachers considering evaluative judgements. Therefore, according to Brown (ibid.), students should have a chance to feed back on their teachers' feedback, "to seek clarification of any issues that are fuzzy, and to set new and appropriate goals for themselves for the days and weeks ahead" with a view to continuing learning.

2.1.3 Norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests

As indicated by Brown (2004: 7), an important dichotomy in defining tests is the distinction between 'norm-referenced' and 'criterion-referenced testing'. In a norm-referenced test, for example, each student's score is interpreted in relation to a mean (i.e. average score), a median (i.e. middle score), a standard deviation (i.e. extent of variance in scores) and also a percentile rank. Furthermore, it is important to note that norm-referenced tests aim at placing "test-takers along a mathematical continuum in rank order" (ibid.) and test-takers usually get their scores in the form of a numerical score (e.g. 80 out of 100) and a percentile rank (e.g. 75 percent, which means that the test-taker's score is higher than 75 percent of the total number of test-takers, but lower than

25 percent in that group of test-takers). As indicated by Brown (ibid.), the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is an example of norm-referenced test since it is a standardised test, which is thought to be administrated to large groups. This type of test is characterised by fixed, predetermined responses in a format that can be scored quickly and at minimum expense. As a consequence, results are efficiently disseminated to test-takers as efficiency is the main concern in norm-referenced tests.

As regards criterion-referenced tests, they are designed in order to give each test-taker feedback, usually in the form of grades, on specific lesson or course objectives with a view to helping EFL students find their strengths and weaknesses (ibid.). As observed by Brown (ibid.), an example of criterion-referenced testing can be those classroom tests that involve the students in only one class and are connected to a curriculum. Moreover, according to Oller (1979: 52), sometimes much time and effort on the part of the teachers are required in order to deliver "instructional value", that is useful, appropriate and constructive feedback, to their students. As stated by Brown (2004: 7), in a criterion-referenced test "the distribution of students' scores across a continuum may be of little concern as long as the instrument assesses appropriate objectives". In addition, it is important to notice that criterion-referenced testing is more appropriate than norm-referenced testing if teachers are interested in classroom-based assessment.

2.1.4 Discrete-point and integrative testing

According to Oller (1979), there are two major approaches to language testing, namely discrete-point and integrative-testing methods. As regards 'discrete-point tests', they are constructed taking account of the different component parts of language with a view to testing them successfully and separately. In this regard, as indicated by Brown (2004: 8), it is fundamental to remember that these components are the skills of speaking, writing, listening and reading, but also various units of language (i.e. discrete points) of phonology, morphology, syntax, lexicon and discourse. Therefore, discrete-point tests aim at testing students' language knowledge considering the different component parts of language individually.

On the contrary, an overall proficiency test should take all four skills into account and try to sample as many linguistic discrete points as possible since, as emphasised by Oller (1979), language competence can be defined as a unified set of interacting abilities that need to be tested collectively. As a consequence, according to Cziko (1982) and Novello (2014: 44), it is crucial to take account of 'integrative tests' with a view to testing different skills simultaneously and in a context similar to real life. Moreover, as revealed by Novello (ibid.), integrative testing is commonly used in order to test the communicative aspects of the English language, whereas discrete-point tests can be useful for EFL learners in order to improve specific skills.

2.1.5 Communicative language testing

It is important to design 'communicative language-testing' tasks since, as explained by Bachman and Palmer (1996: 9), there should be a correspondence between language test performance and language use. As a consequence, according to Brown (2004: 10), a language test can be considered useful for its intended purposes if test performance corresponds "in demonstrable ways to language use in non-test situations". Furthermore, according to Bachman and Palmer (1996: 70-75), strategic competence (i.e. "the ability to employ communicative strategies to compensate for breakdowns as well as to enhance the rhetorical effect of utterances") plays a crucial role in the process of communication and, for this reason, strategic abilities need to be included in the constructs (i.e. what a test measures) of language testing and in test-takers' performance.

At the same time, as emphasised by Weir (1990: 11), it is fundamental to take account of "where, when, how, with whom, and why language is to be used, and on what topics, and with what effect" with a view to measuring language proficiency effectively.

2.1.6 Test types

As observed by Brown (2004: 42-43), it is important to consider the following critical questions in order to start designing tests or revising existing tests:

1. What is the purpose of the test?
2. What are the objectives of the test?
3. How will the test specifications reflect both the purpose and the objectives?
4. How will the test tasks be selected and the separate items arranged?
5. What kind of scoring, grading, and/or feedback is expected?

Therefore, in designing a test for their EFL students, teachers need to determine the purpose for the test with a view to choosing the right type of test and, as a consequence, focusing on the specific objectives of the test (Luoma, 2004: 29). The most common test types are placement tests, diagnostic tests and achievement tests, but there are also language aptitude tests and language proficiency tests.

According to Brown (2004: 43), a 'language aptitude test' aims at measuring "capacity or general ability to learn a foreign language and ultimate success in that undertaking". As a consequence, these tests can be used in order to predict a person's success prior to exposure to the English language. For instance, the MLAT (*Modern Language Aptitude Test*) and the PLAB (*Pimsleur Language Aptitude Test*) are two examples of standardised aptitude tests that have been used in the United States (Carroll and Sapon, 1958; Pimsleur, 1966). As explained by Brown (2004: 43-44), these English language tests require students to perform a number of language-related tasks (e.g. number learning, phonetic script, spelling clues, words in sentences, paired associates). Moreover, according to Carroll (1981), the MLAT and the PLAB presuppose an English course in which success is measured by processes of memorization, mimicry and puzzle-solving. Nevertheless, no research shows unambiguously that this type of tasks is able to predict communicative success in English, especially in the case of untutored acquisition of the language (Brown, 2004: 44). In this regard, it is essential to note that standardised aptitude tests are rarely used today even though they could provide EFL students with "information about their preferred styles and their potential

strengths and weaknesses, with follow-up strategies for capitalizing on the strengths and overcoming the weaknesses" (ibid.).

With reference to 'proficiency tests', it is crucial to observe that 'testing proficiency' means testing global competence in a language (Luoma, 2004: 133-134). Therefore, proficiency tests aim at testing overall ability and, as explained by Brown (2004: 44-45), they usually consist of standardised multiple-choice items on grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension, aural comprehension, but also a sample of writing and oral production performance. In addition, they are almost always summative and norm-referenced. At the same time, they provide results in the form of a single score, but "they are usually not equipped to provide diagnostic feedback" (ibid.). The TOEFL (*Test of English as a Foreign Language*), produced by the Educational Testing Service, is a typical example of a standardised proficiency test. As maintained by Brown (ibid.), the TOEFL consists of sections on grammatical accuracy, listening comprehension, reading comprehension and written expression, and it is widely used, especially by several instituitions of higher education in the United States, "as an indicator of a prospective students' ability to undertake academic work in an English-speaking milieu". Furthermore, as observed by Luoma (2004: 135), it is fundamental that the tasks that test-takers have to perform are valid samples of English language use in a specific context.

As regards 'placement tests', they aim at placing an EFL student into a particular level or section of the language curriculum or school (Brown, 2004: 45-46). As a consequence, a student's performance on the test indicates the point at which he/she will find material and topics appropriately challenging, that is neither too easy nor too difficult. Moreover, as described by Brown (ivi: 46), there are many varieties of placement tests in order to place a student into the correct course or level, taking account of the nature of a program and its needs: assessing comprehension and production, open-ended and limited responses, responding through written and oral performance, selection (e.g. multiple-choice) and gap-filling formats (e.g. cloze).

As revealed by Brown (ivi: 46-47), a 'diagnostic test' is designed with a view to diagnosing specified aspects of a language. A test in pronunciation, for instance, may diagnose the phonological features of the English language that seem to be more difficult for EFL students and, for this reason, should be included in a curriculum.

Furthermore, such tests tend to offer a checklist of features for the teacher to use in understanding his/her students' difficulties. In this respect, as observed by Brown (ibid.), it is important to note that sometimes diagnostic and placement tests might be indistinguishable from each other and, in particular, "any placement test that offers information beyond simply designating a course level may also serve diagnostic purposes". At the same time, it is possible to distinguish a diagnostic test from a general achievement test since achievement tests aim at analysing "the extent to which students have acquired language features that have already been taught", whereas diagnostic tests tend to "elicit information on what students need to work on in the future" (ibid.). As a consequence, a diagnostic test can offer more specific subcategorised information on the EFL learner.

As regards an 'achievement test', it is "related directly to classroom lessons, units, or even a total curriculum" (Brown, ivi: 47-48). In this respect, these tests tend to refer to particular material addressed in a curriculum within a specific time frame and are offered after a course based on the objectives in question. Moreover, as emphasised by Brown (ibid.) and Luoma (2004: 127), it is important to observe that the primary role of an achievement test is to ascertain whether course objectives have been achieved or not by EFL students and, as a consequence, adequate knowledge and skills acquired after a period of proper instruction. Nevertheless, an achievement test can also indicate what an EFL student needs to continue to work on in the future with a view to improving his/her language skills. Furthermore, as indicated by Brown (2004: 48), achievement tests are usually summative since "they are administrated at the end of a unit or term of study", but, at the same time, they play a crucial formative role. Moreover, an achievement test is effective if it offers washback about the quality of an EFL student's performance in the different aspects of the unit or course. According to Luoma (2004: 186), this washback defines the formative nature of achievement tests and, as suggested by Brown (2004: 48), the specifications for these tests need to be determined by "the objectives of the lesson, unit or course being assessed, the relative importance (or weight) assigned to each objective", the tasks employed in lessons during a specific unit of time, practicality issues (e.g. the time frame for the test and turnaround time) and, last but not least, "the extent to which the test structure lends itself to formative washback". In addition, it is important to notice that achievement

tests can have a wide variety of item types and formats and, as a consequence, they might be five-minute quizzes or even three-hour final examinations.

2.2 What is assessment?

The term 'assessment' is frequently used in current educational context and sometimes it is considered as a synonym for test, but it is not. A test, as described by Brown (2004: 4), is a prepared administrative procedure that occurs at fixed times in a 'curriculum' (i.e. the subjects that are taught in a school or included in a course of study) when learners muster all their faculties to offer peak performance and they are aware that their responses are being measured and evaluated. In contrast, assessment is a continuing process that encompasses a much wider domain and, according to Porcelli (1992), it is based both on the interpretation of test results and the experiences of each student. For this reason, it is fundamental that teachers take account of their EFL students' entire career, their language level and their skills (Novello, 2014: 37). For example, when an EFL student answers to a question, makes a comment on what he/she has studied or uses new words and structures, the teacher can make an assessment of the student's performance considering his/her personal skills and background. However, students must be free to experiment, to develop their own hypothesis without feeling that they are going to be judged taking their errors into account. Moreover, it is important to notice that a good teacher conducts both incidental and intended assessment as who teaches should never cease to assess students.

Tests can be considered a subset of assessment (ivi: 38), but they are only one among many procedures that teachers can use to assess their students. As noted by Brown (2004: 5), for example, teaching plays a crucial role in giving EFL students the opportunity to listen, speak, write, read, think, set goals and process feedback from the teacher in order to improve their language skills. *Figure 2.1* represents a diagram of the relationship among testing, teaching, and assessment and, in particular, it shows that teaching includes assessment, which, in turn, includes tests.

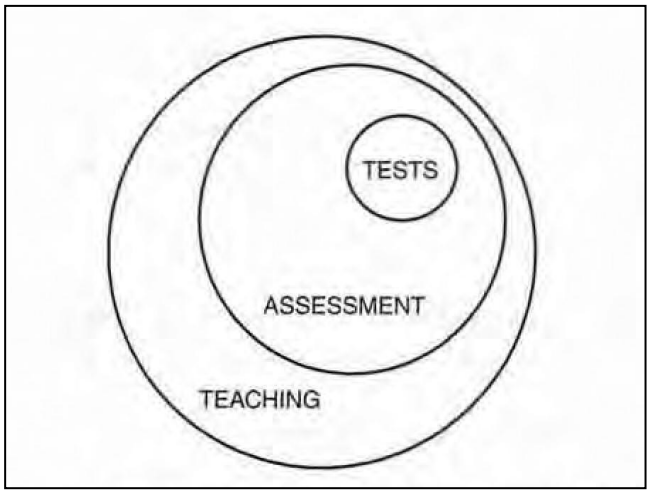


Figure 2.1: A diagram of the relationship among testing, teaching, and assessment (Brown, 2004: 5)

During these practice activities, teachers observe their students' performance and, at the same time, they evaluate each learner comparing the current performance with the previous one and emphasising which aspects are better than others with a view to providing adequate instructions to each student.

2.2.1 Informal and formal assessment

As explained by Brown (2004: 5), a first distinction is between informal and formal assessment. 'Informal assessment' can take different forms since the teacher can give students some feedback starting with unplanned comments and responses. Moreover, a great deal of a teacher's informal assessment can be found in tasks designed with a view to eliciting performance without recording results and making fixed judgements about students' linguistic competence. Some examples of informal assessment can be advice about how to better pronounce a word or showing students how to expand their vocabulary and to structure their discourse.

On the contrary, according to Brown (ivi: 6), 'formal assessment' consists of systematic exercises specifically designed in order to "tap into a storehouse of skills and knowledge", but it also aims at giving both teachers and students an appraisal of students' achievement. In addition, it is possible to say that all tests are formal

assessments, but not all formal assessment is testing since, for example, a systematic set of observations of an EFL student's frequency of oral participation in class is a formal assessment, but it cannot be considered as a test. In this regard, it is important to note that tests are usually time-constrained and take a limited sample of behaviour into account.

2.2.2 Formative and summative assessment

A second possible distinction can be made taking account of the function of an assessment. As revealed by Brown (ibid.), in the literature two functions can be identified, namely formative and summative assessment. With reference to 'formative assessment', it is important to note that it aims at evaluating EFL students during the process of forming their competencies and skills in order to help them to improve (Vertecchi, La Torre and Nardi, 1994). According to Gipps (1994), this type of assessment is based on the teacher's delivery and, consequently, the student's internalisation of constructive feedback (i.e. the teacher's opinion about the learner's performance on either a traditional test or an authentic task; it can be either written feedback or oral feedback, but, in any case, it is given in order to help each student find his/her strengths and weaknesses on his/her performance) with a view to continuing with the learning process. In addition, according to Harlen and James (1997: 367), it is crucial to observe that the direct aim of education is to promote learning with understanding, which is also called 'learning as an interpretative process' (Säljö, 1979) or 'deep learning' (Gibbs, Morgan and Taylor, 1984), since, when something is learned with understanding, it is actively understood and internalised by the learner. Moreover, thanks to formative assessment, this type of learning makes sense as it represents the learner's experience and it takes the progress of each individual into account. In this regard, it is important to note that formative assessment provides "washback in the form of information to the learner on progress toward goals" (Brown, 2004: 29).

Furthermore, in theory, as maintained by Brown (ivi: 6), all kinds of informal assessment are formative since they promote learning and focus on "the ongoing development of the learner's language". For example, when a teacher gives his/her EFL

student a suggestion or draw attention to an error, the feedback is thought in order to improve the learner's language ability.

In summary, as reported by Harlen and James (1997: 370-372), formative assessment is essentially positive in intent as it is always made in relation to where students are in their learning with reference to specific content or skills. As regards its main features, it is fundamental to remember that it aims at promoting learning and, for this reason, it is part of teaching. At the same time, according to Harlen and James (ivi: 372), it takes the progress and the effort of each EFL learner into account and, in this case, errors provide diagnostic information since they are extremely useful in order to help the student improve his/her language skills. Moreover, usefulness and, in particular, validity are of paramount importance for the intended use of the test and they should take precedence over reliability. Furthermore, as indicated by Harlen and James (ibid.), it is essential to note that formative assessment requires that learners have a central role in it since they have to be active in their learning and, as a consequence, they have to understand their strengths and weaknesses with a view to make progress.

In contrast, 'summative assessment' aims at measuring, or even summarising, what an EFL student has understood and, for this reason, it usually occurs at the end of a course or unit of instruction (Brown, 2004: 6). This type of assessment can be considered as a summation of what the student has learned since it requires teachers to look back and take stock of how the student has accomplished objectives, but it is not enough to understand how to achieve future progress. Some examples of summative assessment could be general proficiency exams or final exams in a course. However, according to Brown (ibid.), sometimes students tend to maintain that all tests (e.g. quizzes, midterm exams, periodic review tests) are summative and, as a consequence, in most cases, after the test, students remove what they have learned. In respect of this attitude, teachers should offer their EFL students an opportunity to convert tests into learning experiences in order to perceive them as considerable steps to improve their language skills. Nevertheless, as revealed by Brown (ivi: 29-30), sometimes teachers are tempted to feel that summative assessment does not need to offer much in the way of washback and, as a consequence, this negative attitude does not consider that "the end of every language course or program is always the beginning of further pursuits, more learning, more goals, and more challenges to face".

As proposed by Harlen and James (1997: 372-373), it is possible to distinguish formative assessment from summative assessment summarising the main distinctive characteristics of summative assessment. First, it takes place at specific intervals when achievement has to be reported and it aims at measuring what an EFL student has understood. Second, it is related to progression in learning and, as emphasised by Harlen and James (ivi: 373), it is crucial to notice that the results for different students can be combined for various purposes since they are based on the same criteria. Third, summative assessment requires methods which are as reliable as possible without endangering validity and, finally, it needs to "be based on evidence from the full range of performance relevant to the criteria being used" (ibid.).

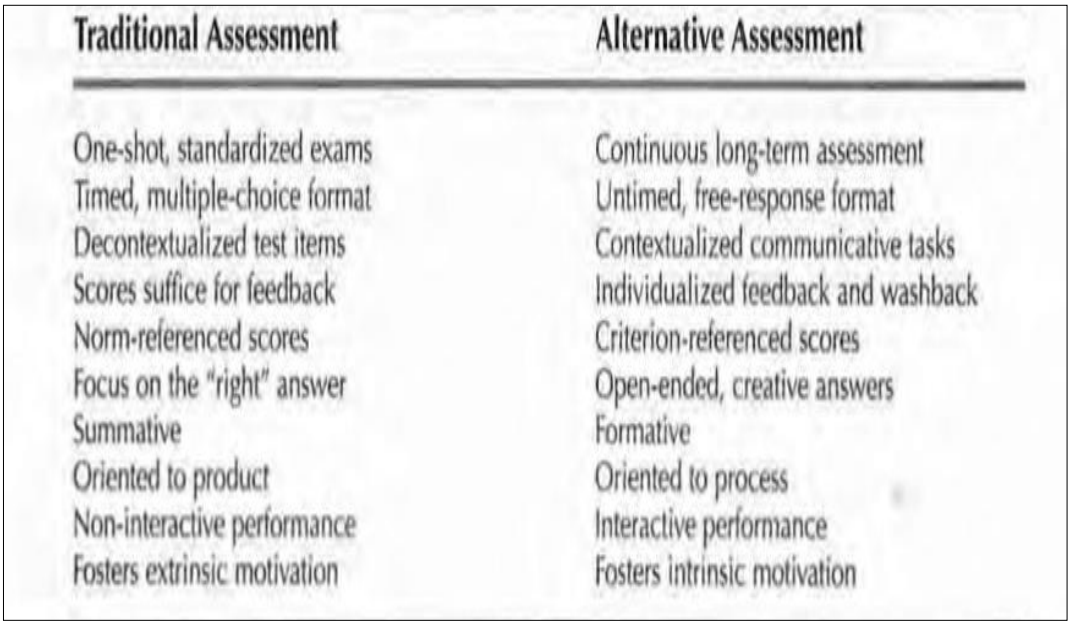
Although formative and summative assessments have different characteristics, information gathered by teachers for formative purposes can be used when they make summative assessments. Moreover, according to Harlen and James (ivi: 373-375), the knowledge that teachers have of their students is essential with a view to distinguishing different ways of arriving at 'an assessment for different purposes'. In this regard, certain conditions on the use of this information are needed for reliable assessment and, in particular, information has to be reviewed strictly against the criteria of what EFL students are expected to achieve at certain stages of their learning process, the criteria have to be applied holistically (i.e. markers award a mark based on their overall impression of the performance and, in addition, marking is perceived to be reliable if two or more markers rate the same performance) and, as a consequence, it is fundamental to ensure that the judgements of one teacher can be compared with those of other teachers.

2.2.3 Traditional and alternative assessment

According to Armstrong (1994) and Bailey (1998), two different approaches can be identified, namely 'traditional assessment' and 'alternative assessment'. *Figure 2.2* highlights differences between the two approaches even though, as explained by Brown (2004: 13), it represents some overgeneralisations and, for this reason, it should be considered with caution. In this regard, it is important to note that it is difficult to

clearly distinguish between what Armstrong (1994) and Bailey (1998) define as traditional and alternative assessment. In addition, as indicated by Brown (2004: 13), some forms of assessment can be considered in between the two and others tend to combine the best of both.

At the same time, according to Brown (2004: 13), *Figure 2.2* shows a bias toward alternative assessment, but it is essential to understand which alternatives can be effectively used.



Traditional Assessment	Alternative Assessment
One-shot, standardized exams	Continuous long-term assessment
Timed, multiple-choice format	Untimed, free-response format
Decontextualized test items	Contextualized communicative tasks
Scores suffice for feedback	Individualized feedback and washback
Norm-referenced scores	Criterion-referenced scores
Focus on the "right" answer	Open-ended, creative answers
Summative	Formative
Oriented to product	Oriented to process
Non-interactive performance	Interactive performance
Fosters extrinsic motivation	Fosters intrinsic motivation

Figure 2.2: Traditional and alternative assessment (Brown, 2004: 13)

2.3 Assessing speaking

As noted by Brown (2004: 140), "it is very difficult to isolate oral production tasks that do not directly involve the interaction of aural comprehension" since only in monologues, speeches and storytelling oral language can be assessed without the aural participation of an interlocutor. Therefore, as observed by Harris (1969: 81), "no language skill is so difficult to assess with precision as speaking ability" as speaking is a complex skill that requires the simultaneous use of different abilities which tend to develop at different rates.

Moreover, as it has been already mentioned in the first chapter, speaking is a productive skill that can be directly and empirically observed, but, at the same time, it is important to consider that it can be difficult to understand if a speaking score is exclusively a measure of oral production without the potentially frequent clarifications of an interlocutor. As a consequence, according to Brown (2004: 140), the designer of an oral production test needs to "tease apart, as much as possible, the factors accounted for by aural intake". At the same time, the design of elicitation techniques plays a crucial role since most speaking is the result of creative construction of linguistic strings characterised by specific choices of structure, lexicon and discourse.

According to Harris (1969: 81-82), five aspects are generally recognised with a view to assessing the speech process:

1. Pronunciation (taking account of the segmental features, that is vowels and consonants, but also the stress and intonation patterns);
2. Grammar;
3. Vocabulary;
4. Fluency (i.e. the ease and speed of the flow of speech);
5. Comprehension (how to respond to speech as well as to initiate it).

In particular, as revealed by Harris (ivi: 82-83), grammatical structure, vocabulary and auditory comprehension can be tested through reliable and simple objective techniques and, for this reason, it is important to note that in this case performance is positively related to general ability to converse in English. In addition, as regards fluency, it is quite easy to assess and, as observed by Harris (ibid.), "it usually takes only a few minutes of listening to determine whether a foreign speaker is able to approximate the speed and ease" with which an English native speaker typically produces his/her utterances. However, with reference to pronunciation, it seems difficult to find a general agreement on what 'good pronunciation' of EFL really means in order to understand if comprehensibility could be considered the sole basis of judgement or a high degree of both phonemic and allophonic accuracy must be demanded (Harris, ivi: 83).

2.3.1 Different types of speaking

As observed by Brown (2004: 141-142), there are different types of speaking:

1. 'Imitative' is the term used in order to emphasise an EFL speaker's ability to imitate a word, a phrase or even a sentence. In this regard, "the only role of listening is in the short-term storage of a prompt, just long enough to allow the speaker to retain the short stretch of language that must be imitated".

2. 'Intensive' speaking is the production of short stretches of oral language thought to demonstrate an EFL student's language competence, taking account of several grammatical, lexical and phonological relationships (e.g. prosodic elements, in particular intonation, stress and rhythm). In this case, the speaker must be able to respond, but it is important to note that "interaction with an interlocutor or test administrator is minimal at best". Directed response tasks are an example of intensive assessment tasks.

3. 'Responsive' speaking requires interaction and test comprehension. Some examples of this type of speaking could be short conversations, standard greetings and small talks or simple comments and requests (e.g. 'Can you help me, please?'). With reference to the stimulus, it is essential to observe that it is usually a spoken prompt which is able to preserve authenticity. *Example 2.1*, for instance, shows that a spoken prompt can also be followed by one or two follow-up questions:

Example 2.1: A) Hey, how are you?
B) I'm quite well, and you?
A) I'm good, thank you!
B) I'm pleased to hear that!

4. 'Interactive' speaking can be distinguished from responsive speaking since the first one is characterised by a longer and more complex interaction, which can include "multiple exchanges and/or multiple participants". Furthermore, interaction can be considered as 'transactional language' with a view to exchanging specific information or even as 'interpersonal exchanges' in order to maintain social relationships. In this respect, *Example 2.1* can be defined as an interpersonal exchange and it is important to observe that, in this case, "oral production can become pragmatically complex with the

need to speak in a casual register and use colloquial language, ellipsis, slang, humour, and other sociolinguistic conventions".

5. 'Extensive' speaking is a synonym for monologue. As a consequence, extensive oral production tasks are speeches, story-telling, and oral presentations and, in this regard, language style tends to be more deliberative and formal since the speaker usually plans his/her discourse.

2.3.2 Micro- and macroskills of speaking

According to Brown (2004: 142-144), it is possible to identify some micro- and macroskills of speaking with a view to enumerating the various components of speaking that make up criteria for assessment. Therefore, these skills can become the objectives of an assessment task. As regards microskills, they refer to the production of small chunks of language (e.g. phonemes, morphemes, words, collocations, phrasal units), whereas the macroskills consist of larger elements (e.g. discourse, fluency, style, function, cohesion, coherence, nonverbal communication, strategic options). As explained by Brown (ibid.), the micro- and macroskills define 16 different objectives to assess in speaking (see *Figure 2.3*).

Microskills

1. Produce differences among English phonemes and allophonic variants.
2. Produce chunks of language of different lengths.
3. Produce English stress patterns, words in stressed and unstressed positions, rhythmic structure, and intonation contours.
4. Produce reduced forms of words and phrases.
5. Use an adequate number of lexical units (words) to accomplish pragmatic purposes.
6. Produce fluent speech at different rates of delivery.
7. Monitor one's own oral production and use various strategic devices—pauses, fillers, self-corrections, backtracking—to enhance the clarity of the message.
8. Use grammatical word classes (nouns, verbs, etc.), systems (e.g., tense, agreement, pluralization), word order, patterns, rules, and elliptical forms.
9. Produce speech in natural constituents: in appropriate phrases, pause groups, breath groups, and sentence constituents.
10. Express a particular meaning in different grammatical forms.
11. Use cohesive devices in spoken discourse.

Macroskills

12. Appropriately accomplish communicative functions according to situations, participants, and goals.
13. Use appropriate styles, registers, implicature, redundancies, pragmatic conventions, conversation rules, floor-keeping and -yielding, interrupting, and other sociolinguistic features in face-to-face conversations.
14. Convey links and connections between events and communicate such relations as focal and peripheral ideas, events and feelings, new information and given information, generalization and exemplification.
15. Convey facial features, kinesics, body language, and other nonverbal cues along with verbal language.
16. Develop and use a battery of speaking strategies, such as emphasizing key words, rephrasing, providing a context for interpreting the meaning of words, appealing for help, and accurately assessing how well your interlocutor is understanding you.

Figure 2.3: Micro- and macroskills of oral production (Brown, 2004: 142-143)

While designing tasks in order to assess spoken language, it could be helpful to consider these skills, both micro and macro ones, as a checklist of objectives. Although sometimes the macroskills are considered to be more complex than the microskills, it is fundamental to note that both types of skills can be difficult since it depends on the stage and context of the EFL test-taker (Brown, ivi: 143).

Furthermore, according to Brown (ivi: 143-144), the following considerations are crucial in order to design oral tasks:

1. No speaking task can isolate the single skill of oral production since concurrent involvement of the additional performance of aural comprehension and reading is needed.
2. It is essential to understand if the elicitation prompt achieves its aims as closely as possible.
3. Taking account of the above two features of oral production assessment, it is important to carefully specify scoring procedures for a response with a view to achieving as high a reliability index as possible.

2.3.3 Types of oral production tests

According to Harris (1969: 83), the majority of oral production tests fall into one of the following categories:

1. Relatively unstructured interviews, rated on a carefully constructed scale;
2. Highly structured speech samples (generally recorded), rated according to very specific criteria;
3. Paper-and-pencil objective tests of pronunciation, presumably providing indirect evidence of speaking ability.

As revealed by Harris (ibid.), the most commonly used technique and the one with the longest history is the rated interview. In contrast, paper-and-pencil tests of pronunciation are often used in combination with other types of assessment. Moreover, as regards highly structured speech samples, they seem to be a good alternative to relatively unstructured interviews.

2.4 Self- and peer-assessment

As defined by Roberts (2006: 3), 'self-assessment' is "the process of having the learners critically reflect upon, record the progress of, and perhaps suggest grades for, their own learning". As regards 'critical reflection', it is crucial to observe that it enhances the learning process in a positive way, whereas 'recording of progress' can be seen as a stimulus in order to focus learning in appropriate directions and 'suggested grades' do not diminish teachers' responsibility for the final marks and grades, but they can be considered as guides with a view to assisting teachers in making accurate judgements on their students' performance. As regards reflection, it is a fundamental component of self-assessment since it provides EFL students with an opportunity in order to consider both their own learning and their learning process (i.e. how they have learned), taking account of the various problems encountered along the way (Roberts, ivi: 4). Furthermore, this type of reflection can aid in self awareness and it is able to provide invaluable feedback with a view to guiding future learning.

Nevertheless, as revealed by Roberts (ibid.), sometimes "course schedules are devised without any time specifically set aside for reflection" and this is a pity since students do not have enough time to realise "their maximum learning potential". According to Buchanan (2004: 169), for example, self-assessment plays a crucial role in active learning since it "can promote more active engagement with the course than

simply sitting back and awaiting a grade from one's instructor". In addition, as observed by Schunk (2000: 379), "developing self evaluation strategies helps students gain control over their learning" and, at the same time, it "allows them to focus more effort in studying those areas where they need more time". However, according to Falchikov and Boud (1989), some EFL students may not be naturally skilled at self-assessment and, as a consequence, their self assessed grades could have little in common with those assigned by their teachers. In this respect, it is important to note that self-assessment needs guidance and practice in order to improve considerably and, for this reason, specific guidelines for self-assessment should be provided since they can help EFL students self assess appropriately, in particular within the context of upper-level undergraduate or graduate courses. Therefore, as observed by Davis (1993: 291), if self-assessment is used appropriately, it can become a valuable assistant and an important guide to the students' learning instead of being seen as an external process imposed by the teacher.

In addition, as stated by Brown (2004: 270), self-assessment is based on the principle of autonomy, namely "one of the primary foundation stones of successful learning". Consequently, EFL students' ability to set their own goals both within and beyond the structure of a course curriculum, to pursue them without the help of an external person, and to autonomously monitor their pursuit are all keys to success. Furthermore, the development of 'intrinsic motivation' that derives from students' desire to excel is the most prominent example "of successful acquisition of any set of skills" (ibid.).

In contrast, with reference to 'peer-assessment', it is crucial to note that it is the process of having EFL students critically reflect upon, and maybe suggest grades for, the learning of their peers (Roberts, 2006: 6). According to Luoma (2004: 189), "peer-assessment can supplement teacher-based evaluation, but it cannot replace it" as teachers are able to provide a different perspective to their students' performances because they are specialists in language learning and they know the specific goals of the curriculum. Nevertheless, peer evaluation plays a crucial role in learning since "it allows teachers to share some of the rating responsibility with their students, and it is especially useful in speaking assessment, which is time-consuming if rated by one person only" (ibid.). Therefore, this type of assessment can have a very positive effect

on the process of learning since students are more actively involved in decisions about criteria for assessment and, at the same time, they can judge their peers' performance reflecting on the English language and its characteristics. Consequently, as revealed by McConnell (2000: 127), peer assessors can go "through a similar learning experience" and, in addition, peers' feedback might be more helpful than teachers' one since it comes from students' perspective and, for this reason, it should be more positive than that received from instructors. Therefore, peer-assessment appeals to the 'cooperative learning' principle and it can help students appreciate the value of collaboration in learning, that is, "the benefit of a community of learners capable of teaching each other something" (Brown, 2004: 270). In this regard, as maintained by Race (2001: 94-95), it is fundamental to take account of the following reasons in order to understand the importance of peer-assessment:

1) Students usually conduct peer-assessment, but unconsciously (they are continually peer-assessing; they tend to look at others' work and judge against their own or others', but sometimes they do not get a chance to state their opinions publicly);
2) Students find out more about assessment cultures (thanks to peer-assessment, the assessment culture seems to be much more transparent);
3) It is difficult to do as much assessing as in the past since now, for example, there are more students and heavier teaching loads;
4) Students tend to learn more deeply when they have a sense of ownership of the agenda and, as a consequence, this perception always increases involvement;
5) The act of assessing is one of the deepest learning experiences since applying criteria to someone else's work is one of the most productive ways of developing and deepening understanding of the subject matter involved in the process and, moreover, measuring and judging are far more rigorous processes than simply reading, listening, and watching;
6) Peer-assessment allows students to learn from each other's successes;
7) Peer-assessment allows students to learn from each other's weaknesses.

However, according to Brown (2004: 270), thanks to a closer look at the acquisition of any skill, it is possible to note the considerable importance of self-assessment and the benefit of peer-assessment. As a consequence, each EFL learner should develop the ability to monitor his/her own performance and to use the data gathered for adjustments and corrections with a view to becoming a successful speaker.

Therefore, as explained by Brown (ibid.), the learning process must be extended beyond the classroom, the course, the presence of a teacher or tutor and, for this reason, students should autonomously master the art of self-assessment. Moreover, if peers are present, peer-assessment could be a good alternative to self-assessment since it can be an additional input to the learning process.

As emphasised by Brown and Hudson (1998), self- and peer-assessment offer considerable benefits, such as the direct involvement of EFL students in their own learning process, the encouragement of autonomy and increased motivation due to their self-involvement. Nevertheless, according to Brown (2004: 270), it is essential to take account of subjectivity as it is a primary obstacle to overcome and, in addition, it is important to note that students "may not have the necessary tools to make an accurate assessment". In the case of self-assessment, for example, students might not be able to discern their own errors even though, according to Bailey (1998: 58), in the assessment of general competence students' self-assessments could be more precise than one might suppose.

2.4.1 Different types of self- and peer-assessment

As indicated by Brown (2004: 271-277), it is crucial to distinguish among several different types of self- and peer-assessment and, moreover, it is possible to create five categories of self- and peer-assessment: direct assessment of performance, indirect assessment of performance, metacognitive assessment, assessment of socioaffective factors and, last but not least, student self-generated tests (Brown, ivi: 271).

Thanks to 'assessment of a specific performance', for example, an EFL student can monitor himself/herself, both in oral and written production, and then evaluate his/her performance. In this respect, as revealed by Brown (ibid.), it is fundamental to note that "the evaluation takes place immediately or very soon after the performance" and, in the case of an oral performance, the student himself/herself or the peer fills out a checklist that is used in order to rate performance on a defined scale.

As regards 'indirect assessment of general competence', the aim of indirect self- and peer-assessment is to target "larger slices of time with a view to rendering an evaluation of general ability" (ibid.). Moreover, it is important to observe that the distinction between direct and indirect assessments is based on the classic competence-performance distinction. In this respect, as explained by Brown (ibid.), self- and peer-assessments of performance tend to be limited in time and they usually focus on a relatively short performance, whereas assessments of competence can refer to a module or even a whole term of course work since they aim at evaluating general ability.

With reference to 'metacognitive assessment for setting goals', it is important to observe that it is defined as a more strategic kind of evaluation since, according to Brown (ivi: 272-274), it aims at "setting goals and maintaining an eye on the process of their pursuit". Furthermore, personal goal-setting fosters intrinsic motivation and, at the same time, provides EFL students with that special impetus due to having set and accomplished their own goals.

In contrast, 'socioaffective assessment' consists of different methods of examining affective factors in learning the English language. In particular, this type of assessment requires each EFL student to look at himself/herself "through a psychological lens" (Brown, ivi: 274-275). Moreover, if the student resolves to assess and improve motivation, to lower his/her anxiety, to overcome mental and emotional obstacles with a view to learning effectively, a socioaffective domain is present.

Finally, as explained by Brown (ivi: 275-276), 'student-generated tests' are not usually classified as self- and peer-assessment since they can be defined as "the technique of engaging students in the process of constructing tests themselves". In this respect, it is crucial to note that student-generated tests can be extremely productive, intrinsically motivating and also autonomy-building processes.

2.4.2 Guidelines for self- and peer-assessment

As stated by Brown (2004: 276-277), self- and peer-assessment are the best example of formative assessment, but they must be carefully designed and administrated

with a view to reaching their great potential. Therefore, according to Brown (ivi: 227), teachers should take the following guidelines into account in order to develop intrinsically motivating tasks successfully:

1. "Tell students the purpose of the assessment" since some students could perceive self-assessment as an uncomfortable process. For this reason, it is essential to introduce the concept of this type of assessment to them and, at the same time, teachers should analyse the needs that will be met through self- and peer-assessment, and then convey this information to their students.

2. "Define the tasks clearly" and, as a consequence, make sure their students know exactly what they are supposed to do. Moreover, the use of guidelines and models can be very helpful in order to clarify the procedures.

3. "Encourage impartial evaluation of performance or ability" with a view to reducing subjectivity in self-assessment. In this respect, teachers should show their EFL students the importance of honest and objective judgements in order to maximise the beneficial washback of self-assessments. Therefore, both for self- and peer-assessments it is essential to establish clear assessment criteria with a view to encouraging objectivity.

4. "Ensure beneficial washback through follow-up tasks" since a simple self-checklist is not enough for students. For this reason, further self-analysis, written feedback from the teachers or conferencing with the teachers are some examples of systematic follow-up.

2.4.3 Speaking tasks for self- and peer-assessment

As indicated by Brown (2004: 277-278), it is possible to consider a variety of speaking tasks for self- and peer-assessment (See *Figure 2.4*).

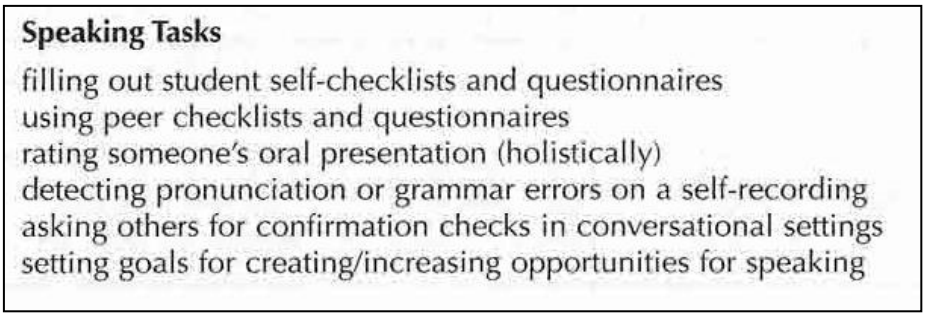


Figure 2.4: Speaking tasks for self- and peer-assessment (Brown, 2004: 277)

Moreover, according to Brown (ivi: 278-279), it is important to note that both self- and peer-assessment are good alternatives in assessment since they fulfil the major assessment principles (i.e. practicality, reliability, face validity, content validity, washback and authenticity). In particular, thanks to checklists and questionnaires, practicality can achieve a moderate level, whereas reliability seems to remain at a low level since it can vary within and across students. In addition, if EFL students accept that they can legitimately assess themselves, face validity can achieve a moderate level. Then, taking account of adherence to course objectives, content validity is at a high level and, as regards washback and authenticity, they both have high potential since students receive useful feedback.

Therefore, in view of all that has been mentioned so far, it is possible to state that all kinds of assessment are needed with a view to assembling accurate information on EFL students' learning and, in particular, self- and peer-assessment can promote students' autonomy and motivation.

2.5 The role of self- and peer-assessment in promoting EFL students' autonomy

According to Little (1991: 4), autonomy can be defined as the "capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making and independent action" and "it presupposes, but also entails, that the learner will develop a particular kind of psychological relation to the process and content of his learning".

Thanks to self- and peer-assessment, for example, EFL students can become autonomous learners since these types of assessment permit them to reflect on their

progress, take stock of their learning and, in particular through peer-assessment, to compare their perceptions of their performance with their peers' ones. In addition, as revealed by Novello (2014: 20), it is essential to observe that autonomy plays a crucial role in learning a foreign language like English and, as a consequence, teachers should promote 'student-centered learning' with a view to helping their students be aware of their language skills and start 'goal setting'. In this respect, as stated by Cameron (2001: 237), it is important to note that "being able to set realistic and useful goals for one's own language learning is one of the skills of autonomous learners".

Furthermore, as noticed by Holec (1981: 1), "autonomous learners understand the purpose of their learning programme, share in the setting of learning goals, take initiatives in planning and executing learning activities, and regularly review their learning and evaluate its effectiveness". Therefore, in this respect, it is possible to state that self- and peer-assessment are an important medium for promoting EFL students' autonomy.

2.6 Motivation and its importance

According to Ur (1996: 274), "the abstract term 'motivation' on its own is rather difficult to define" and, for this reason, it is better to think in terms of 'motivated student', namely someone who wants to invest effort in learning activities and to improve his/her language skills. Moreover, as revealed by Ur (ibid.), motivation is essential since it makes learning immeasurably easier, more interesting and, as a consequence, more productive.

With reference to Gardner and Lambert's (1972) studies on the role of motivation, it is fundamental to note that motivation seems to be very strongly related to achievement in language learning and, in this respect, it is important to understand if success in language learning breeds its own motivation or if previous motivation leads to success, but also if motivation is more, or less, important than a natural aptitude for learning foreign languages (Ur, 1996: 275).

However, as noted by Naiman, Fröhlich, Stern and Todesco (1978), "most successful students are not necessarily those to whom a language comes very easy", but

rather "those who display certain typical characteristics, most of them clearly associated with motivation". As reported by Ur (1996: 275), some of these features are:

1. "Positive task orientation" since the EFL student wants to tackle tasks and challenges, and he/she has confidence in his/her success;
2. "Ego-involvement" as the EFL student wants to succeed in learning with a view to promoting his/her own self-image;
3. "Need for achievement" since the EFL student is interested in overcoming difficulties and achieving his/her goals;
4. "High aspirations" that show the EFL student's ambition;
5. "Goal orientation" as the EFL student is aware of the goals of learning;
6. "Perseverance" since the EFL student invests a high level of effort in learning;
7. "Tolerance of ambiguity" as the EFL student is not disturbed by situations involving a temporary lack of understanding because he/she knows that understanding will come later.

2.6.1 Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation

As revealed by Brown (1987), an important distinction which has been made is that between 'intrinsic motivation' (i.e. the urge to engage in the learning activity for its own sake) and 'extrinsic motivation' (i.e. it is derived from external circumstances). In this regard, it is essential to notice that both of them play a crucial role in classroom motivation, but intrinsic motivation seems to be "very typical of young children and tends to deteriorate with age" (Ur, 1996: 276), whereas many sources of extrinsic motivation are inaccessible to the influence of the teacher (e.g. students' wish to succeed in an external exam, students' desire to please other authority figures such as their parents).

2.6.2 Global, situational and task motivation

As explained by Brown (1987), another important distinction that has been made is that between global, situational, and task motivation. As regards 'global motivation', it refers to the overall orientation of the EFL student towards the learning of the English language, whereas, according to Ur (1996: 276), 'situational motivation' is based on "the

context of learning (e.g. classroom, total environment)". In contrast, 'task motivation' has to do with the way the EFL student approaches the specific task and, as a consequence, it is fundamental that the task in hand is as attractive as possible with a view to encouraging the student to invest effort and succeed. Furthermore, it is important to note that global motivation tends to be influenced by previous education and several social factors, but it is also determined by the teacher's own attitudes conveyed either through explicit information or unconsciously (Ur, 1996: 276).

To conclude, this chapter was intended to provide the reader with some important notions, starting from the definition of 'test' and 'assessment' with a view to illustrating both the complexity and the importance of testing speaking skills to promote EFL learners' autonomy through self- and peer-assessment. The next chapter, indeed, will take account of what has been mentioned so far in order to draw a comparison between the CEFR and my self- and peer-assessment grid (B2 level) on speaking skills.

CHAPTER 3: A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE CEFR AND MY SELF- AND PEER-ASSESSMENT GRID (B2 LEVEL) ON SPEAKING SKILLS

This chapter will be entirely devoted to a comparison between the CEFR and my self- and peer-assessment grid (B2 level) on speaking skills. First, a definition of the notion of CEFR will be provided; second, the CEFR self-assessment grid (B2 level) on speaking skills will be taken into account. Third, my self- and peer-assessment grid (B2 level) on speaking skills will be presented with a view to analysing the descriptors of the different aspects (i.e. 'grammar', 'vocabulary', 'content', 'pronunciation', 'fluency', 'coherence and cohesion', 'interaction') and the reason why they are of considerable importance. Finally, a comparison between the CEFR and my self- and peer-assessment grid will be drawn in order to reveal the similarities and the differences between the two.

3.1 What is the CEFR?

The CEFR ("Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment") is one of the best-known and most used policy instruments of the Council of Europe, "an intergovernmental institution primarily concerned with human rights, which has been active in the field of language education since the 1960s" (Council of Europe, 2020: 11). In this respect, it is important to note that this language policy document was developed in the 1990s by the Council of Europe and first published as a book in 2001 with a view to describing in broad terms language learners' ability in European languages. At the same time, with reference to the English language, the CEFR aims at fostering innovation in language education by encouraging EFL learners to reflect on their language skills as well as by providing common descriptors in order to facilitate collaboration across different languages and educational institutions. Moreover, according to Snežana Samardžić-Marković (ibid.), Director General of Democracy at the Council of Europe, the CEFR is fundamental to

the effective enjoyment of the right to education and other individual human rights since:

> It is intended to promote quality plurilingual education, facilitate greater social mobility and stimulate reflection and exchange between language professionals for curriculum development and in teacher education. Furthermore, the CEFR provides a metalanguage for discussing the complexity of language proficiency for all citizens in a multilingual and intercultural Europe, and for education policy makers to reflect on learning objectives and outcomes that should be coherent and transparent.

Furthermore, as revealed by the Council of Europe (ivi: 27), it is essential to observe that the core of the CEFR consists of the descriptive scheme, which defines four modes of communicative language activities and strategies (i.e. 'reception', 'production', 'interaction', 'mediation'), general competences, including the ability to learn (i.e. 'savoir apprendre') and communicative language competences (i.e. 'linguistic', 'sociolinguistic', 'pragmatic'), but also of a flexible set of common reference levels (A1-C2).

As a consequence, the CEFR presents "a comprehensive descriptive scheme of language proficiency and a set of Common Reference Levels (A1 to C2) defined in illustrative descriptor scales" (ibid.). Although in the past, as explained by Novello (2014: 25-26), words such as 'Beginner', 'Intermediate' and 'Advanced' were used in order to describe language learners' different levels of ability and, as a consequence, people tended to interpret those terms in different ways, "one of the main principles of the CEFR is the promotion of the positive formulation of educational aims and outcomes at all levels" (Council of Europe, 2020: 27). Therefore, with reference to the CEFR, language can be defined as a vehicle for opportunity and success in social, educational and professional domains and, for this reason, the 'can do' definition of aspects of proficiency is an essential instrument in order to gauge EFL learners' progress. In this regard, as recommended by the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers, the CEFR should be used "as a tool for coherent, transparent and effective plurilingual education in such a way as to promote democratic citizenship, social cohesion and intercultural dialogue" (ibid.).

As revealed by Novello (2014: 26), nowadays the CEFR is used as a reference tool by almost all member states of the Council of Europe and the European Union, but,

at the same time, it has considerable influence beyond Europe since it is used to facilitate transparency providing clear descriptors for assessment purposes as well as to inform curriculum reform and teaching methods.

3.1.1 Aims of the CEFR

As declared by the Council of Europe (2020: 28), the CEFR aims at helping EFL learners and teachers "further improve the quality and effectiveness of language learning and teaching". Therefore, it is important to note that the CEFR is not focused on assessment since, as clarified by its subtitle, it simultaneously refers to learning, teaching and assessment. Moreover, in the CEFR the language user/learner plays a crucial role as he/she is defined as a 'social agent' that is able to act in the social world and exert agency in the learning process. As a consequence, as emphasised by Novello (2014: 25-26), the CEFR promotes EFL learners' engagement and autonomy, but also "a multidimensional view of communicative language proficiency, suggesting that all language education should be based on a needs analysis, in which the descriptor scales can be consulted to identify priorities for learning objectives and to promote different types of assessment with defined criteria" (Council of Europe, 2020: 28).

Therefore, the CEFR is characterised by an 'action-oriented approach' that represents "a shift away from syllabuses based on a linear progression through language structures [...] towards syllabuses based on needs analysis, oriented towards real-life tasks and constructed around purposefully selected notions and functions" (ibid.). The following paragraph (Council of Europe, 2001: 9-10) summarises the overall approach of the CEFR:

> Language use, embracing language learning, comprises the actions performed by persons who as individuals and as social agents develop a range of competences, both general and in particular communicative language competences. They draw on the competences at their disposal in various contexts under various conditions and under various constraints to engage in language activities involving language processes to produce and/or receive texts in relation to themes in specific domains, activating those strategies which seem most appropriate for carrying out the tasks to be accomplished. The

> monitoring of these actions by the participants leads to the reinforcement or modification of their competences.

Therefore, thanks to the CEFR, EFL learners can adopt a 'proficiency perspective' guided by 'can do' descriptors instead of focusing on what they have not acquired yet, that is, adopting a 'deficiency perspective'. In this regard, curricula and courses should be based on real-world communicative needs, related to real-life tasks and accompanied by 'can do' descriptors that communicate objectives to EFL learners.

To summarise, the CEFR an essential tool with a view to assisting "the planning of curricula, courses and examinations by working backwards from what the users/learners need to be able to do in the language" (Council of Europe, 2020: 28). In particular, the CEFR 2001 promotes and facilitates co-operation among educational institutions in various countries, provides a sound basis for the mutual recognition of language qualifications and, last but not least, assists EFL learners, teachers, course designers, examining bodies and educational administrators to situate and co-ordinate their efforts (Council of Europe, 2001: 5-6).

3.1.2 The CEFR common reference levels

The CEFR has two axes: the horizontal axis is the one of categories with a view to describing different activities (i.e. 'reception' with listening and reading, spoken and written 'production', spoken and written 'interaction', 'mediation' with translation and interpretation) and aspects of competence, whereas the vertical axis aims at representing progress in proficiency in those categories. As shown in *Figure 3.1*, the CEFR is characterised by the six 'Common Reference Levels' (i.e. A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2) and the use of 'can do' descriptors in order to define the learner/user's proficiency at each level even though this roadmap does not indicate that the six levels are absolute (Council of Europe, 2020: 36).

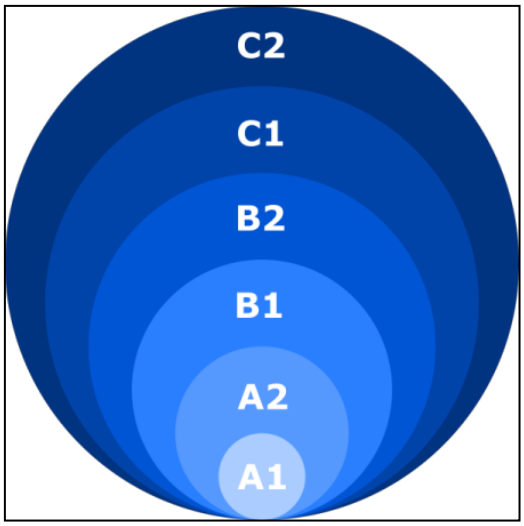


Figure 3.1: The CEFR Common Reference Levels (Council of Europe, 2020: 36)

As indicated by the Council of Europe (2020), the six levels can be grouped into three main categories: Basic user (A1 and A2), Independent user (B1 and B2) and Proficient user (C1 and C2). Moreover, it is important to notice that the six reference levels are often subdivided as follows:

A: Basic User
- A1 Breakthrough or beginner
- A2 Waystage or elementary

B: Independent User
- B1 Threshold or intermediate
- B2 Vantage or upper intermediate

C: Proficient User
- C1 Effective Operational Proficiency or advanced
- C2 Mastery or proficiency

Therefore, in view of all that has been mentioned so far, it is possible to define language proficiency as a continuum since the CEFR describes what an EFL learner can do in English and, at the same time, it shows his/her progress from the lowest level to the highest one, providing a series of descriptions that are related to the four language skills (i.e. speaking, listening, reading, and writing).

3.2 The CEFR self-assessment grid (B2 level) on speaking skills

As previously explained, the CEFR can provide a common basis for the explicit description of objectives, content and methods in foreign language education. As regards the English language, for example, the CEFR self-assessment grid (B2 level) on speaking skills (see *Figure 3.2*) can be a good starting point for EFL learners in order to use self-assessment with a view to improving their speaking skills autonomously.

S P E A K I N G	**Spoken Interaction**	I can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible. I can take an active part in discussion in familiar contexts, accounting for and sustaining my views.
	Spoken Production	I can present clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of subjects related to my field of interest. I can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.

Figure 3.2: The CEFR self-assessment grid (B2 level) on speaking skills (Council of Europe, 2018: 168-169)

Thanks to this self-assessment grid, EFL learners can understand if both their spoken interaction and spoken production correspond to a real B2 level. Moreover, the Council of Europe (2018: 164) offers them a detailed description of the salient features of speaking skills at B2 level:

> Level B2 represents a new level as far above B1 (Threshold) as A2 (Waystage) is below it. It is intended to reflect the Vantage Level specification. The metaphor is that having been progressing slowly but steadily across the intermediate plateau, the learner finds he has arrived somewhere, things look different, he/she acquires a new perspective, - can look around him/her in a new way. This concept does seem to be borne out to a considerable extent by the descriptors calibrated at this level. They represent quite a break with the content so far. For example at the lower end of the band there is a focus on effective argument: account for and sustain his opinions in discussion

> by providing relevant explanations, arguments and comments; explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options; construct a chain of reasoned argument; develop an argument giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view; explain a problem and make it clear that his counterpart in a negotiation must make a concession; speculate about causes, consequences, hypothetical situations; take an active part in informal discussion in familiar contexts, commenting, putting point of view clearly, evaluating alternative proposals and making and responding to hypotheses. Secondly, running right through the level there are two new focuses. The first is being able to more than hold your own in social discourse: e.g. converse naturally, fluently and effectively; understand in detail what is said to him/her in the standard spoken language even in a noisy environment; initiate discourse, take his turn when appropriate and end conversation when he/she needs to, though he/she may not always do this elegantly; use stock phrases (e.g. 'That's a difficult question to answer') to gain time and keep the turn whilst formulating what to say; interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without imposing strain on either party; adjust to the changes of direction, style and emphasis normally found in conversation; sustain relationships with native speakers without unintentionally amusing or irritating them or requiring them to behave other than they would with a native speaker. The second new focus is a new degree of language awareness: correct mistakes if they have led to misunderstandings; make a note of 'favourite mistakes' and consciously monitor speech for it/them; generally correct slips and errors if he becomes conscious of them; plan what is to be said and the means to say it, considering the effect on the recipient/s. In all, this does seem to be a new threshold for a language learner to cross.

Therefore, taking account of both the CEFR self-assessment grid (B2 level) on speaking skills and its detailed description of the salient features of speaking skills at B2 level, EFL learners might realise that spoken interaction and production assume considerable importance in speaking, but, at the same time, they could need further information about those language aspects that should be considered conducting self-assessment of spoken language.

3.3 My self- and peer-assessment grid (B2 level) on speaking skills

After having taken account of both the CEFR self-assessment grid (B2 level) on speaking skills and its detailed description of the salient features of speaking skills at B2 level, I decided to create a self- and peer-assessment grid (B2 level) on speaking

skills for the first-year students of the bachelor's degree course in 'Lingue, letterature e mediazione culturale' (University of Padua) as the CEFR grid could have been too vague about the language aspects that professors and CELs would have tested during the final oral exam at B2 level.

First, since I wanted to provide these students with a grid specifically designed for their 'General English' oral exam, first-year students' professors and CELs explained to me exactly what the objectives of the final oral exam would have been. Moreover, they told me that unfortunately their students had no assessment grid (B2 level) on speaking skills, but, on the other hand, they had provided them with a list of useful tips so that their students would have been able to have a ten-minute conversation on one of the six topics (i.e. 'Language and Identity', 'Food Ethics', 'Civic Duty vs. Civic Responsibility', 'Human Rights', 'Higher Education', 'Internet and Information') discussed during the course. At the same time, first-year students' professors and CELs gave me a brief overview of the heterogeneity among the first-year group of students and, in this respect, they highlighted the importance, both for attending and non-attending students, of a self- and peer-assessment grid (B2 level) on speaking skills. Third, I combined the information reported by first-year students' professors and CELs with that from the CEFR and, in addition, I took account of another grid, that is, the CEFR grid (B2 level) on qualitative features of spoken language (see *Figure 3.3*).

	RANGE	ACCURACY	FLUENCY	INTERACTION	COHERENCE	PHONOLOGY
B2	Has a sufficient range of language to be able to give clear descriptions, express viewpoints on most general topics, without much conspicuous searching for words, using some complex sentence forms to do so.	Shows a relatively high degree of grammatical control. Does not make errors which cause misunderstanding, and can correct most of his/her mistakes.	Can produce stretches of language with a fairly even tempo; although he/she can be hesitant as he or she searches for patterns and expressions, there are few noticeably long pauses.	Can initiate discourse, take his/her turn when appropriate and end conversation when he/she needs to, though he/she may not always do this elegantly. Can help the discussion along on familiar ground confirming comprehension, inviting others in, etc.	Can use a limited number of cohesive devices to link his/her utterances into clear, coherent discourse, though there may be some "jumpiness" in a long contribution.	Can generally use appropriate intonation, place stress correctly and articulate individual sounds clearly; accent tends to be influenced by other language(s) he/she speaks, but has little or no effect on intelligibility.

Figure 3.3: The CEFR grid (B2 level) on qualitative features of spoken language (Council of Europe, 2018: 171)

As shown in *Figure 3.3*, assessing EFL speaking means assessing different aspects (e.g. 'range', 'accuracy', 'fluency', 'interaction', 'coherence', 'phonology') of the English language. In this regard, it is important to note that these different aspects contribute equally to the oral performance and, as a consequence, EFL students need to consider each single aspect with a view to improving their speaking skills. A student, for example, could have a good range of vocabulary, but, at the same time, he/she may have considerable difficulty interacting with the other speaker and, for this reason, he/she should improve his/her interaction skills in order to enhance his/her oral performance. In addition, since a self- and peer-assessment grid also aims at promoting students' autonomy in learning, this type of grid needs to be as exhaustive as possible, but even very clear in order to be a useful tool for each EFL student.

Finally, I designed my self- and peer-assessment grid taking seven language aspects (i.e. 'grammar', 'vocabulary', 'content', 'pronunciation', 'fluency', 'coherence and cohesion', 'interaction') into account (see *APPENDIX A*). In this regard, it is important to note that the order in which they are presented is purely random since no aspect is more or less important than the others and, as a consequence, students have to pay particular attention to each one of them. Moreover, I decided to offer first-year students a grid for both self- and peer-assessment so that they could compare their perception of their oral performance with their peer's one of the same performance. For this reason, I provided them with a 1 to 5 grading scale (see *Figure 3.4*) so that they could have a common basis for their self- and peer-assessment.

A 1 to 5 grading scale:

1 = need/needs improvement
2 = acceptable
3 = satisfactory
4 = good
5 = excellent

Figure 3.4: A 1 to 5 grading scale for my self- and peer-assessment grid (B2 level) on speaking skills

Nevertheless, I did not want first-year students to simply base their assessment on numbers since I realised that this type of self- and peer-assessment grid could be used as a powerful tool with a view to reflecting on their language and, as a

consequence, making constructive observations on their own oral performance and their peer's one with reference to each single aspect.

3.3.1 Grammar

As shown in *Figure 3.5*, 'grammar' is the first aspect of this self- and peer-assessment grid. As revealed by the descriptors, students need to pay particular attention to their use of different verb tenses (e.g. the use of the present simple vs. the use of the present perfect simple) and modal verbs and, at the same time, self-correct their errors.

ASPECT	*SELF-ASSESSMENT*	*COMMENTS/ OBSERVATIONS*	*PEER-ASSESSMENT*	*COMMENTS/ OBSERVATIONS*
Grammar	I express myself with a good grammatical control (ex. the correct use of different verb tenses and modal verbs). I avoid mistakes which could impede comprehension and I self-correct my errors.		He/she expresses himself/herself with a good grammatical control (ex. the correct use of different verb tenses and modal verbs). He/she avoids mistakes which could impede comprehension and he/she self-corrects his/her errors.	

Figure 3.5: 'Grammar' in my self- and peer-assessment grid (B2 level) on speaking skills

3.3.2 Vocabulary

As regards 'vocabulary', *Figure 3.6* highlights the importance of this aspect in order to enhance EFL students' oral performance. Therefore, they should express themselves clearly, with a good range of vocabulary and a high level of lexical accuracy. Moreover, it is fundamental to observe that repetitions should be avoided and, as a consequence, students need to paraphrase if they do not know a specific word.

ASPECT	*SELF-ASSESSMENT*	*COMMENTS/ OBSERVATIONS*	*PEER-ASSESSMENT*	*COMMENTS/ OBSERVATIONS*
Vocabulary	I express myself clearly, with a good range of vocabulary and my lexical accuracy is generally high. I paraphrase when I don't know a word and I vary words to avoid frequent repetitions.		He/she expresses himself/herself clearly, with a good range of vocabulary and his/her lexical accuracy is generally high. He/she paraphrases when he/she doesn't know a word and he/she varies words to avoid frequent repetitions.	

Figure 3.6: 'Vocabulary' *in my self- and peer-assessment grid (B2 level) on speaking skills*

3.3.3 Content

As revealed by first-year students' CELs, 'content' (see *Figure 3.7*) is an important aspect since students should express and support their opinions with precision, but also talk about the issues convincingly since they are not supposed to simply give their opinion and say what they like or not. Furthermore, students should offer details with a view to showing that they have studied the material of the course.

ASPECT	*SELF-ASSESSMENT*	*COMMENTS/ OBSERVATIONS*	*PEER-ASSESSMENT*	*COMMENTS/ OBSERVATIONS*
Content	I express and support my opinions with precision and talk about the issues convincingly. I give clear, detailed descriptions and relevant examples of different themes on the topic. I express a viewpoint on a topical issue considering pros and cons.		He/she expresses and supports his/her opinions with precision and talks about the issues convincingly. He/she gives clear, detailed descriptions and relevant examples of different themes on the topic. He/she expresses a viewpoint on a topical issue considering pros and cons.	

Figure 3.7: 'Content' in my self- and peer-assessment grid (B2 level) on speaking skills

3.3.4 Pronunciation

With reference to 'pronunciation' (see *Figure 3.8*), it is essential to note that it plays a crucial role in assessing oral skills. For this reason, students need to speak with clearly intelligible pronunciation and appropriate intonation, using sentence stress and word stress correctly.

ASPECT	*SELF-ASSESSMENT*	*COMMENTS/ OBSERVATIONS*	*PEER-ASSESSMENT*	*COMMENTS/ OBSERVATIONS*
Pronunciation	I speak with clearly intelligible pronunciation and appropriate intonation even though sometimes a foreign accent is evident and occasional mispronunciations occur. I nearly always use sentence stress and word stress correctly.		He/she speaks with clearly intelligible pronunciation and appropriate intonation even though sometimes a foreign accent is evident and occasional mispronunciations occur. He/she nearly always uses sentence stress and word stress correctly.	

Figure 3.8: 'Pronunciation' in my self- and peer-assessment grid (B2 level) on speaking skills

3.3.5 Fluency

As regards 'fluency' (see *Figure 3.9*), students should communicate spontaneously and avoid long pauses, especially while searching for words.

ASPECT	*SELF-ASSESSMENT*	*COMMENTS/ OBSERVATIONS*	*PEER-ASSESSMENT*	*COMMENTS/ OBSERVATIONS*
Fluency	I communicate spontaneously and I am fluent. I avoid long pauses while searching for words.		He/she communicates spontaneously and he/she is fluent. He/she avoids long pauses while searching for words.	

Figure 3.9: 'Fluency' in my self- and peer-assessment grid (B2 level) on speaking skills

3.3.6 Coherence and cohesion

As shown in *Figure 3.10*, this aspect requires the use of different linking words and discourse markers so that the structure of the discourse can be clear. In addition, it is important that students react appropriately, continue a topic or successfully introduce a new topic.

ASPECT	*SELF-ASSESSMENT*	*COMMENTS/ OBSERVATIONS*	*PEER-ASSESSMENT*	*COMMENTS/ OBSERVATIONS*
Coherence and Cohesion	I use a variety of linking words and discourse markers (ex. "then", "well", etc.) to convey the relationships between ideas and to gain time to formulate what to say. I react appropriately and I am able to continue a topic or to successfully introduce another topic (ex. "by the way", "changing the subject", etc.).		He/she uses a variety of linking words and discourse markers (ex. "then", "well", etc.) to convey the relationships between ideas and to gain time to formulate what to say. He/she reacts appropriately and he/she is able to continue a topic or to successfully introduce another topic (ex. "by the way", "changing the subject", etc.).	

Figure 3.10: 'Coherence and cohesion' in my self- and peer-assessment grid (B2 level) on speaking skills

3.3.7 Interaction

'Interaction' (see *Figure 3.11*) plays a crucial role in a conversation. As a consequence, it is essential to note that students need to interact well with the other speaker, asking and answering questions. Moreover, they should participate actively and intervene appropriately in both usual and unusual formal discussions. At the same time, students need to use effective turn-taking strategies, but also stock phrases in order to show they are listening. Furthermore, they should react appropriately and, if necessary, ask for clarification.

ASPECT	*SELF-ASSESSMENT*	*COMMENTS/ OBSERVATIONS*	*PEER-ASSESSMENT*	*COMMENTS/ OBSERVATIONS*
Interaction	I interact well with the other speaker. I ask and answer questions. I participate actively and intervene appropriately in usual and unusual formal discussions. I use effective turn-taking strategies. I use stock phrases (ex. "I totally agree with you!", "Really?", etc.) to show I am listening. I react appropriately and, if necessary, I ask for clarification.		He/she interacts well with the other speaker. He/she asks and answers questions. He/she participates actively and intervenes appropriately in usual and unusual formal discussions. He/she uses effective turn-taking strategies. He/she uses stock phrases (ex. "I totally agree with you!","Really?", etc.) to show he/she is listening. He/she reacts appropriately and, if necessary, he/she asks for clarification.	

Figure 3.11: 'Interaction' in my self- and peer-assessment grid (B2 level) on speaking skills

3.4 The CEFR and my self- and peer-assessment grid (B2 level) on speaking skills

As previously explained, the CEFR self-assessment grid (B2 level) on speaking skills and its detailed description of the salient features of speaking skills at B2 level were a useful starting point for my grid since they offered me an overview of the main aspects of speaking. However, I tried to combine both the examples that I had found in the literature and the first-year professors and CELs' advice with my personal experience as a first-year student who took the 'General English' oral exam. In particular, when in 2015 I took this oral exam, a self- and peer-assessment grid (B2 level) on speaking skills was not provided to the first-year students so that they could practice their speaking skills both autonomously and in pairs. Therefore, since in the meanwhile I realised that the use of a self- and peer-assessment grid on speaking skills would have been very helpful for the first-year students, I decided to design it for the first-year students (Academic Year 2019/2020) so that EFL students could have the chance of practicing speaking skills through self- and peer-assessment.

As regards the CEFR self-assessment grid (B2 level) on speaking skills, it is possible to notice that it does not take account of peer-assessment and it is accompanied by 'can do' descriptors that communicate objectives to EFL learners. Moreover, it is fundamental to note that this grid distinguishes between spoken interaction and spoken interaction, but it does not take specific aspects into account.

In contrast, with reference to my grid, it is possible to observe that it takes account of both self- and peer-assessment since, as explained in the second chapter, these two types of assessment can be very helpful for EFL students if they are conducted together. In this respect, it is important to note that self- and peer-assessment can promote students' autonomy, increase their motivation, and, consequently, improve students' speaking skills considerably. Moreover, my self- and peer-assessment grid provides the first-year students with specific descriptors for each of the aspects considered (i.e. 'grammar', 'vocabulary', 'content', 'pronunciation', 'fluency', 'coherence and cohesion', 'interaction') with a view to giving them the chance of reflecting on the English language. Nevertheless, this grid is not based on 'can do' descriptors since it was designed in order to be a formative instrument for self- and peer-assessment with a view to consider the progress of the first-year students in improving their speaking skills.

As observed in this chapter, a self- and peer-assessment grid (B2 level) on speaking skills can be a helpful tool for EFL students in order to promote their autonomy and, as a consequence, improve their speaking skills taking account of the different aspects of the spoken language. Therefore, the last chapter will be devoted to the project on the use of my self- and peer-assessment grid (B2 level) on speaking skills.

CHAPTER 4: MY PROJECT ON THE USE OF MY SELF- AND PEER-ASSESSMENT GRID (B2 LEVEL) ON SPEAKING SKILLS

This chapter will be devoted to an in-depth analysis of my project on the use of my self- and peer-assessment grid (B2 level) on speaking skills. First, the project and its objectives will be described; second, the data collected will be reported. Finally, an analysis of the data will be conducted and some observations will be offered with a view to considering the effectiveness of this type of project even for future studies on self- and peer-assessment of speaking skills.

4.1 The project

My project was based on the use of my self- and peer-assessment grid (B2 level) on speaking skills in order to help both attending and non-attending first-year students of the bachelor's degree course in 'Lingue, letterature e mediazione culturale' (University of Padua) improve their speaking skills in view of their 'General English' oral exam. In particular, this project aimed both at promoting students' autonomy and increasing their motivation through self- and peer-assessment, and, consequently, at improving students' speaking skills considerably.

As regards my project, it is important to observe that it was divided into two parts. The first part consisted of a ten-minute conversation on the topic 'Higher Education' and, in this case, the students had to work in pairs in order to assess their peer's oral performance and, in turn, to be assessed by him/her. For both self- and peer-assessment they were given a 1 to 5 grading scale (1=need/needs improvement; 2=acceptable; 3=satisfactory; 4=good; 5=excellent) to evaluate the different aspects of speaking skills (i.e. 'grammar', 'vocabulary', 'content', 'pronunciation', 'fluency', 'coherence and cohesion', 'interaction') and, in addition, they had some space to add their comments/observations on both self- and peer-assessment. In contrast, the second part of the project was devoted to the comparison between the self-assessment and the peer-assessment. In this regard, I provided each student with the results (average)

considering both types of assessment; in brackets I reported both each student's comments/observations on his/her oral performance and his/her peer's ones. Moreover, I provided each student with my feedback on his/her oral performance and, during the project, I always tried to motivate EFL students to use the self- and peer-assessment grid with a view to reflecting on the different aspects of speaking skills and, as a consequence, improving autonomously.

Figure 4.1 shows the introduction to my feedback on students' oral performance. Even in this case I tried to emphasise the importance of self- and peer-assessment, their comments/observations on their and their peer's oral performance and the feedback, but, at the same time, I seized the opportunity in order to motivate first-year students to keep practicing speaking skills.

PROJECT: My self- and peer-assessment grid (B2 level) on speaking skills

Dear *(student's name)*,

Thank you for sending me your self- and peer-assessment grid. Your comments are very thoughtful. Here you can find the results (average) considering both types of assessment. In brackets you can also find your comments/observations and *(peer's name)*'s ones on the different aspects. Moreover, I provide you with my feedback on your oral performance. Keep up the good work!

Should you need any further information, please do not hesitate to get in contact with me.

Thank you once again for your cooperation and good luck!

All the best,

Alessia Benetollo

Figure 4.1: The introduction to my feedback on students' oral performance

4.1.1 The project via Zoom

It is fundamental to note that at first this project had been conceived to be carried out in person, that is, at university, but then, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I was compelled to perform this activity via Zoom. Obviously, even though this online platform can be used for distance learning, this type of technology cannot be compared to face-to-face interaction. However, thanks to students' cooperation, I managed to carry out my project via Zoom. Moreover, since all the students had consented to record their oral performance, I recorded the meetings via Zoom with a view to providing them with more accurate feedback and I guaranteed them that the project would have been entirely anonymous.

With reference to the participants, in May 2020 thirty first-year students (i.e. fifteen pairs) took part in my project in order to practice their speaking skills in view of their 'General English' oral exam. In particular, 27 of them were attending students, whereas 3 were non-attending students and, moreover, in most cases the participants knew each other. Some days before the meeting via Zoom, I sent them my self- and peer-assessment grid (B2 level) on speaking skills so that they could read the different descriptors and know on which aspects they would have assessed themselves and their peer. In addition, before the pair started to speak, I asked the students if they had any doubts about the grid, in particular the descriptors, since it was essential that both participants had clear the different aspects of the grid in order to use it properly.

Moreover, during the project, I highlighted the importance of the self- and peer-assessment grid, explaining that it aimed at promoting EFL students' autonomy in improving their oral proficiency. At the same time, I stressed the fact that the project would have been a considerable opportunity for them to enhance their speaking skills and to know on which aspects they would have been assessed during their final oral exam. Furthermore, I assured them that this activity would have given them the chance to reflect on their speaking skills taking account of the different aspects that contribute to a brilliant performance.

4.2 Students' peer- and self-assessment grids and my feedback on students' oral performance

In this section, the data collected will be reported and, consequently, analysed. In this regard, it is important to note that the different pairs will be identified with numbers 1-15, whereas the participants of each pair will be identified with SA (i.e. Student A) and SB (i.e. Student B). Moreover, it will be always indicated whether participants were attending students or non-attending students and if they knew each other or not.

4.2.1 Pair 1

Both participants were attending students and they knew each other.

Self- and peer-assessment of SA's (pair 1) oral performance:

GRAMMAR (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 4 [I think that at some points I made some grammatical mistakes with the use of the present and past tense trying to talk fast. Probably I need to talk slower and focus more carefully on what I'm saying.]
Peer-assessment: 5 [She expresses herself good and doesn't make grammatical errors that could impede comprehension. She is able to self-correct her errors and uses well structured sentences.]

VOCABULARY (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [I always try to rephrase a concept when I don't remember how to say a word. Probably I need to wider the range of words that I use and some more specific terminology.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [She expresses with a good range of vocabulary and is able to paraphrase when she doesn't know a word. I didn't hear repetitions that could be redundant and her lexicon is accurate.]

CONTENT (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 5 [I tried to come up with ideas that allowed me, and my peer to discuss and I think that it went pretty well, even if probably I should focus more on some objectives opinion. Probably we both need to talk more about what we did during the lessons.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [She expresses and supports her ideas and opinions with precision and she can respond to my opinions giving her viewpoint and adding some more information.]

PRONUNCIATION (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 4 [I think that my pronunciation is acceptable, not amazing but good. Sometimes I made some mistakes even if I know how to pronounce a word perfectly but probably it's normal in such a context.]
Peer-assessment: 5 [She has a clear intonation and she stresses correctly the words and expressions. Sometimes she makes some mispronunciations, but it is probably caused by the accent and not by conscious mistakes.]

FLUENCY (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [I think that I need to focus on my fluency because sometimes I made pauses.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [She is fluent and spontaneous. Even if she occasionally makes short pauses and she's able to go on with the discussion without stopping.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 4 [I think that I should use more "discourse markers" to connect my phrases, but I actually don't remember right now if I used a lot of "and" to connect my ideas or if I used some better conjunctions.]
Peer-assessment: 5 [She uses a wide range of correct linking words and connects the ideas in a clear and good way. she reacts properly and is able to continue a topic or to introduce a new one.]

INTERACTION (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 5 [I think that the interaction was good in both of us, since we found ourselves with a lot of common ideas that we shared.]
Peer-assessment: 5 [She interacts well with the other speaker. She participates and intervenes appropriately in the discussion and she uses stock phrases to show her opinions.]

My feedback on SA's (pair 1) oral performance:

GRAMMAR: 4 [You express yourself with a good grammatical control and your mistakes (ex. present tenses vs. past tenses) don't impede comprehension. Tip! You could use some question tags during your conversation.]

VOCABULARY: 4 [You express yourself with a good range of vocabulary and, when you don't know a word, you paraphrase. Tip! You could use some synonyms in order to avoid frequent repetitions and use more idiomatic expressions (ex. using 'lectures' instead of 'classes' or 'lessons'; 'in-person lessons' is more correct than 'lessons in presence'). Moreover, you could create a list of words/expressions that you are going to use to discuss these topics.]

CONTENT: 5 [You express and support your opinions with precision. Moreover, you give relevant examples of different themes on the topic. Tip! Remember to make reference to the materials on Moodle to express your viewpoint on a topical issue considering pros and cons.]

PRONUNCIATION: 4 [You speak with clearly intelligible pronunciation and appropriate intonation. Sometimes mispronunciations occur (ex. the plural form, the -ed ending to form the past simple and the past participle of regular verbs). Tip! If you have any doubts concerning pronunciation, consult an online dictionary (ex. https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/) since it can be very useful to improve this aspect.]

FLUENCY: 4 [You communicate spontaneously and you are quite fluent. Tip! You could brainstorm your ideas in advance in order to know how to organise your conversation avoiding hesitation.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION: 5 [You use a wide variety of linking words and discourse markers that help you convey the relationships between ideas and gain time to formulate what to say. Tip! You can always find other linking words (ex. Moreover, in conclusion, in spite of, etc.).]

INTERACTION: 5 [You interact well with the other speaker. In fact, you participate actively, and you react and intervene appropriately during your conversation. You use effective turn-taking strategies and different stock phrases.]

Self- and peer-assessment of SB's (pair 1) oral performance:

GRAMMAR (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [I think that I usually don't make huge mistakes that could impede comprehension, but I tend to make some mistakes linked to pronunciation (e.g.: I forget the "s" in the third person). I think that in general my grammar is quite good, but the main obstacle is being aware of everything I say and being able to grammatically control it.]
Peer-assessment: 5 [I didn't notice any particular mistakes neither in the concordances nor in the use of verbs.]

VOCABULARY (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [In my opinion my vocabulary is good enough to be able to have a good conversation, but I could learn a lot of new words and expressions. I usually tend to paraphrase a lot, and this leads to repetitions: it would be better if I had more words in my vocabulary.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [I didn't notice any mistakes in her use of vocabulary, if I have to say something I would say that probably she would need to use a wider range of words to express her thought, just to vary a little.]

CONTENT (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 4 [I think that my opinions and examples are well detailed and varied. In my opinion I can discuss in a good way with my colleague, and I can respond to her ideas while giving mine.]
Peer-assessment: 5 [I think that she expressed her ideas very well also giving a lot of examples about researches that she made and also talking about what we say in the labs. Probably we both need to talk more about what we did during the lessons.]

PRONUNCIATION (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [I am quite confident that my sentence and word stress is good, but I know that I make too much mispronunciation.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [I don't think that I can judge her pronunciation as I'm not a native speaker, but she was good.]

FLUENCY (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [I think that I communicate spontaneously and fluently, but I make too much pauses and I tend to stop when I don't know how to go on.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [She was fluent and spontaneous and she avoided strange pauses.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [I think that I am better in introducing successfully another topic or in continuing a topic, but I have tend to repeat the linking words that I use.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [She manages to connects ideas really well, I don't think that she had a lot of problems since she talked fluently following a scheme that probably she had in her mind.]

INTERACTION (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 5 [I use a lot of stock phrases to show that I am listening to my partner, and I give her the time to express everything she has to say.]
Peer-assessment: 5 [I think that the interaction was good in both of us, since we found ourselves with a lot of common ideas that we shared.]

My feedback on SB's (pair 1) oral performance:

GRAMMAR: 4 [You express yourself with a good grammatical control and your mistakes (ex. past simple vs. present perfect simple) don't impede comprehension. Tip! You could use some question tags during your conversation.]

VOCABULARY: 4 [You express yourself with a good range of vocabulary and, when you don't know a word, you paraphrase. Tip! You could use some synonyms in order to avoid frequent repetitions and use more idiomatic expressions (ex. using 'lectures' instead of 'classes' or 'lessons'; 'in-person lessons' is more correct than 'lessons in presence'). Moreover, you could create a list of words/expressions that you are going to use to discuss these topics.]

CONTENT: 5 [You express and support your opinions with absolute precision. Moreover, you give relevant examples of different themes on the topic. Tip! Remember to make reference to the materials on Moodle to express your viewpoint on a topical issue considering pros and cons.]

PRONUNCIATION: 4 [You speak with clearly intelligible pronunciation and appropriate intonation. Sometimes mispronunciations occur (ex. the plural form, the -ed ending to form the past simple and the past participle of regular verbs). Tip! Pay attention to the pronunciation of the word 'actually' /ˈæktʃuəli/. If you have any doubts concerning pronunciation, consult an online dictionary (ex. https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/) since it can be very useful to improve this aspect.]

FLUENCY: 4 [You communicate spontaneously and you are quite fluent. Tip! You could brainstorm your ideas in advance in order to know how to organise your conversation avoiding hesitation.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION: 5 [You use a wide variety of linking words and discourse markers that help you convey the relationships between ideas and gain time to formulate what to say. Tip! You can always find other linking words and discourse markers (ex. Moreover, in conclusion, likewise, hence, in spite of, to sum up, etc.).]

INTERACTION: 5 [You interact well with the other speaker. In fact, you participate actively, and you react and intervene appropriately during your conversation. You use effective turn-taking strategies and different stock phrases.]

4.2.2 Pair 2

SA was an attending student, whereas SB was a non-attending student, but they knew each other.

Self- and peer-assessment of SA's (pair 2) oral performance:

GRAMMAR (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 4 [Good; I made some mistakes due to the fact I was a little bit nervous.]
Peer-assessment: 5 [I think that she expresses herself with a good grammatical control.]

VOCABULARY (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [Satisfactory; I made some repetitions such as 'thinking', 'talking', 'I think'.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [I think that she has a good vocabulary in fact she uses suitable words to express her idea.]

CONTENT (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [Good.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [I think that she gives me a clear descriptions and she gives a good examples that supported his idea.]

PRONUNCIATION (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 2 [Acceptable.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [I think that she has a good pronunciation.]

FLUENCY (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [Satisfactory.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [I think that fluency is connected to pronunciation, in fact, in my opinion she is very fluent while she speaking.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 2 [Acceptable; I have to learn to use more words which connect sentences. When I write, it's easier to use them because I have more time to reflect.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [She uses many linking words.]

INTERACTION (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [Good.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [She interacts well with me and she uses good turn-taking strategies.]

My feedback on SA's (pair 2) oral performance:

GRAMMAR: 5 [You express yourself with a good grammatical control and you self-correct your errors (ex. present tenses vs. past tenses). Tip! You could use some question tags during your conversation. Moreover, pay attention to word order in sentences (ex. " I don't remember what kind of school did you attend in the past..." --> "I don't remember what kind of school you attended in the past...".]

VOCABULARY: 4 [You express yourself with a good range of vocabulary and, when you don't know a word, you paraphrase. Tip! You could use some synonyms in order to avoid frequent repetitions and use more idiomatic expressions (ex. 'to go to/attend a lecture'; 'a course offered online'). Moreover, you could create a list of words/expressions that you are going to use to discuss these topics.]

CONTENT: 4 [You express and support your opinions with precision. Moreover, you give relevant examples of different themes on the topic. Tip! Remember to make reference to the materials on Moodle to express your viewpoint on a topical issue considering pros and cons.]

PRONUNCIATION: 4 [You speak with clearly intelligible pronunciation and appropriate intonation. Sometimes mispronunciations occur (ex. the -ed ending to form the past simple and the past participle of regular verbs). Tip! If you have any doubts concerning pronunciation, consult an online dictionary (ex. https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/) since it can be very useful to improve this aspect.]

FLUENCY: 4 [You communicate spontaneously and you are quite fluent. Tip! You could brainstorm your ideas in advance in order to know how to organise your conversation avoiding hesitation.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION: 4 [You use a variety of linking words and discourse markers that help you convey the relationships between ideas and gain time to formulate what to say. Tip! You can always find other linking words and discourse markers (ex. Moreover, in conclusion, likewise, hence, in spite of, to sum up, etc.). In addition to this, you could think about how to introduce the topic and conclude the conversation.]

INTERACTION: 5 [You interact well with the other speaker. In fact, you participate actively, and you react and intervene appropriately during your conversation. You use effective turn-taking strategies and different stock phrases.]

Self- and peer-assessment of SB's (pair 2) oral performance:

GRAMMAR (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 2 [I think that I made many mistakes.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [Good.]

VOCABULARY (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 2 [I think that I have to enlarge my vocabulary because when I speak I realize that I use the same terms.]
Peer-assessment: 3 [Satisfactory.]

CONTENT (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 1 [I think that I support my ideas but I said few examples so I have to learn to express my idea with more examples.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [Good; she refers to what we have done in class, but also to her experience. This gave me the opportunity to talk about my own experience.]

PRONUNCIATION (average = 2):
Self-assessment: 1 [This point is very very crucial for me because I realize that I have a bad pronunciation. In fact, I would like to improve this aspect to make myself more confident when I speak.]
Peer-assessment: 2 [Acceptable.]

FLUENCY (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 2 [I think that I don't communicate I'm not very fluent because I always try to check my grammar and pronunciation so this makes me less fluent when I speak.]
Peer-assessment: 3 [Satisfactory; She made some pauses in order to find words, but at the same time this could be a sign of spontaneity]

COHERENCE AND COHESION (average = 2):
Self-assessment: 1 [I think that I use many linking words.]
Peer-assessment: 2 [Acceptable; I think she has the same problem I have, we know the correct words, but we haven't enough time to reflect.]

INTERACTION (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 2 [I think that I interact well with the other speaker but I would like to become more argumentative when I speak.]
Peer-assessment: 3 [Satisfactory; she did not ask me many questions.]

My feedback on SB's (pair 2) oral performance:

GRAMMAR: 3 [You express yourself with a satisfactory grammatical control and you avoid mistakes which could impede comprehension (ex. present tenses vs. past tenses). Tip! You could use some question tags during your conversation. Moreover, pay attention to the use of present tenses and past tenses (ex. "At high school my teacher teaches..." --> "At high school my teacher taught..." since this is an action referred to the past.]

VOCABULARY: 3 [You express yourself with a satisfactory range of vocabulary and, when you don't know a word, you paraphrase. Tip! You could use some synonyms in order to avoid frequent repetitions and use more idiomatic expressions (ex. 'to go to/attend a lecture'; 'a course offered online'). Remember that 'ignorance' is the noun, whereas 'ignorant' is the adjective. Moreover, you could create a list of words/expressions that you are going to use to discuss these topics.]

CONTENT: 4 [You express and support your opinions with precision. Moreover, you give relevant examples of different themes on the topic. Tip! Remember to make reference to the materials on Moodle to express your viewpoint on a topical issue considering pros and cons.]

PRONUNCIATION: 2 [Your pronunciation and intonation are acceptable. Sometimes mispronunciations occur (ex. the plural form, the -s in the third person singular of the present simple, the -ed ending to form the past simple and the past participle of regular verbs). Tip! If you have any doubts concerning pronunciation, consult an online dictionary (ex. https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/) since it can be very useful to improve this aspect. Pay attention to the pronunciation of the following words: 'exam' /ɪgˈzæm/,'lecture' /ˈlektʃə(r)/, 'literature' /ˈlɪtrətʃə(r)/, 'ignorance' /ˈɪgnərəns/.]

FLUENCY: 3 [You communicate with a satisfactory degree of spontaneity and you are quite fluent. Tip! You could brainstorm your ideas in advance in order to know how to organise your conversation avoiding hesitation.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION: 3 [You use some linking words and discourse markers that help you convey the relationships between ideas and gain time to formulate what to say. Tip! You can always find other linking words and discourse markers (ex. Moreover, in conclusion, likewise, hence, in spite of, to sum up, etc.). In addition to this, you could think about how to introduce the topic and conclude the conversation.]

INTERACTION: 4 [You interact well with the other speaker. In fact, you participate actively, and you react and intervene during your conversation. You use effective turn-taking strategies and different stock phrases. Tip! You could use some question tags to involve more the other speaker in the conversation.]

4.2.3 Pair 3

Both participants were attending students and they knew each other.

Self- and peer-assessment of SA's (pair 3) oral performance:

GRAMMAR (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [In my opinion I still need to improve my grammar. During the simulation I noticed that I sometimes use the wrong grammar forms.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [/]

VOCABULARY (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 5 [I think my vocabulary is wide enough, even though I will still look for some new words regarding the exam's topics.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [/]

CONTENT (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 4 [/]
Peer-assessment: 5 [She gives relevant examples about a variety of themes about the main topic.]

PRONUNCIATION (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 4 [I misspell some words, such as 'register'.]
Peer-assessment: 5 [/]

FLUENCY (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 4 [I think I may speak too fast sometimes.]

Peer-assessment: 5 [She's very fluent and spontaneous.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [/]
Peer-assessment: 4 [/]

INTERACTION (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 5 [In my opinion I interacted a lot with the other speaker. I asked her about her personal opinion regarding the topic and made some questions as well.]
Peer-assessment: 5 [She asks and answers questions and brings up different themes during the conversation.]

My feedback on SA's (pair 3) oral performance:

GRAMMAR: 5 [You express yourself with a good grammatical control and you self-correct your errors (ex. present tenses vs. past tenses). Tip! You could use some question tags during your conversation. Moreover, pay attention to word order in sentences.]

VOCABULARY: 5 [You express yourself with a good range of vocabulary and, when you don't know a word, you paraphrase. Tip! You could use some synonyms in order to avoid frequent repetitions and use more idiomatic expressions (ex. 'to go to/attend a lecture'; 'a course offered online'). Notice that in this context you should say 'oral recordings' instead of 'registrations'. Moreover, you could create a list of words/expressions that you are going to use to discuss these topics.]

CONTENT: 5 [You express and support your opinions with a high degree of precision. Moreover, you give relevant examples of different themes on the topic. Tip! Remember to make reference to the materials on Moodle to express your viewpoint on a topical issue considering pros and cons.]

PRONUNCIATION: 5 [You speak with clearly intelligible pronunciation and appropriate intonation even though sometimes mispronunciations occur (ex. the -s in the plural form). Tip! If you have any doubts concerning pronunciation, consult an online dictionary (ex. https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/) since it can be very useful to improve this aspect. Notice the correct pronunciation of the following words: 'register' /ˈredʒɪstə(r)/, 'courage' /ˈkʌrɪdʒ/ and 'receive' /rɪˈsiːv/.]

FLUENCY: 5 [You communicate spontaneously and you are very fluent. Tip! You could brainstorm your ideas in advance in order to know how to organise your conversation.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION: 4 [You use a variety of linking words and discourse markers that help you convey the relationships between ideas and gain time to formulate what to say. Tip! You can always find other linking words and discourse markers (ex. Moreover, in conclusion, likewise, hence, in spite of, to sum up, etc.). In addition to this, you could think about how to introduce the topic and conclude the conversation.]

INTERACTION: 5 [You interact well with the other speaker. In fact, you participate actively, and you react and intervene appropriately during your conversation. You use effective turn-taking strategies and different stock phrases. Tip! You could use some question tags to involve more the other speaker in the conversation.]

Self- and peer-assessment of SB's (pair 3) oral performance:

GRAMMAR (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [I have to pay more attention on the correct use of verb tenses (for ex. when I answer questions).]
Peer-assessment: 4 [She makes a good use of the grammar and I heard few mistakes.]

VOCABULARY (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 2 [I frequently repeat words and I try to paraphrase when I don't remember a word.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [She works with a good range of vocabulary.]

CONTENT (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [I don't give detailed descriptions or examples and I need to improve this.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [She interprets her speech a lot.]

PRONUNCIATION (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [/]
Peer-assessment: 4 [/]

FLUENCY (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 1 [/]
Peer-assessment: 5 [She communicates spontaneously and expresses her ideas clearly by talking at a normal speed.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 2 [I can introduce another topic asking questions, but I can't formulate a discourse using linking words.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [/]

INTERACTION (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 5 [I ask and answer questions about different topics.]
Peer-assessment: 5 [She expresses her opinion and asked me about mine.]

My feedback on SB's (pair 3) oral performance:

GRAMMAR: 4 [You express yourself with a good grammatical control and you self-correct your errors (ex. present tenses vs. past tenses). In addition to this, you avoid mistakes which could impede comprehension. Tip! You could use some question tags during your conversation. Moreover, pay attention to word order in sentences and to the use of present tenses and past tenses.]

VOCABULARY: 4 [You express yourself with a good range of vocabulary and, when you don't know a word, you paraphrase. Sometimes you repeat the same word/s. Tip! You could use some synonyms in order to avoid frequent repetitions and use more idiomatic expressions (ex. 'to go to/attend a lecture'; 'a course offered online'). Notice that in this context you should say 'oral recordings' instead of 'registrations'. Moreover, you could create a list of words/expressions that you are going to use to discuss these topics.]

CONTENT: 4 [You express and support your opinions with precision. Moreover, you give relevant examples of different themes on the topic. Tip! Remember to make reference to the materials on Moodle to express your viewpoint on a topical issue considering pros and cons.]

PRONUNCIATION: 4 [You speak with clearly intelligible pronunciation and appropriate intonation. Sometimes mispronunciations occur (ex. the -ed ending to form the past simple and the past participle of regular verbs, the -s in the plural form, the -s in the third person singular of the present simple). Tip! If you have any doubts concerning pronunciation, consult an online dictionary (ex. https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/) since it can be very useful to improve this aspect.]

FLUENCY: 4 [You communicate spontaneously and you are quite fluent. Tip! You could brainstorm your ideas in advance in order to know how to organise your conversation avoiding hesitation.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION: 3 [You use few linking words and discourse markers that can help you convey the relationships between ideas and gain time to formulate what to say. You react appropriately and you are able to continue a topic or to successfully introduce another topic Tip! You can always find other linking words and discourse markers (ex. Moreover, in conclusion, likewise, hence, in spite of, to sum up, etc.). In addition to this, you could think about how to introduce the topic and conclude the conversation.]

INTERACTION: 5 [You interact well with the other speaker. In fact, you participate actively, and you react and intervene appropriately during your conversation. You use effective turn-taking strategies and different stock phrases. Tip! You could use some question tags to involve more the other speaker in the conversation.]

4.2.4 Pair 4

Both participants were attending students and they knew each other.

Self- and peer-assessment of SA's (pair 4) oral performance:

GRAMMAR (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [I think that I let slip some mistakes sometimes but I don't notice it.]
Peer-assessment: 5 [She used different verbs without doing grammatical mistakes.]

VOCABULARY (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [I think I have a good vocabulary but I don't really pay attention to repetition.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [Her lexical accuracy is high and she succeeded in avoiding frequent repetitions.]

CONTENT (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 4 [I support my ideas fairly well but sometimes I get lost.]
Peer-assessment: 5 [She exposed objective facts and personal experiences too, also giving pros and cons.]

PRONUNCIATION (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [I have an acceptable pronunciation but get some words wrong.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [Her Italian accent doesn't influence so much her English one.]

FLUENCY (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 2 [I tend to get lost in thought causing the conversation to slow down and sometimes pause to choose the right word.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [Our conversation looked very spontaneous and there weren't long pauses.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [Pretty good on that but after a while I might repeat the same conjunctions.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [She used a good variety of linking words and was able to introduce new topics.]

INTERACTION (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 5 [We did interact in a good way.]
Peer-assessment: 5 [She interacted well with me and created a good conversation.]

My feedback on SA's (pair 4) oral performance:

GRAMMAR: 5 [You express yourself with a good grammatical control and you self-correct your errors (ex. present tenses vs. past tenses). Tip! You could use some question tags during your conversation. Moreover, pay attention to word order in sentences.]

VOCABULARY: 4 [You express yourself with a good range of vocabulary and, when you don't know a word, you paraphrase. Sometimes you repeat the same word/s. Tip! You could use some synonyms in order to avoid frequent repetitions and use more idiomatic expressions (ex. 'I think/believe/realize/assume/consider', 'to go to/attend a lecture', 'a course offered online';). Notice that in this context you should say 'in-person education/learning' instead of 'physical education' and 'access to higher education' instead of 'access with higher education'. Moreover, you could create a list of words/expressions that you are going to use to discuss these topics.]

CONTENT: 5 [You express and support your opinions with a high degree of precision. Moreover, you give relevant examples of different themes on the topic. Tip! Remember to make reference to the materials on Moodle to express your viewpoint on a topical issue considering pros and cons.]

PRONUNCIATION: 4 [Your pronunciation and intonation are good. Sometimes mispronunciations occur (ex. the plural form, the -ed ending to form the past simple and the past participle of regular verbs). Moreover, you nearly always use sentence stress and word stress correctly. Tip! If you have any doubts concerning pronunciation, consult an online dictionary (ex. https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/) since it can be very useful to improve this aspect.

FLUENCY: 4 [You communicate spontaneously and you are quite fluent. Tip! You could brainstorm your ideas in advance in order to know how to organise your conversation.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION: 4 [You use a variety of linking words and discourse markers that help you convey the relationships between ideas and gain time to formulate what to say. Moreover, you react appropriately and you are able to continue a topic or to introduce another topic. Tip! You can always find other linking words and discourse markers (ex. Moreover, in conclusion, likewise, hence, in spite of, to sum up, etc.). In addition to this, you could think about how to introduce the topic and conclude the conversation.]

INTERACTION: 5 [You interact well with the other speaker. In fact, you participate actively, and you react and intervene appropriately during your conversation. You use effective turn-taking strategies and different stock phrases. Tip! You could use some question tags to involve more the other speaker in the conversation.]

Self- and peer-assessment of SB's (pair 4) oral performance:

GRAMMAR (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [There are some grammatical mistakes but I usually tend to self-correct my errors.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [He pays attention to what he is saying and the way he is doing that.]

VOCABULARY (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [I used different words but at a certain point of the conversation I noticed that I was repeating too much times the same words.]
Peer-assessment: 3 [We have the same problem.]

CONTENT (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 5 [I talked about the topic introducing both objective facts and personal experiences; moreover I tried to express pros and cons about certain topics.]
Peer-assessment: 5 [He is really good in explaining and supporting ideas]

PRONUNCIATION (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 3 [My English is clearly influenced by my native tongue and I often do mispronunciation.]
Peer-assessment: 3 [He is more careful about the pronunciation but still get some words wrong.]

FLUENCY (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [Our conversation looked very spontaneous and there weren't long pauses.]
Peer-assessment: 3 [He constantly follows his line of thought but has some pauses in the research of the right words]

COHERENCE AND COHESION (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [I used different connectives to introduce the topic and my arguments.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [He's good too but has the same problem.]

INTERACTION (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 5 [I interacted a lot with the other speaker asking and answering questions, also using stock phrases.]
Peer-assessment: 5 [We did interact in a good way.]

My feedback on SB's (pair 4) oral performance:

GRAMMAR: 5 [You express yourself with a good grammatical control and you self-correct your errors (ex. present tenses vs. past tenses). Tip! You could use some question tags during your conversation. Moreover, pay attention to word order in sentences.]

VOCABULARY: 4 [You express yourself with a good range of vocabulary and, when you don't know a word, you paraphrase. Sometimes you repeat the same word/s. Tip! You could use some synonyms in order to avoid frequent repetitions and use more idiomatic expressions (ex. 'to go to/attend a lecture', 'a course offered online', 'I think/believe/realize/assume/consider, etc.'). Notice that in this context you should say 'in-person education/learning' instead of 'physical education'. Moreover, you could create a list of words/expressions that you are going to use to discuss these topics.]

CONTENT: 5 [You express and support your opinions with a high degree of precision. Moreover, you give relevant examples of different themes on the topic. Tip! Remember to make reference to the materials on Moodle to express your viewpoint on a topical issue considering pros and cons.]

PRONUNCIATION: 3 [Your pronunciation and intonation are satisfactory. Sometimes mispronunciations occur (ex. the plural form, the -ed ending to form the past simple and the past participle of regular verbs). Moreover, you nearly always use sentence stress and word stress correctly. Tip! If you have any doubts concerning pronunciation, consult an online dictionary (ex. https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/) since it can be very useful to improve this aspect. Notice the correct pronunciation of the following words: 'adventure' /ədˈventʃə(r)/, 'support' /səˈpɔːt/ and 'said' /sed/.]

FLUENCY: 5 [You communicate spontaneously and you are very fluent. Tip! You could brainstorm your ideas in advance in order to know how to organise your conversation.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION: 4 [You use a variety of linking words and discourse markers that help you convey the relationships between ideas and gain time to formulate what to say. Moreover, you react appropriately and you are able to continue a topic or to introduce another topic. Tip! You can always find other linking words and discourse markers (ex. Moreover, in conclusion, likewise, hence, in spite of, to sum up, etc.). In addition to this, you could think about how to introduce the topic and conclude the conversation.]

INTERACTION: 5 [You interact well with the other speaker. In fact, you participate actively, and you react and intervene appropriately during your conversation. You use effective turn-taking strategies and different stock phrases. Tip! You could use some question tags to involve more the other speaker in the conversation.]

4.2.5 Pair 5

Both participants were attending students and they knew each other.

Self- and peer-assessment of SA's (pair 5) oral performance:

GRAMMAR (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [I have to revise conditional and past tenses, because when I have to use it in complex sentences I don't use them well, so they can avoid comprehension. However, I think I have the ability to self-correct my errors.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [I think he used verbs in a correct and comprehensible way. Maybe he didn't use a lot of modal verbs.]

VOCABULARY (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [I should improve my vocabulary, especially when I have to deal with specific topics.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [He used a wide range of words avoiding repetition and incomprehension. He was able to paraphrase when he didn't remember some words and he expressed himself in a clear way]

CONTENT (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 4 [Maybe I should express better my viewpoint, because I'm not so capable at considering pros and cons.]
Peer-assessment: 5 [In my opinion he was able to make a lot of references to activities reviewed during the classes and also he made a lot of examples.]

PRONUNCIATION (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [I think I should improve my pronunciation as well as my intonation. I think I not always give the correct intonation, especially in questions. About pronunciation in general, I should practice more the vowel sounds.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [I think his pronunciation is good and he never made pronunciation mistakes. I didn't give him a five because I think his accent is not very marked even if he has a very good pronunciation.]

FLUENCY (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 4 [I think I'm enough fluent. However, I should learn more synonyms, because usually I make long pauses while searching for synonyms of a word.]
Peer-assessment: 5 [Personally he looked like he already knew what to say.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [I think I'm good at introducing new topics and at conveying relationships between ideas. However, I should improve this ability, because I noticed that sometimes I use the wrong linking word. Moreover, I sometimes introduce topics that are too much different from the previous one.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [I really appreciated the way he introduced the topic. Despite the large range of arguments, sometimes instead to motivate his opinion he repeated what he said before.]

INTERACTION (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 4 [I think my interaction is good. Maybe I should ask better the questions, because I think sometimes I asked things a bit confused. Talking about stock phrases, I use only "I agree/totally agree with you", so maybe I should use some other phrases.]
Peer-assessment: 5 [In my opinion he expressed himself in a clear way, so I never asked him for clarification. He made a lot of questions and this gave us the opportunity to keep up the conversation. He participated actively in the interview, he gave opinions and he motivated them. He used also stock phrases like “I totally agree with you” or “You’re right!”.]

My feedback on SA's (pair 5) oral performance:

GRAMMAR: 4 [You express yourself with a good grammatical control and you self-correct your errors (ex. present tenses vs. past tenses, conditional sentences). Moreover, you avoid mistakes which could impede comprehension. Tip! You could use some question tags and more modal verbs during your conversation. Moreover, pay attention to word order in sentences.]

VOCABULARY: 4 [You express yourself with a good range of vocabulary and, when you don't know a word, you paraphrase. Sometimes you repeat the same word/s. Tip! You could use some synonyms in order to avoid frequent repetitions and use more idiomatic expressions (ex. 'I think/believe/realize/assume/consider', 'to go to/attend a lecture', 'a course offered online'). Notice that the word 'satisfacted' does not exist, so you should say 'satisfied'. Moreover, you could create a list of words/expressions that you are going to use to discuss these topics.]

CONTENT: 5 [You express and support your opinions with a high degree of precision. Moreover, you give relevant examples of different themes on the topic. Tip! Remember to make reference to the materials on Moodle to express your viewpoint on a topical issue considering pros and cons.]

PRONUNCIATION: 4 [Your pronunciation and intonation are good. Sometimes mispronunciations occur (ex. the plural form, the -ed ending to form the past simple and the past participle of regular verbs). Moreover, you nearly always use sentence stress and word stress correctly. Tip! If you have any doubts concerning pronunciation, consult an online dictionary (ex. https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/) since it can be very useful to improve this aspect. Pay attention to how to use intonation in questions.

FLUENCY: 5 [You communicate spontaneously and you are fluent. Tip! You could brainstorm your ideas in advance in order to know how to organise your conversation.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION: 4 [You use a variety of linking words and discourse markers that help you convey the relationships between ideas and gain time to formulate what to say. Moreover, you react appropriately and you are able to continue a topic or to introduce another topic. Tip! You can always find other linking words and discourse markers (ex. Moreover, in conclusion, likewise, hence, in spite of, to sum up, etc.) paying attention to their meaning. In addition to this, you could think about how to introduce the topic and conclude the conversation.]

INTERACTION: 5 [You interact well with the other speaker. In fact, you participate actively, and you react and intervene appropriately during your conversation. You use effective turn-taking strategies and quite different stock phrases. Tip! You could use some question tags to involve more the other speaker in the conversation.]

Self- and peer-assessment of SB's (pair 5) oral performance:

GRAMMAR (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [I tried to use different verb tenses and modal verbs like even if I think that I have invented a verb and sometimes I could have mixed singular and plural forms.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [The grammatical control is good, and I have always comprehended what she was saying me. However, I would suggest using a variety of verb tenses (like conditionals).]

VOCABULARY (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [I think I expressed myself quite clearly even if sometimes I used to make some confusion. I also think I paraphrased when I didn't know a word instead to be seized by panic.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [She is clear and she well uses synonyms. Maybe she should paraphrase more, so to make more long and complex speeches.]

CONTENT (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [Personally I think I was able to keep up the conversation even if I should make more references to some videos or activities made in class.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [In my opinion se supports her opinions well. I would suggest considering more pros and cons while introducing an idea (I mean that she could consider several pros and cons when introducing a topic).]

PRONUNCIATION (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [In my opinion I was more focused on what I wanted to say instead of in which way express myself. So at the beginning I didn't pay a lot of attention in my pronunciation, while at the end of the interview I tried to be more focused on it.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [Pronunciation is good. Maybe she could work on intonation, especially when asking question and giving an opinion. I think that if she improves her intonation, she could better express her emotional involvement in what she's saying.]

FLUENCY (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [In my opinion I always found something to say, but when I wasn't able to express myself there were some pauses. I need some seconds to think about what I want to say, so maybe briefly pauses are normal]
Peer-assessment: 5 [She is fluent and avoids long pauses. I appreciated when she talked about universities in other countries, because she introduced that topic in a really spontaneous way.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [I think that I never went off-topic. I tried to use connectors even if I think I always used the same two. I always repeated "and you, what do you think about that?", but I should use different ways to ask an opinion instead to the repeat the same phrase 5 times.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [I think she is able to introduce topics and to react well. Maybe she could use different sentences to introduce a new topic.]

INTERACTION (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [I think that I interacted well with the other speaker. I gave opinions and I tried to motivate them giving also some examples. I made some questions even if that were grammatically incorrect. The other speaker never asked me for clarification, so I think that I expressed myself clearly.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [She interacts well and answers the questions in a clear way. Maybe she could use a variety of stock phrases, and not only "I agree".]

My feedback on SB's (pair 5) oral performance:

GRAMMAR: 4 [You express yourself with a good grammatical control and you self-correct your errors (ex. present tenses vs. past tenses). Moreover, you avoid mistakes which could impede comprehension. Tip! You could use some question tags, more modal verbs and conditional sentences during your conversation. Moreover, pay attention to word order in sentences.]

VOCABULARY: 4 [You express yourself with a good range of vocabulary and, when you don't know a word, you paraphrase. Sometimes you repeat the same word/s. Tip! You could use some synonyms in order to avoid frequent repetitions and use more idiomatic expressions (ex. 'I think/believe/realize/assume/consider', 'to go to/attend a lecture', 'a course offered online', 'in-person lectures', 'method/methodology'). Notice that the word 'argument' is not a synonym for 'topic' and you cannot say 'frequent a class' since you should say 'attend/go to a class'. Moreover, you could create a list of words/expressions that you are going to use to discuss these topics.]

CONTENT: 5 [You express and support your opinions with a high degree of precision. Moreover, you give relevant examples of different themes on the topic. Tip! Remember to make reference to the materials on Moodle to express your viewpoint on a topical issue considering pros and cons.]

PRONUNCIATION: 4 [Your pronunciation and intonation are good. Sometimes mispronunciations occur (ex. the plural form, the -ed ending to form the past simple and the past participle of regular verbs). Moreover, you nearly always use sentence stress and word stress correctly. Tip! If you have any doubts concerning pronunciation, consult an online dictionary (ex. https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/) since it can be very useful to improve this aspect. Pay attention to how to use intonation in questions and to the correct pronunciation of the word 'guarantee' /ˌgærənˈtiː/.

FLUENCY: 5 [You communicate spontaneously and you are fluent. Tip! You could brainstorm your ideas in advance in order to know how to organise your conversation.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION: 4 [You use linking words and discourse markers that help you convey the relationships between ideas and gain time to formulate what to say. Moreover, you react appropriately and you are able to continue a topic or to introduce another topic. Tip! You can always find other linking words and discourse markers (ex. Moreover, in conclusion, likewise, hence, in spite of, to sum up, etc.). In addition to this, you could think about how to introduce the topic and conclude the conversation.]

INTERACTION: 4 [You interact well with the other speaker. In fact, you participate actively, and you react and intervene appropriately during your conversation. You use effective turn-taking strategies. Tip! You could try to find different stock phrases and use some question tags to involve more the other speaker in the conversation.]

4.2.6 Pair 6

SA was an attending student, whereas SB was a non-attending student. Moreover, they did not know each other.

Self- and peer-assessment of SA's (pair 6) oral performance:

GRAMMAR (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [I made some mistakes with verb structures that I could have avoided.]
Peer-assessment: 5 [/]

VOCABULARY (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 4 [/]
Peer-assessment: 5 [Good vocabulary; Formal/informal register; Phrasal verbs.]

CONTENT (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [/]
Peer-assessment: 4 [She deserves 5 everywhere in this grid. I put 4 because she focuses more on personal experience and less on lab topics.]

PRONUNCIATION (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [/]
Peer-assessment: 4 [I'm not so able to comment that; she speaks faster than teachers. She has a soft pronunciation.]

FLUENCY (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [/]
Peer-assessment: 5 [Top!]

COHERENCE AND COHESION (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [/]
Peer-assessment: 5 [I wasn't able to remember something about linking words. She reacted appropriately.]

INTERACTION (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 4 [/]
Peer-assessment: 5 [No hesitation.]

My feedback on SA's (pair 6) oral performance:

GRAMMAR: 4 [You express yourself with a good grammatical control and you self-correct your errors (ex. present tenses vs. past tenses, conditional sentences). Moreover, you avoid mistakes which could impede comprehension. Tip! You could use some question tags during your conversation. Moreover, pay attention to word order in sentences.]

VOCABULARY: 5 [You express yourself with a good range of vocabulary and, when you don't know a word, you paraphrase. Tip! You could use some synonyms in order to avoid frequent repetitions and use more idiomatic expressions (ex. 'I think/believe/realize/assume/consider', 'to go to/attend a lecture', 'a course offered online'). Moreover, you could create a list of words/expressions that you are going to use to discuss these topics.]

CONTENT: 4 [You express and support your opinions with precision. Moreover, you give relevant examples of different themes on the topic. Tip! Remember to make reference to the materials on Moodle to express your viewpoint on a topical issue considering pros and cons.]

PRONUNCIATION: 4 [Your pronunciation and intonation are good. Sometimes mispronunciations occur (ex. the plural form). Moreover, you nearly always use sentence stress and word stress correctly. Tip! If you have any doubts concerning pronunciation, consult an online dictionary (ex. https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/) since it can be very useful to improve this aspect. In addition to this, pay attention to how to use intonation in questions.

FLUENCY: 5 [You communicate spontaneously and you are very fluent. Tip! You could brainstorm your ideas in advance in order to know how to organise your conversation.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION: 5 [You use a variety of linking words and discourse markers that help you convey the relationships between ideas and gain time to formulate what to say. Moreover, you react appropriately and you are able to continue a topic or to introduce another topic. Tip! You can always find other linking words and discourse markers (ex. Moreover, in conclusion, likewise, hence, in spite of, to sum up, etc.). In addition to this, you could think about how to introduce the topic and conclude the conversation.]

INTERACTION: 5 [You interact well with the other speaker. In fact, you participate actively, and you react and intervene appropriately during your conversation. You use effective turn-taking strategies and quite different stock phrases. Tip! You could use some question tags to involve more the other speaker in the conversation.]

Self- and peer-assessment of SB's (pair 6) oral performance:

GRAMMAR (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 2 [I'm aware that I need improvement.]
Peer-assessment: 3 [She expressed herself with a good grammar control, with some occasional mistakes.]

VOCABULARY (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [Maybe 3 relating to vocabulary. Not the same for lexical accuracy.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [She avoided repetitions and used the correct vocabulary.]

CONTENT (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [/]
Peer-assessment: 4 [/]

PRONUNCIATION (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 2 [/]
Peer-assessment: 3 [She has a good pronunciation, although in some cases intonation could have been adjusted differently.]

FLUENCY (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 3 [/]
Peer-assessment: 3 [/]

COHERENCE AND COHESION (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 2 [I don't know that. I panicked.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [She successfully introduced and continued the debates we held.]

INTERACTION (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [/]
Peer-assessment: 5 [She was confident when it came to create connections between the topics and start a new discussion thread.]

My feedback on SB's (pair 6) oral performance:

GRAMMAR: 3 [You express yourself with a satisfactory grammatical control and sometimes you self-correct your errors (ex. present tenses vs. past tenses, conditional sentences). Moreover, you avoid mistakes which could impede comprehension. Tip! You could use some question tags and more modal verbs during your conversation. Moreover, pay attention to word order in sentences.]

VOCABULARY: 4 [You express yourself with a good range of vocabulary and, when you don't know a word, you paraphrase. Sometimes you repeat the same word/s. Tip! You could use some synonyms in order to avoid frequent repetitions and use more idiomatic expressions (ex. 'I think/believe/realize/assume/consider', 'to go to/attend a lecture', 'a course offered online', 'opportunity/chance'). Moreover, you could create a list of words/expressions that you are going to use to discuss these topics.]

CONTENT: 4 [You express and support your opinions with precision. Moreover, you give relevant examples of different themes on the topic. Tip! Remember to make reference to the materials on Moodle to express your viewpoint on a topical issue considering pros and cons.]

PRONUNCIATION: 3 [Your pronunciation and intonation are satisfactory. Sometimes mispronunciations occur (ex. the plural form, the -ed ending to form the past simple and the past participle of regular verbs). Moreover, you nearly always use sentence stress and word stress correctly. Tip! If you have any doubts concerning pronunciation, consult an online dictionary (ex. https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/) since it can be very useful to improve this aspect. Pay attention to how to use intonation in questions and to the correct pronunciation of the following words: 'differently' /ˈdɪfrəntli/, 'opportunity' /ˌɒpəˈtjuːnəti/ and 'social' /ˈsəʊʃl/.]

FLUENCY: 3 [You communicate spontaneously and you are quite fluent. Tip! You could brainstorm your ideas in advance in order to know how to organise your conversation avoiding long pauses while searching for words.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION: 4 [You use linking words and discourse markers that help you convey the relationships between ideas and gain time to formulate what to say. Moreover, you react appropriately and you are able to continue a topic or to introduce another topic. Tip! You can always find other linking words and discourse markers (ex. Moreover, in conclusion, likewise, hence, in spite of, to sum up, etc.) paying attention to their meaning. In addition to this, you could think about how to introduce the topic and conclude the conversation.]

INTERACTION: 5 [You interact well with the other speaker. In fact, you participate actively, and you react and intervene appropriately during your conversation. You use effective turn-taking strategies and quite different stock phrases. Tip! You could use some question tags to involve more the other speaker in the conversation.]

4.2.7 Pair 7

Both participants were attending students and they knew each other.

Self- and peer-assessment of SA's (pair 7) oral performance:

GRAMMAR (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 3 [I expressed myself with a pretty low grammatical control. I made a few minor errors I could avoid. I tried to self correct many of them.]
Peer-assessment: 3 [She expresses herself with a good grammatical control and she avoids mistakes which could impede comprehension.]

VOCABULARY (average = 2):
Self-assessment: 1 [I express myself clearly; but my range of vocabulary is not accurate or high. I don't vary words to avoid frequent repetitions.]
Peer-assessment: 3 [/]

CONTENT (average = 2):
Self-assessment: 1 [I express and support my opinions not precisely. I didn't talk about the issues convincingly. I didn't give clear, detailed descriptions. I made examples of different themes on the topic. I express a viewpoint on a topical issue but not considering pros and cons.]
Peer-assessment: 2 [We both didn't express a viewpoint considering pros and cons.]

PRONUNCIATION (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [I speak with clearly intelligible pronunciation and appropriate intonation even though sometimes a foreign accent is evident and occasional mispronunciations occur. I nearly always use sentence stress and word stress correctly.]
Peer-assessment: 3 [/]

FLUENCY (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 2 [I don't communicate spontaneously and I'm not very fluent. I made a lot of pauses while searching for words.]
Peer-assessment: 3 [/]

COHERENCE AND COHESION (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 3 [I use a variety of linking words and discourse markers. I haven't reacted appropriately and I wasn't very able to continue a topic or successfully introduce another, especially at the end. I was better at the beginning.]
Peer-assessment: 2 [/]

INTERACTION (average = 2):
Self-assessment: 1 [/]
Peer-assessment: 3 [She uses effective turn-taking strategies and stock phrases, and she never asks for a clarification.]

My feedback on SA's (pair 7) oral performance:

GRAMMAR: 3 [You express yourself with a satisfactory grammatical control and sometimes you self-correct your errors (ex. present tenses vs. past tenses, conditional sentences). Moreover, you avoid mistakes which could impede comprehension (ex. You said 'I think everyone agree' instead of 'I think everyone agrees'). Tip! You could use some question tags and more modal verbs during your conversation. Moreover, pay attention to word order in sentences, in particular in questions; you should have said 'Do you mean to study..?' instead of 'You mean to study..?'.]

VOCABULARY: 4 [You express yourself with a satisfactory range of vocabulary and, when you don't know a word, you paraphrase. Sometimes you repeat the same word/s. Tip! You could use some synonyms in order to avoid frequent repetitions and use more idiomatic expressions (ex. 'I think/believe/realize/assume/consider', 'to go to/attend a lecture', 'a course offered online', 'helpful/useful'). Moreover, you could create a list of words/expressions that you are going to use to discuss these topics.]

CONTENT: 3 [You express and support your opinions with a satisfactory degree of precision. Moreover, you give examples of different themes on the topic. Tip! Remember to make reference to the materials on Moodle to express your viewpoint on a topical issue considering pros and cons.]

PRONUNCIATION: 4 [Your pronunciation and intonation are good. Sometimes mispronunciations occur (ex. the plural form, the -ed ending to form the past simple and the past participle of regular verbs). Moreover, you nearly always use sentence stress and word stress correctly. Tip! If you have any doubts concerning pronunciation, consult an online dictionary (ex. https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/) since it can be very useful to improve this aspect. Pay attention to how to use intonation in questions and to the correct pronunciation of the word 'higher' /ˈhaɪə(r)/.]

FLUENCY: 3 [You communicate spontaneously and you are quite fluent. Tip! You could brainstorm your ideas in advance in order to know how to organise your conversation.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION: 4 [You use a variety of linking words and discourse markers that help you convey the relationships between ideas and gain time to formulate what to say. Moreover, you react and you are able to continue a topic or to introduce another topic. Tip! You can always find other linking words and discourse markers (ex. Moreover, in conclusion, likewise, hence, in spite of, to sum up, etc.) paying attention to their meaning. In addition to this, you could think about how to introduce the topic and conclude the conversation.]

INTERACTION: 4 [You interact well with the other speaker. In fact, you participate actively, and you react and intervene appropriately during your conversation. You use some turn-taking strategies and quite different stock phrases. Tip! You could use some question tags to involve more the other speaker in the conversation.]

Self- and peer-assessment of SB's (pair 7) oral performance:

GRAMMAR (average = 2):
Self-assessment: 2 [I tried to express myself with a good grammatical control but I rarely self-corrected my errors.]
Peer-assessment: 2 [She made as well small grammar errors. She avoided mistakes which could impede comprehension.]

VOCABULARY (average = 2):
Self-assessment: 2 [/]
Peer-assessment: 1 [She expressed herself clearly; but her range of vocabulary was not accurate or high.]

CONTENT (average = 2):
Self-assessment: 2 [We both didn't express a viewpoint considering pros and cons.]
Peer-assessment: 1 [She expresses and supports her opinions but not precisely. She didn't talk about the issues convincingly. She didn't give clear, detailed descriptions. She made examples of different themes on the topic. She expresses a viewpoint.]

PRONUNCIATION (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 3 [/]
Peer-assessment: 3 [/]

FLUENCY (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 4 [/]
Peer-assessment: 2 [She doesn't communicates spontaneously and she is fluent. she made long pauses while searching for words.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 3 [I use a variety of linking words and discourse markers to gain time to formulate what to say and I am able to continue a topic or to introduce another topic.]
Peer-assessment: 3 [She was better at the end.]

INTERACTION (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 3 [/]
Peer-assessment: 2 [/]

My feedback on SB's (pair 7) oral performance:

GRAMMAR: 3 [You express yourself with a satisfactory grammatical control and sometimes you self-correct your errors (ex. present tenses vs. past tenses). Moreover, you avoid mistakes which could impede comprehension. Tip! You could use some question tags, more modal verbs and conditional sentences during your conversation. Moreover, pay attention to word order in sentences, in particular in questions; you should have said 'Do you think..?' instead of 'You think..?'.]

VOCABULARY: 3 [You express yourself with a satisfactory range of vocabulary and, when you don't know a word, you paraphrase. Sometimes you repeat the same word/s. Tip! You could use some synonyms in order to avoid frequent repetitions and use more idiomatic expressions (ex. 'I think/believe/realize/assume/consider', 'to go to/attend a lecture', 'a course offered online', 'in-person lectures'). Moreover, you could create a list of words/expressions that you are going to use to discuss these topics.]

CONTENT: 3 [You express and support your opinions with a satisfactory degree of precision. Moreover, you give examples of different themes on the topic. Tip! Remember to make reference to the materials on Moodle to express your viewpoint on a topical issue considering pros and cons.]

PRONUNCIATION: 3 [Your pronunciation and intonation are satisfactory. Sometimes mispronunciations occur (ex. the plural form, the -ed ending to form the past simple and the past participle of regular verbs). Moreover, you nearly always use sentence stress and word stress correctly. Tip! If you have any doubts concerning pronunciation, consult an online dictionary (ex. https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/) since it can be very useful to improve this aspect. Pay attention to how to use intonation in questions and to the correct pronunciation of the following words: 'literature' /ˈlɪtrətʃə(r)/, future /ˈfjuːtʃə(r)/, 'culture' /ˈkʌltʃə(r)/, 'especially' /ɪˈspeʃəli/, 'choose' /tʃuːz/ - 'chose' /tʃəʊz/ - 'chosen' /ˈtʃəʊzn/.]

FLUENCY: 3 [You communicate spontaneously and you are quite fluent. Tip! You could brainstorm your ideas in advance in order to know how to organise your conversation.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION: 4 [You use a variety of linking words and discourse markers that help you convey the relationships between ideas and gain time to formulate what to say. Moreover, you react and you are able to continue a topic or to introduce another topic. Tip! You can always find other linking words and discourse markers (ex. Moreover, in conclusion, likewise, hence, in spite of, to sum up, etc.) paying attention to their meaning. In addition to this, you could think about how to introduce the topic and conclude the conversation.]

INTERACTION: 4 [You interact well with the other speaker. In fact, you participate actively, and you react and intervene appropriately during your conversation. You use some turn-taking strategies and quite different stock phrases. Tip! You could use some question tags to involve more the other speaker in the conversation.]

4.2.8 Pair 8

Both participants were attending students and they knew each other.

Self- and peer-assessment of SA's (pair 8) oral performance:

GRAMMAR (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [/]
Peer-assessment: 5 [/]

VOCABULARY (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [/]
Peer-assessment: 5 [/]

CONTENT (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [/]
Peer-assessment: 5 [/]

PRONUNCIATION (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [/]
Peer-assessment: 4 [/]

FLUENCY (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [/]
Peer-assessment: 4 [/]

COHERENCE AND COHESION (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [/]
Peer-assessment: 4 [/]

INTERACTION (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 5 [/]
Peer-assessment: 5 [She completes my sentences and interacts very well with me.]

My feedback on SA's (pair 8) oral performance:

GRAMMAR: 5 [You express yourself with a good grammatical control and you self-correct your errors (ex. present tenses vs. past tenses). Moreover, you avoid mistakes which could impede comprehension. Tip! You could use some question tags during your conversation. Moreover, pay attention to word order in sentences.]

VOCABULARY: 5 [You express yourself with a good range of vocabulary and, when you don't know a word, you paraphrase. Tip! You could use some synonyms in order to avoid frequent repetitions and use more idiomatic expressions (ex. 'I think/believe/realize/assume/consider', 'to go to/attend a lecture', 'a course offered online', 'in-person lectures', 'in-person attendance'). Notice that you should have said 'theoretical' since 'theorical' does not exist. Moreover, you could create a list of words/expressions that you are going to use to discuss these topics.]

CONTENT: 5 [You express and support your opinions with a high degree of precision. Moreover, you give relevant examples of different themes on the topic. Tip! Remember to make reference to the materials on Moodle to express your viewpoint on a topical issue considering pros and cons.]

PRONUNCIATION: 5 [Your pronunciation and intonation are good. Moreover, you nearly always use sentence stress and word stress correctly. Tip! If you have any doubts concerning pronunciation, consult an online dictionary (ex. https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/) since it can be very useful to improve this aspect. In addition to this, pay attention to how to use intonation in questions.]

FLUENCY: 5 [You communicate spontaneously and you are very fluent. Tip! You could brainstorm your ideas in advance in order to know how to organise your conversation.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION: 4 [You use a variety of linking words and discourse markers that help you convey the relationships between ideas and gain time to formulate what to say. Moreover, you react appropriately and you are able to continue a topic or to introduce another topic. Tip! You can always find other linking words and discourse markers (ex. Moreover, in conclusion, likewise, hence, in other words, in spite of, to sum up, etc.). In addition to this, you could think about how to introduce the topic and conclude the conversation.]

INTERACTION: 5 [You interact well with the other speaker. In fact, you participate actively, and you react and intervene appropriately during your conversation. You use effective turn-taking strategies and quite different stock phrases. Tip! You could use some question tags to involve more the other speaker in the conversation.]

Self- and peer-assessment of SB's (pair 8) oral performance:

GRAMMAR (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 3 [I feel insecure with my grammar knowledge when I am under pressure.]
Peer-assessment: 3 [/]

VOCABULARY (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 3 [/]
Peer-assessment: 2 [/]

CONTENT (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [/]
Peer-assessment: 3 [/]

PRONUNCIATION (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [/]
Peer-assessment: 3 [/]

FLUENCY (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 2 [/]
Peer-assessment: 3 [/]

COHERENCE AND COHESION (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 3 [/]
Peer-assessment: 3 [/]

INTERACTION (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 5 [/]
Peer-assessment: 5 [/]

My feedback on SB's (pair 8) oral performance:

GRAMMAR: 3 [You express yourself with a satisfactory grammatical control and you self-correct your errors (ex. present tenses vs. past tenses, conditional sentences). Tip! You could use some question tags during your conversation. Moreover, pay attention to word order in sentences and to subject-verb agreement (ex. You said 'A man who were working...' instead of 'A man who was working...'.]

VOCABULARY: 3 [You express yourself with a satisfactory range of vocabulary and, when you don't know a word, you paraphrase. Tip! You could use some synonyms in order to avoid frequent repetitions and use more idiomatic expressions (ex. 'to go to/attend a lecture'; 'a course offered online', 'in-person lectures' 'possibility/chance/opportunity'). Notice that you said '... did sacrifices', but you should have said '...made sacrifices'. Moreover, you could create a list of words/expressions that you are going to use to discuss these topics.]

CONTENT: 4 [You express and support your opinions with precision. Moreover, you give examples of different themes on the topic. Tip! Remember to make reference to the materials on Moodle to express your viewpoint on a topical issue considering pros and cons.]

PRONUNCIATION: 4 [Your pronunciation and intonation are good even though sometimes mispronunciations occur (ex. the -s in the plural form, the -s in the third person singular of the present simple, the -ed ending to form the past simple and the past participle of regular verbs). Tip! If you have any doubts concerning pronunciation, consult an online dictionary (ex. https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/) since it can be very useful to improve this aspect. Notice the correct pronunciation of the word 'support' /səˈpɔːt/.]

FLUENCY: 3 [You communicate with a satisfactory degree of spontaneity and you are quite fluent. Tip! You could brainstorm your ideas in advance in order to know how to organise your conversation.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION: 3 [You use some linking words and discourse markers that help you convey the relationships between ideas and gain time to formulate what to say. Tip! You can always find other linking words and discourse markers (ex. Moreover, in conclusion, likewise, hence, in other words, in spite of, to sum up, etc.). In addition to this, you could think about how to introduce the topic and conclude the conversation.]

INTERACTION: 5 [You interact well with the other speaker. In fact, you participate actively, and you react and intervene appropriately during your conversation. You use effective turn-taking strategies and different stock phrases. Tip! You could use some question tags to involve more the other speaker in the conversation.]

4.2.9 Pair 9

Both participants were attending students, but they did not know each other.

Self- and peer-assessment of SA's (pair 9) oral performance:

GRAMMAR (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [I think I use always the same construction and sometimes I use the wrong prepositions.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [/]

VOCABULARY (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 2 [I always do repetitions; I have a small range of vocabulary.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [/]

CONTENT (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 5 [I always know what I want to say. I have a lot of ideas on each topic.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [She introduced interesting themes on the topic.]

PRONUNCIATION (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 3 [My pronunciation is too influenced by the Italian one.]
Peer-assessment: 3 [/]

FLUENCY (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 5 [I always speak, without hesitations.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [She was natural and fluent.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [I link well the ideas but maybe I should change the connectors sometimes.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [She used some good linking words.]

INTERACTION (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 5 [I speak and listen a lot. I do questions to the other and wait for an answer.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [She interacted very well, but according to me she should restrict a little the time of her turns.]

My feedback on SA's (pair 9) oral performance:

GRAMMAR: 4 [You express yourself with a good grammatical control and you self-correct your errors (ex. present tenses vs. past tenses, conditional sentences). Moreover, you avoid mistakes which could impede comprehension. Tip! You could use some question tags during your conversation. Moreover, pay attention to word order in sentences.]

VOCABULARY: 3 [You express yourself with a satisfactory range of vocabulary and, when you don't know a word, you paraphrase. Sometimes you repeat the same word/s. Tip! You could use some synonyms in order to avoid frequent repetitions and use more idiomatic expressions (ex. 'I think/believe/realize/assume/consider', 'to go to/attend a lecture', 'a course offered online', 'in-person lectures', 'in-person attendance', 'possibility/chance/opportunity'). Notice that you should have said 'tour guide/tourist guide' since 'travel guide' indicates the book and not the profession/job; in this context, you should have used the term 'reading' and not 'lecture' in order to indicate the process of reading. Moreover, you could create a list of words/expressions that you are going to use to discuss these topics.]

CONTENT: 5 [You express and support your opinions with a high degree of precision. Moreover, you give relevant examples of different themes on the topic. Tip! Remember to make reference to the materials on Moodle to express your viewpoint on a topical issue considering pros and cons.]

PRONUNCIATION: 3 [Your pronunciation and intonation are satisfactory. Moreover, you nearly always use sentence stress and word stress correctly. Sometimes mispronunciations occur (ex. the -ed ending to form the past simple and the past participle of regular verbs). Tip! If you have any doubts concerning pronunciation, consult an online dictionary (ex. https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/) since it can be very useful to improve this aspect. In addition to this, pay attention to how to use intonation in questions and to the correct pronunciation of the following words: 'higher' /ˈhaɪə(r)/ and 'fundamental' /ˌfʌndəˈmentl/.]

FLUENCY: 5 [You communicate spontaneously and you are very fluent. Tip! You could brainstorm your ideas in advance in order to know how to organise your conversation.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION: 4 [You use a variety of linking words and discourse markers that help you convey the relationships between ideas and gain time to formulate what to say. Moreover, you react appropriately and you are able to continue a topic or to introduce another topic. Tip! You can always find other linking words and discourse markers (ex. Moreover, in conclusion, likewise, hence, in other words, in spite of, to sum up, etc.). In addition to this, you could think about how to introduce the topic and conclude the conversation.]

INTERACTION: 5 [You interact well with the other speaker. In fact, you participate actively, and you react and intervene appropriately during your conversation. You use effective turn-taking strategies and quite different stock phrases. Tip! You could use some question tags to involve more the other speaker in the conversation.]

Self- and peer-assessment of SB's (pair 9) oral performance:

GRAMMAR (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [/]
Peer-assessment: 4 [She is very good in grammar, she uses very well the verb tenses, maybe sometimes she could change the constructions.]

VOCABULARY (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [/]
Peer-assessment: 4 [She has a very wide range of vocabulary, but she can improve more.]

CONTENT (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 4 [I think to have touched different aspects of the topic.]
Peer-assessment: 5 [She always adds very interesting ideas.]

PRONUNCIATION (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [/]
Peer-assessment: 4 [Her pronunciation is quite good, but she is still influenced by Italian.]

FLUENCY (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [Because I had little hesitations.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [She speaks in a fluent way, but sometimes she hesitates maybe because she is thinking about what she has to say.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [/]
Peer-assessment: 4 [She links her ideas very well. Sometimes she should change the connectors.]

INTERACTION (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 5 [/]
Peer-assessment: 5 [She asked me a lot of questions and she listened to me so she interacts very well.]

My feedback on SB's (pair 9) oral performance:

GRAMMAR: 5 [You express yourself with a good grammatical control and you self-correct your errors (ex. present tenses vs. past tenses, conditional sentences). Moreover, you avoid mistakes which could impede comprehension. Tip! You could use some question tags during your conversation. Moreover, pay attention to word order in sentences.]

VOCABULARY: 4 [You express yourself with a good range of vocabulary and, when you don't know a word, you paraphrase. Tip! You could use some synonyms in order to avoid frequent repetitions and use more idiomatic expressions (ex. 'I think/believe/realize/assume/consider', 'to go to/attend a lecture', 'a course offered online', 'in-person lectures', 'in-person attendance'). Notice that you should have said 'imagine' since 'imaginate' does not exist. Moreover, you could create a list of words/expressions that you are going to use to discuss these topics.]

CONTENT: 5 [You express and support your opinions with a high degree of precision. Moreover, you give relevant examples of different themes on the topic. Tip! Remember to make reference to the materials on Moodle to express your viewpoint on a topical issue considering pros and cons.]

PRONUNCIATION: 4 [Your pronunciation and intonation are good. Moreover, you nearly always use sentence stress and word stress correctly. Sometimes mispronunciations occur (ex. the plural form, the -s in the third person singular of the present simple, the -ed ending to form the past simple and the past participle of regular verbs). Tip! If you have any doubts concerning pronunciation, consult an online dictionary (ex. https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/) since it can be very useful to improve this aspect. In addition to this, pay attention to how to use intonation in questions and to the correct pronunciation of the word 'enhance' /ɪnˈhɑːns/.]

FLUENCY: 4 [You communicate spontaneously and you are quite fluent. Tip! You could brainstorm your ideas in advance in order to know how to organise your conversation.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION: 4 [You use a variety of linking words and discourse markers that help you convey the relationships between ideas and gain time to formulate what to say. Moreover, you react appropriately and you are able to continue a topic or to introduce another topic. Tip! You can always find other linking words and discourse markers (ex. Moreover, in conclusion, likewise, hence, in other words, in spite of, to sum up, etc.). In addition to this, you could think about how to introduce the topic and conclude the conversation.]

INTERACTION: 5 [You interact well with the other speaker. In fact, you participate actively, and you react and intervene appropriately during your conversation. You use effective turn-taking strategies and quite different stock phrases. Tip! You could use some question tags to involve more the other speaker in the conversation.]

4.2.10 Pair 10

Both participants were attending students, but they did not know each other.

Self- and peer-assessment of SA's (pair 10) oral performance:

GRAMMAR (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [Overall I have a great grammatical control. I do my best to avoid wrong verb tenses or distraction mistakes.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [She expresses herself with a good grammatical control. She avoids mistakes which could impede comprehension.]

VOCABULARY (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [Sometimes I make repetitions and in general I think I have a narrow range of vocabulary.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [She expresses herself clearly, with a good range of vocabulary.]

CONTENT (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [I could explain a topic through its pros and cons instead of concentrating only on one main aspect.]
Peer-assessment: 3 [She expresses and supports her opinions with precision and talks about the issue convincingly. She gives clear descriptions and relevant examples of different themes on the topic. She expresses a viewpoint on a topic issue considering pros and cons.]

PRONUNCIATION (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 3 [I think that I should work more on my intonation in order to make my interaction more interesting.]
Peer-assessment: 3 [She speaks with clearly intelligible pronunciation and appropriate intonation even though sometimes a foreign accent is evident. She nearly always uses sentence stress and word stress correctly.]

FLUENCY (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [Sometimes I feel that I do too long pauses because I do not know what to talk about.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [She communicates spontaneously and she avoids long pauses while searching for words.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 3 [I feel that I tend to use the same range of linking words.]
Peer-assessment: 3 [He/she uses a variety of linking words and discourse markers to convey the relationships between ideas and to gain time to formulate what to say. He/she reacts appropriately and he/she is able to continue a topic or to successfully introduce another topic.]

INTERACTION (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [I tried to add as much questions as possible in order to make the interaction flew well, even though sometimes I did not know how to continue the discussion.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [She interacts well with the other speaker. She asks and answers questions. She participates actively and intervenes appropriately in usual and unusual formal discussions. She uses effective turn- taking strategies.
She uses stock phrases to show she is listening. She reacts appropriately and, if necessary.]

My feedback on SA's (pair 10) oral performance:

GRAMMAR: 4 [You express yourself with a good grammatical control and you self-correct your errors (ex. present tenses vs. past tenses, conditional sentences). Moreover, you avoid mistakes which could impede comprehension. Tip! You could use some question tags during your conversation. Moreover, pay attention to word order in sentences and to some constructions: you said 'Every time I listen at her...' instead of 'Every time I listen to her...'.]

VOCABULARY: 4 [You express yourself with a good range of vocabulary and, when you don't know a word, you paraphrase. Tip! You could use some synonyms in order to avoid frequent repetitions and use

more idiomatic expressions (ex. 'I think/believe/realize/assume/consider', 'to go to/attend a lecture', 'a course offered online', 'in-person lectures', 'in-person attendance', 'chance/opportunity/possibility', 'essential/fundamental/important', 'situation/circumstances'). Moreover, you could create a list of words/expressions that you are going to use to discuss these topics.]

CONTENT: 4 [You express and support your opinions with precision. Moreover, you give relevant examples of different themes on the topic. Tip! Remember to make reference to the materials on Moodle to express your viewpoint on a topical issue considering pros and cons.]

PRONUNCIATION: 4 [Your pronunciation and intonation are good. Moreover, you nearly always use sentence stress and word stress correctly. Sometimes mispronunciations occur (ex. the plural form, the -s in the third person singular of the present simple, the -ed ending to form the past simple and the past participle of regular verbs). Tip! If you have any doubts concerning pronunciation, consult an online dictionary (ex. https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/) since it can be very useful to improve this aspect. In addition to this, pay attention to how to use intonation in questions and to the correct pronunciation of the word 'money' /ˈmʌni/.]

FLUENCY: 4 [You communicate spontaneously and you are quite fluent. Tip! You could brainstorm your ideas in advance in order to know how to organise your conversation.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION: 4 [You use a variety of linking words and discourse markers that help you convey the relationships between ideas and gain time to formulate what to say. Moreover, you react appropriately and you are able to continue a topic or to introduce another topic. Tip! You can always find other linking words and discourse markers (ex. Moreover, in conclusion, likewise, hence, in other words, in spite of, to sum up, etc.). In addition to this, you could think about how to introduce the topic and conclude the conversation.]

INTERACTION: 4 [You interact well with the other speaker. In fact, you participate actively, and you react and intervene appropriately during your conversation. You use effective turn-taking strategies and quite different stock phrases. Tip! You could use some question tags to involve more the other speaker in the conversation.]

Self- and peer-assessment of SB's (pair 10) oral performance:

GRAMMAR (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [I express myself with good grammatical control; sometimes I did some tenses confusion. I think that I have avoided mistakes that could impede comprehension.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [She did only few grammar mistakes, maybe because she felt "under pressure".]

VOCABULARY (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [I express myself clearly, with quite good range of vocabulary. Maybe I repeated too much "I think".]
Peer-assessment: 4 [She has a good range of vocabulary and she did not do as many repetitions as I did.]

CONTENT (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [I express my opinion with precision. I give relevant examples of different themes. I express a viewpoint on a topical issue considering pros and cons.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [She expressed many different points of view about higher education.]

PRONUNCIATION (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [I speak with clearly intelligible pronunciation an almost appropriate intonation even though sometimes foreign accent is evident and occasional mispronunciations occur.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [In my opinion she has a good pronunciation and her foreign accent is not so evident.]

FLUENCY (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [I communicate spontaneously and I am quite fluent. I avoid long pauses while searching words.]
Peer-assessment: 3 [Sometimes she did some pauses, but I think it was a matter of "stress" and anxiety.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [I use variety of linking words and discourse markers. I react appropriately and I am able to continue a topic or to successfully introduce another topic.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [She used a many linking words and always reacted appropriately to what I said.]

INTERACTION (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 4 [I interact well with the other speaker. I ask and answer questions. I participate actively and intervene appropriately in usual and unusual formal discussions. I use effective turn-taking strategies. I react appropriately and, if necessary, I ask for clarification.]
Peer-assessment: 5 [She Always does a question after having explained her view and somehow, when I could not find a topic to talk about, she understood and she started focusing on another point, "saving" the interaction from a long pause.]

My feedback on SB's (pair 10) oral performance:

GRAMMAR: 4 [You express yourself with a good grammatical control and you self-correct your errors (ex. present tenses vs. past tenses, conditional sentences). Moreover, you avoid mistakes which could impede comprehension. Tip! You could use some question tags during your conversation. Moreover, pay attention to word order in sentences.]

VOCABULARY: 4 [You express yourself with a good range of vocabulary and, when you don't know a word, you paraphrase. Tip! You could use some synonyms in order to avoid frequent repetitions and use more idiomatic expressions (ex. 'I think/believe/realize/assume/consider', 'to go to/attend a lecture', 'a course offered online', 'in-person lectures', 'in-person attendance', 'chance/opportunity/possibility', 'essential/fundamental/important', 'situation/circumstances'). Moreover, you could create a list of words/expressions that you are going to use to discuss these topics.]

CONTENT: 4 [You express and support your opinions with precision. Moreover, you give relevant examples of different themes on the topic. Tip! Remember to make reference to the materials on Moodle to express your viewpoint on a topical issue considering pros and cons.]

PRONUNCIATION: 4 [Your pronunciation and intonation are good. Moreover, you nearly always use sentence stress and word stress correctly. Sometimes mispronunciations occur (ex. the plural form, the -s in the third person singular of the present simple, the -ed ending to form the past simple and the past participle of regular verbs). Tip! If you have any doubts concerning pronunciation, consult an online dictionary (ex. https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/) since it can be very useful to improve this aspect. In addition to this, pay attention to how to use intonation in questions.]

FLUENCY: 4 [You communicate spontaneously and you are quite fluent. Tip! You could brainstorm your ideas in advance in order to know how to organise your conversation.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION: 4 [You use a variety of linking words and discourse markers that help you convey the relationships between ideas and gain time to formulate what to say. Moreover, you react appropriately and you are able to continue a topic or to introduce another topic. Tip! You can always find other linking words and discourse markers (ex. Moreover, in conclusion, likewise, hence, in other words, in spite of, to sum up, etc.). In addition to this, you could think about how to introduce the topic and conclude the conversation.]

INTERACTION: 5 [You interact well with the other speaker. In fact, you participate actively, and you react and intervene appropriately during your conversation. You use effective turn-taking strategies and quite different stock phrases. Tip! You could use some question tags to involve more the other speaker in the conversation.]

4.2.11 Pair 11

Both participants were attending students and they knew each other.

Self- and peer-assessment of SA's (pair 11) oral performance:

GRAMMAR (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 2 [I tend to use, sometimes, the wrong verb tense, especially the past tenses.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [She didn't make mistakes which could impede comprehension.]

VOCABULARY (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [I noticed that I repeat the same words over and over.]
Peer-assessment: 5 [She expresses herself clearly with a good vocabulary]

CONTENT (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [We talked about the topic without particular details and we finished the oral interaction without having a conclusion.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [She could give more detailed descriptions and examples.]

PRONUNCIATION (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [/]
Peer-assessment: 4 [She has some problems with "th" sound.]

FLUENCY (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 2 [I have difficulties when I need to express myself.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [She communicates spontaneously enough.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 3 [We were only talking about two aspects of the main topic and because of this there was no use of linking words. There were moments when we contradicted our initial thoughts.]
Peer-assessment: 3 [We were talking about only one topic so we didn't have the chance to use linking words.]

INTERACTION (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [We both participated, in the same proportion to the discussion and we both had a turn to speak.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [We interacted well enough and participated actively but we didn't use stock phrases and didn't ask anything to each other.]

My feedback on SA's (pair 11) oral performance:

GRAMMAR: 4 [You express yourself with a good grammatical control and sometimes you self-correct your errors (ex. present tenses vs. past tenses, conditional sentences). Moreover, you avoid mistakes which could impede comprehension. Tip! You could use some question tags and more modal verbs during your conversation. Moreover, pay attention to word order in sentences and to some constructions (ex. You said 'Everyone who don't have the possibility...' instead of 'Everyone who doesn't have the possibility...'.]

VOCABULARY: 4 [You express yourself with a good range of vocabulary and, when you don't know a word, you paraphrase. Sometimes you repeat the same word/s. Tip! You could use some synonyms in order to avoid frequent repetitions and use more idiomatic expressions (ex. 'I think/believe/realize/assume/consider', 'to go to/attend a lecture', 'a course offered online', 'opportunity/chance'). Moreover, you could create a list of words/expressions that you are going to use to discuss these topics.]

CONTENT: 4 [You express and support your opinions with a good degree of precision. Moreover, you give some examples of different themes on the topic. Tip! Remember to make reference to the materials on Moodle to express your viewpoint on a topical issue considering pros and cons.]

PRONUNCIATION: 4 [Your pronunciation and intonation are good. Sometimes mispronunciations occur (ex. the plural form, the -ed ending to form the past simple and the past participle of regular verbs). Moreover, you nearly always use sentence stress and word stress correctly. Tip! If you have any doubts concerning pronunciation, consult an online dictionary (ex. https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/) since it can be very useful to improve this aspect. Pay attention to how to use intonation in questions and to the correct pronunciation of the 'th' sound (voiced /ð/ and unvoiced /θ/).]

FLUENCY: 4 [You communicate spontaneously and you are quite fluent. Tip! You could brainstorm your ideas in advance in order to know how to organise your conversation avoiding long pauses while searching for words.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION: 3 [You use few linking words and discourse markers that could help you convey the relationships between ideas and gain time to formulate what to say. In addition to this, you react appropriately and you are able to continue a topic or to introduce another topic. Tip! You can always find other linking words and discourse markers (ex. Moreover, in conclusion, likewise, hence, in other words, in spite of, to sum up, etc.). In addition to this, you could think about how to introduce the topic and conclude the conversation.]

INTERACTION: 4 [You interact well with the other speaker. In fact, you participate actively, and you react and intervene appropriately during your conversation. You use effective turn-taking strategies, but few stock phrases. Tip! You could use some question tags to involve more the other speaker in the conversation.]

Self- and peer-assessment of SB's (pair 11) oral performance:

GRAMMAR (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 3 [Sometimes I use wrong verb tenses.]
Peer-assessment: 3 [I noticed some verb tense mistakes.]

VOCABULARY (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [I couldn't remember some words and I couldn't paraphrase when I didn't know a word.]

Peer-assessment: 3 [Even if she sometimes forgot some words she needed a few moments to remember and then she continued to carry on the speech.]

CONTENT (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 3 [I could improve my opinions with more information which could support them]
Peer-assessment: 3 [We talked about the topic without particular details and we finished the oral interaction without having a conclusion.]

PRONUNCIATION (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [I have to do more practice with the pronunciation.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [I love the fact she always pronounces right the "th" sound which I can't.]

FLUENCY (average = 2):
Self-assessment: 2 [I can't avoid long pauses while searching for words.]
Peer-assessment: 2 [Sometimes, she forgot the words she had to say.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 3 [We were talking about only one topic so we didn't have the chance to use linking words.]
Peer-assessment: 3 [We were only talking about two aspects of the main topic and because of this there were no use of linking words. There were moments when we contradicted our initial thoughts.]

INTERACTION (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [We interacted well enough and participated actively but we didn't use stock phrases and didn't ask anything to each other.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [We both participated, in the same proportion to the discussion and we both had a turn to speak.]

My feedback on SB's (pair 11) oral performance:

GRAMMAR: 3 [You express yourself with a satisfactory grammatical control and you self-correct your errors (ex. present tenses vs. past tenses, conditional sentences). Moreover, you avoid mistakes which could impede comprehension. Tip! You could use some question tags during your conversation. In addition to this, pay attention to word order in sentences and to some constructions (ex. You said 'Sometimes can be boring' instead of 'Sometimes it can be boring'; you should have said 'Not everybody has the possibility...' and not 'Not everybody have the possibility...'; you said 'The same people who hasn't time...' instead of 'The same people who haven't time...').]

VOCABULARY: 4 [You express yourself with a good range of vocabulary even though sometimes you repeat the same word/s. Tip! You could paraphrase and use some synonyms in order to avoid frequent repetitions and use more idiomatic expressions (ex. 'I think/believe/realize/assume/consider', 'to go to/attend a lecture', 'a course offered online', 'in-person lectures', 'in-person attendance', 'possibility/chance/opportunity'). Moreover, you could create a list of words/expressions that you are going to use to discuss these topics.]

CONTENT: 3 [You express and support your opinions with a satisfactory degree of precision. Moreover, you give some examples of different themes on the topic. Tip! Remember to make reference to the materials on Moodle to express your viewpoint on a topical issue considering pros and cons.]

PRONUNCIATION: 4 [Your pronunciation and intonation are good. Moreover, you nearly always use sentence stress and word stress correctly. Sometimes mispronunciations occur (ex. the -ed ending to form the past simple and the past participle of regular verbs). Tip! If you have any doubts concerning pronunciation, consult an online dictionary (ex. https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/) since it can be very useful to improve this aspect. In addition to this, pay attention to how to use intonation in

questions and to the correct pronunciation of the following words: 'higher' /ˈhaɪə(r)/, 'already' /ɔːlˈredi/ and 'cultural' /ˈkʌltʃərəl/.]

FLUENCY: 3 [You communicate spontaneously, but your fluency is influenced by your anxiety. Tip! You could brainstorm your ideas in advance in order to know how to organise your conversation.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION: 3 [You use few linking words and discourse markers that could help you convey the relationships between ideas and gain time to formulate what to say. In addition to this, you react appropriately and you are able to continue a topic or to introduce another topic. Tip! You can always find other linking words and discourse markers (ex. Moreover, in conclusion, likewise, hence, in other words, in spite of, to sum up, etc.). Moreover, you could think about how to introduce the topic and conclude the conversation.]

INTERACTION: 4 [You interact well with the other speaker. In fact, you participate actively, and you react and intervene appropriately during your conversation. You use effective turn-taking strategies, but few stock phrases. Tip! You could use some question tags to involve more the other speaker in the conversation.]

4.2.12 Pair 12

Both participants were attending students, but they did not know each other.

Self- and peer-assessment of SA's (pair 12) oral performance:

GRAMMAR (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 2 [/]
Peer-assessment: 3 [She expresses herself properly but sometimes she makes mistakes regarding verbs.]

VOCABULARY (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 3 [/]
Peer-assessment: 3 [She expresses herself in a good way but she doesn't paraphrases when she doesn't know a word.]

CONTENT (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [/]
Peer-assessment: 5 [What she said was coherent.]

PRONUNCIATION (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 3 [I think I speak with clearly intelligible pronunciation and appropriate intonation even though sometimes my foreign accent is evident and occasional mispronunciations occur.]
Peer-assessment: 3 [She has a good pronunciation though sometimes she pronounced in a wrong way certain words.]

FLUENCY (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [/]
Peer-assessment: 4 [/]

COHERENCE AND COHESION (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 3 [/]
Peer-assessment: 3 [/]

INTERACTION (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [/]
Peer-assessment: 5 [/]

My feedback on SA's (pair 12) oral performance:

GRAMMAR: 3 [You express yourself with a satisfactory grammatical control and sometimes you self-correct your errors (ex. present tenses vs. past tenses). Moreover, you avoid mistakes which could impede comprehension. Tip! You could use some question tags during your conversation. In addition to this, pay attention to word order in sentences (ex. You said "English I think is very important..." instead of "I think English is very important..."; you should have said "Do you mean...?" and not "You mean...?").]

VOCABULARY: 3 [You express yourself with a satisfactory range of vocabulary even though sometimes you repeat the same word/s. Tip! You could use some synonyms in order to avoid frequent repetitions and use more idiomatic expressions (ex. 'I think/believe/realize/assume/consider', 'to go to/attend a lecture', 'a course offered online', 'in-person lectures', 'in-person attendance', 'possibility/chance/opportunity', 'obligatory/compulsory'). Moreover, you could create a list of words/expressions that you are going to use to discuss these topics.]

CONTENT: 4 [You express and support your opinions with a good degree of precision. Moreover, you give examples of different themes on the topic. Tip! Remember to make reference to the materials on Moodle to express your viewpoint on a topical issue considering pros and cons.]

PRONUNCIATION: 3 [Your pronunciation and intonation are satisfactory. Moreover, you nearly always use sentence stress and word stress correctly. Sometimes mispronunciations occur (ex. the -ed ending to form the past simple and the past participle of regular verbs, the plural form). Tip! If you have any doubts concerning pronunciation, consult an online dictionary (ex. https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/) since it can be very useful to improve this aspect. In addition to this, pay attention to how to use intonation in questions and to the correct pronunciation of the following words: 'language' /ˈlæŋgwɪdʒ/ and 'develop' /dɪˈveləp/.]

FLUENCY: 4 [You communicate spontaneously and you are quite fluent. Tip! You could brainstorm your ideas in advance in order to know how to organise your conversation.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION: 3 [You use few linking words and discourse markers that could help you convey the relationships between ideas and gain time to formulate what to say. Moreover, you react appropriately and you are able to continue a topic or to introduce another topic. Tip! You can always find other linking words and discourse markers (ex. Moreover, in conclusion, likewise, hence, in other words, in spite of, to sum up, etc.). In addition to this, you could think about how to introduce the topic and conclude the conversation.]

INTERACTION: 4 [You interact well with the other speaker. In fact, you participate actively, and you react and intervene appropriately during your conversation. You use effective turn-taking strategies and quite different stock phrases. Tip! You could use some question tags to involve more the other speaker in the conversation.]

Self- and peer-assessment of SB's (pair 12) oral performance:

GRAMMAR (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 2 [I self-correct myself but I make many mistakes that make the message difficult to comprehend.]
Peer-assessment: 3 [/]

VOCABULARY (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [I express myself with a good range of vocabulary, trying to avoid repetitions.]
Peer-assessment: 3 [She uses a good range of vocabulary and she varies words to avoid frequent repetitions.]

CONTENT (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 5 [What I said was coherent.]
Peer-assessment: 3 [/]

PRONUNCIATION (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 5 [I think I have a clear pronunciation the most of the time.]
Peer-assessment: 3 [Sometimes her foreign accent is evident and some words are pronounced without the correct stress but in general she speaks with clearly intelligible pronunciation.]

FLUENCY (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 5 [I communicate spontaneously and I am fluent.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [She avoids pauses while searching for words.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION (average = 2):
Self-assessment: 2 [I don't use linking words.]
Peer-assessment: 2 [She is able to continue a topic, but maybe she could improve to introduce another topic without just asking a question.]

INTERACTION (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 5 [/]
Peer-assessment: 2 [She asks many questions without an introduction and maybe this could put in trouble the other person who doesn’t have the time to think about it.]

My feedback on SB's (pair 12) oral performance:

GRAMMAR: 3 [You express yourself with a satisfactory grammatical control and you often self-correct your errors (ex. present tenses vs. past tenses, conditional sentences). Moreover, you avoid mistakes which could impede comprehension. Tip! You could use some question tags during your conversation. In addition to this, pay attention to word order in sentences.]

VOCABULARY: 4 [You express yourself with a good range of vocabulary and, when you don't know a word, you paraphrase. Sometimes you repeat the same word/s. Tip! You could use some synonyms in order to avoid frequent repetitions and use more idiomatic expressions (ex. 'I think/believe/realize/assume/consider', 'to go to/attend a lecture', 'a course offered online', 'in-person lectures', 'in-person attendance', 'possibility/chance/opportunity', 'obligatory/compulsory'). Moreover, you could create a list of words/expressions that you are going to use to discuss these topics.]

CONTENT: 5 [You express and support your opinions with a high degree of precision. Moreover, you give relevant examples of different themes on the topic. Tip! Remember to make reference to the materials on Moodle to express your viewpoint on a topical issue considering pros and cons.]

PRONUNCIATION: 4 [Your pronunciation and intonation are good. Moreover, you nearly always use sentence stress and word stress correctly. Sometimes mispronunciations occur (ex. the -ed ending to form the past simple and the past participle of regular verbs). Tip! If you have any doubts concerning pronunciation, consult an online dictionary (ex. https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/) since it can be very useful to improve this aspect. In addition to this, pay attention to how to use intonation in questions and to the correct pronunciation of the word 'pronunciation' /prəˌnʌnsiˈeɪʃn/.]

FLUENCY: 5 [You communicate spontaneously and you are fluent. Tip! You could brainstorm your ideas in advance in order to know how to organise your conversation.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION: 3 [You use few linking words and discourse markers that could help you convey the relationships between ideas and gain time to formulate what to say. Moreover, you react appropriately and you are able to continue a topic or to introduce another topic. Tip! You can always find other linking words and discourse markers (ex. Moreover, in conclusion, likewise, hence, in other words, in spite of, to sum up, etc.). In addition to this, you could think about how to introduce the topic and conclude the conversation.]

INTERACTION: 5 [You interact well with the other speaker. In fact, you participate actively, and you react and intervene appropriately during your conversation. You use effective turn-taking strategies and quite different stock phrases. Tip! You could use some question tags to involve more the other speaker in the conversation.]

4.2.13 Pair 13

Both participants were attending students, but they did not know each other.

Self- and peer-assessment of SA's (pair 13) oral performance:

GRAMMAR (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [I think to express myself with a good grammatical control. Of course I can improve it, especially when I have to improvise, which is the moment in which I am more likely to make some mistakes.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [Her grammar was perfect, she didn't make any mistakes at all.]

VOCABULARY (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [I think to use a quite good range of vocabulary, but I can enrich my knowledge. However, my lexical accuracy is generally high and I always try to avoid repetitions.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [Also she needs to check new words but I think she used a higher language than mine.]

CONTENT (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 5 [I think to express my opinion clearly, giving reasons and examples. I always try to analyze the topic, so that it can be clear to the listener, by considering pros and cons and by avoiding banal consideration.]
Peer-assessment: 5 [I think she has expressed her opinion well because she has spoken about my personal experience but she has also given examples of what we treated in class.]

PRONUNCIATION (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 5 [I think to have a good pronunciation, even though sometimes it is clear that I'm Italian.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [Her intonation was also a bit Italian but her pronunciation was clearly and she has committed no mistakes.]

FLUENCY (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 4 [I think to be fluent while talking, I always avoid long pauses by trying to rephrase what I want to say.]
Peer-assessment: 5 [She has spoken spontaneously and very fluently.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 5 [I use a large variety of linking words and I think to be able to introduce topics quite good.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [She has used a lot of connector and has always formulated well her sentences and questions.]

INTERACTION (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 4 [I think to interact quite well with the other speaker, I let her talk and then I answer by agreeing/disagreeing politely and giving reason in support of my thesis. However, I think that I could be a bit more interactive.]
Peer-assessment: 5 [She interacted well with me: she has used stock phrases and also helped me going on with my answer.]

My feedback on SA's (pair 13) oral performance:

GRAMMAR: 5 [You express yourself with a good grammatical control and you self-correct your errors (ex. present tenses vs. past tenses). Moreover, you avoid mistakes which could impede comprehension. Tip! You could use some question tags during your conversation. Moreover, pay attention to word order in sentences.]

VOCABULARY: 4 [You express yourself with a good range of vocabulary and, when you don't know a word, you paraphrase. Tip! You could use some synonyms in order to avoid frequent repetitions and use more idiomatic expressions (ex. 'I think/believe/realize/assume/consider', 'to go to/attend a lecture', 'a course offered online', 'in-person lectures', 'in-person attendance', 'chance/opportunity/possibility'). Notice that you should have said 'available to people' and not 'available for people' since 'available for' is used for things. Moreover, you could create a list of words/expressions that you are going to use to discuss these topics.]

CONTENT: 5 [You express and support your opinions with a high degree of precision. Moreover, you give relevant examples of different themes on the topic. Tip! Remember to make reference to the materials on Moodle to express your viewpoint on a topical issue considering pros and cons.]

PRONUNCIATION: 5 [Your pronunciation and intonation are good. Moreover, you nearly always use sentence stress and word stress correctly. Tip! If you have any doubts concerning pronunciation, consult an online dictionary (ex. https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/) since it can be very useful to improve this aspect. In addition to this, pay attention to how to use intonation in questions and to the correct pronunciation of the word 'fortunately' /ˈfɔːtʃənətli/.]

FLUENCY: 5 [You communicate spontaneously and you are very fluent. Tip! You could brainstorm your ideas in advance in order to know how to organise your conversation.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION: 5 [You use a variety of linking words and discourse markers that help you convey the relationships between ideas and gain time to formulate what to say. Moreover, you react

appropriately and you are able to continue a topic or to introduce another topic. Tip! You can always find other linking words and discourse markers (ex. Moreover, in conclusion, likewise, hence, in other words, in spite of, to sum up, etc.). In addition to this, you could think about how to introduce the topic and conclude the conversation.]

INTERACTION: 5 [You interact well with the other speaker. In fact, you participate actively, and you react and intervene appropriately during your conversation. You use effective turn-taking strategies and quite different stock phrases. Tip! You could use some question tags to involve more the other speaker in the conversation.]

Self- and peer-assessment of SB's (pair 13) oral performance:

GRAMMAR (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 1 [My grammar was not perfect since sometimes I've made some spelling mistakes.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [I think that also my peer expresses herself with a good grammatical control, but it might happen that she makes some mistakes.]

VOCABULARY (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 3 [I think I need to improve my vocabulary and search new words for every topic.]
Peer-assessment: 3 [She expresses herself clearly and in a correct way, but sometimes tends to repeat some words.]

CONTENT (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 5 [I think I've expressed my opinion well because I've spoken about my personal experience but I've also given examples of what we treated in class.]
Peer-assessment: 5 [I think that also my peer expresses her opinions by supporting them with relevant examples, including the description of her personal experiences.]

PRONUNCIATION (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 2 [I think my pronunciation was not perfect and my intonation was very Italian.]
Peer-assessment: 5 [She has a good pronunciation.]

FLUENCY (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [My fluency was not bad, since I was able to communicate with my peer but I need to make less pauses.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [She speaks fluently, but in some cases she stops to search the words she needs.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [I need to use more linkers, but at the same time I was always able to continue the conversation.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [My pear is able to react properly and knows how to continue a topic in a good way. In my opinion she should use more linking word.]

INTERACTION (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [I've interact quite well with Lisa because I've answered all her questions, I've also added stock phrase.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [I think that she interacts well with the other speaker. She reacts properly and supports her ideas politely. Probably she should try to make more elaborated questions.]

My feedback on SB's (pair 13) oral performance:

GRAMMAR: 3 [You express yourself with a satisfactory grammatical control and sometimes you self-correct your errors (ex. present tenses vs. past tenses, conditional sentences). Moreover, you avoid mistakes which could impede comprehension. Tip! You could use some question tags during your conversation. Moreover, pay attention to word order in sentences and to some constructions (ex. You said "Even for students who doesn't have..." instead of "Even for students who don't have..."; you should have said "University doesn't prepare us..." and not "University don't prepare us...").]

VOCABULARY: 3 [You express yourself with a satisfactory range of vocabulary and, when you don't know a word, you paraphrase. Tip! You could use some synonyms in order to avoid frequent repetitions and use more idiomatic expressions (ex. 'I think/believe/realize/assume/consider', 'to go to/attend a lecture', 'a course offered online', 'in-person lectures', 'in-person attendance', 'chance/opportunity/possibility', 'essential/fundamental/important', 'situation/circumstances'). Notice that you should have said 'available to people' and not 'available for people' since 'available for' is used for things. Moreover, you could create a list of words/expressions that you are going to use to discuss these topics.]

CONTENT: 5 [You express and support your opinions with a high degree of precision. Moreover, you give relevant examples of different themes on the topic. Tip! Remember to make reference to the materials on Moodle to express your viewpoint on a topical issue considering pros and cons.]

PRONUNCIATION: 4 [Your pronunciation and intonation are good. Moreover, you nearly always use sentence stress and word stress correctly. Sometimes mispronunciations occur (ex. the plural form, the -s in the third person singular of the present simple, the -ed ending to form the past simple and the past participle of regular verbs). Tip! If you have any doubts concerning pronunciation, consult an online dictionary (ex. https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/) since it can be very useful to improve this aspect. In addition to this, pay attention to how to use intonation in questions and to the correct pronunciation of the word 'exam' /ɪgˈzæm/.]

FLUENCY: 4 [You communicate spontaneously and you are quite fluent. Tip! You could brainstorm your ideas in advance in order to know how to organise your conversation.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION: 4 [You use few linking words and discourse markers that could help you convey the relationships between ideas and gain time to formulate what to say. Moreover, you react appropriately and you are able to continue a topic or to introduce another topic. Tip! You can always find other linking words and discourse markers (ex. Moreover, in conclusion, likewise, hence, in other words, in spite of, to sum up, etc.). In addition to this, you could think about how to introduce the topic and conclude the conversation.]

INTERACTION: 4 [You interact well with the other speaker. In fact, you participate actively, and you react and intervene during your conversation. You use effective turn-taking strategies and quite different stock phrases. Tip! You could use some question tags to involve more the other speaker in the conversation.]

4.2.14 Pair 14

SA was an attending student, whereas SB was a non-attending student. Moreover, they did not know each other.

Self- and peer-assessment of SA's (pair 14) oral performance:

GRAMMAR (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [I am quite satisfied because I avoided grammar mistakes and apart from one time, I was able to express my idea correctly in order to be understood by my partner.]
Peer-assessment: 3 [/]

VOCABULARY (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 3 [I realized I miss some vocabulary. I am able to paraphrase when I can't remember or I don't know a word.]
Peer-assessment: 2 [She needs to broaden her vocabulary, even though it was acceptable.]

CONTENT (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [I was able to express many themes about the chosen topic.]
Peer-assessment: 3 [The content is satisfactory because she supported her opinions as much as possible in only ten minutes.]

PRONUNCIATION (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 3 [My pronunciation permits my partner to understand what I say but I should improve intonation, apart from when ask something.]
Peer-assessment: 2 [/]

FLUENCY (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 3 [I am fluent most of the time but not always.]
Peer-assessment: 2 [/]

COHERENCE AND COHESION (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 2 [I used a few connectors and I wasn't always ready to answer to my partner's ideas using expression that give cohesion to the conversation.]
Peer-assessment: 3 [/]

INTERACTION (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [I was interactive most of the time expect for answering the questions because my partner didn't do many.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [Her interaction was good; the fact she had detained the focus of the topic helped her to strike up a good interaction.]

My feedback on SA's (pair 14) oral performance:

GRAMMAR: 5 [You express yourself with a good grammatical control and you self-correct your errors (ex. present tenses vs. past tenses). Moreover, you avoid mistakes which could impede comprehension. Tip! You could use some question tags during your conversation. In addition to this, pay attention to word order in sentences.]

VOCABULARY: 4 [You express yourself with a good range of vocabulary and, when you don't know a word, you paraphrase. Tip! You could use some synonyms in order to avoid frequent repetitions and use more idiomatic expressions (ex. 'I think/believe/realize/assume/consider', 'to go to/attend a lecture', 'in-person lectures', 'in-person attendance', 'chance/opportunity/possibility'). Moreover, you could create a list of words/expressions that you are going to use to discuss these topics. Notice that the words 'argument' and 'topic' aren't synonyms, and that the English word 'scholarship' is the exact equivalent of the Italian expression 'borsa di studio'.]

CONTENT: 5 [You express and support your opinions with a high degree of precision. Moreover, you give relevant examples of different themes on the topic. Tip! Remember to make reference to the materials on Moodle to express your viewpoint on a topical issue considering pros and cons.]

PRONUNCIATION: 4 [Your pronunciation and intonation are good. Moreover, you nearly always use sentence stress and word stress correctly. Tip! If you have any doubts concerning pronunciation, consult an online dictionary (ex. https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/) since it can be very useful to improve this aspect. In addition to this, pay attention to how to use intonation in questions and to the correct pronunciation of the -ed ending used to form the past simple and the past participle of regular verbs.]

FLUENCY: 4 [You communicate spontaneously and you are fluent. Tip! You could brainstorm your ideas in advance in order to know how to organise your conversation.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION: 4 [You use some linking words and discourse markers that help you convey the relationships between ideas and gain time to formulate what to say. Moreover, you react appropriately and you are able to continue a topic or to introduce another topic. Tip! You can always find other linking words and discourse markers (ex. Moreover, in conclusion, likewise, hence, in other words, in spite of, to sum up, etc.). In addition to this, you could think about how to introduce the topic and conclude the conversation.]

INTERACTION: 5 [You interact well with the other speaker. In fact, you participate actively, and you react and intervene appropriately during your conversation. You use effective turn-taking strategies and different stock phrases. Tip! You could use some question tags to involve more the other speaker in the conversation.]

Self- and peer-assessment of SB's (pair 14) oral performance:

GRAMMAR (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 2 [In my opinion, the grammatical aspect was quite acceptable even though it was repetitive. I should improve my grammar in order to express myself in a more complete manner.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [He was able to express himself in order to be understood and he avoided big mistakes.]

VOCABULARY (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 2 [I need to broaden my vocabulary, even though it was acceptable.]
Peer-assessment: 3 [If he improves his vocabulary, he will be able to talk more about his ideas.]

CONTENT (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [The content is satisfactory because I supported my opinions as much as possible in only ten minutes.]
Peer-assessment: 4 [He has always talked convincingly about his ideas.]

PRONUNCIATION (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 2 [/]
Peer-assessment: 3 [I think he can improve his intonation in order to be able to give a different sound to his speech.]

FLUENCY (average = 2):
Self-assessment: 1 [Fluency, in my opinion, is an aspect which I have to improve much more. It is not satisfactory at all.]
Peer-assessment: 3 [He was fluent, but not always ready to express totally his ideas.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION (average = 3):
Self-assessment: 3 [/]
Peer-assessment: 2 [He was able to say if he agreed or not with my ideas. However, he couldn't continue on theme for a long time and he wasn't able to change the subject.]

INTERACTION (average = 2):
Self-assessment: 3 [The interaction is quite satisfactory, but at the same time, I did not have the possibility to interact more because she detained the topic focus.]
Peer-assessment: 1 [I think he should be prepared to ask something to his partner.]

My feedback on SB's (pair 14) oral performance:

GRAMMAR: 3 [You express yourself with a satisfactory grammatical control and you often self-correct your errors (ex. present tenses vs. past tenses). Moreover, you avoid mistakes which could impede comprehension. Tip! You could use some question tags during your conversation and more conditional sentences. Moreover, pay attention to word order in sentences.]

VOCABULARY: 3 [You express yourself with a satisfactory range of vocabulary and, when you don't know a word, you paraphrase. Sometimes you repeat the same word/s. Tip! You could use some synonyms in order to avoid frequent repetitions and use more idiomatic expressions (ex. 'I think/believe/realize/assume/consider', 'to go to/attend a lecture', 'in-person lectures', 'in-person attendance', 'possibility/chance/opportunity', 'method/methodology'). In addition to this, you could create a list of words/expressions that you are going to use to discuss these topics.]

CONTENT: 4 [You express and support your opinions. Moreover, you give some examples of different themes on the topic. Tip! Remember to make reference to the materials on Moodle to express your viewpoint on a topical issue considering pros and cons.]

PRONUNCIATION: 3 [Your pronunciation and intonation are satisfactory. Moreover, you nearly always use sentence stress and word stress correctly. Sometimes mispronunciations occur (ex. the -ed ending to form the past simple and the past participle of regular verbs). Tip! If you have any doubts concerning pronunciation, consult an online dictionary (ex. https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/) since it can be very useful to improve this aspect. In addition to this, pay attention to how to use intonation in questions and to the correct pronunciation of the following words: 'allow' /əˈlaʊ/ and 'method' /ˈmeθəd/.]

FLUENCY: 2 [Your fluency is acceptable. Tip! You could brainstorm your ideas in advance in order to know how to organise your conversation.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION: 3 [You use few linking words and discourse markers that could help you convey the relationships between ideas and gain time to formulate what to say. Moreover, you react and sometimes you are able to continue a topic or to introduce another topic. Tip! You can always find other linking words and discourse markers (ex. Moreover, in conclusion, likewise, hence, in other words, in spite of, to sum up, etc.). In addition to this, you could think about how to introduce the topic and conclude the conversation.]

INTERACTION: 3 [Your interaction is satisfactory. In fact, you participate, and you react and intervene during your conversation. You use some effective turn-taking strategies and quite different stock phrases. Tip! You could use some question tags to involve more the other speaker in the conversation.]

4.2.15 Pair 15

Both participants were attending students, but they did not know each other.

Self- and peer-assessment of SA's (pair 15) oral performance:

GRAMMAR (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 4 [I made some grammar mistakes but I corrected myself during the speech.]
Peer-assessment: 5 [/]

VOCABULARY (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 4 [My Peer and I tried to use the vocabulary which was linked to the topic chosen and that we had studied during classes.]
Peer-assessment: 5 [/]

CONTENT (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 4 [I could have done better; I could have described better my ideas. My peer and I discussed the topic by expressing pros and cons.]
Peer-assessment: 5 [/]

PRONUNCIATION (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 5 [I think that my pronunciation was good and the intonation too, since I tried to involve my partner and the audience by changing my pitch.]
Peer-assessment: 5 [/]

FLUENCY (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [I noticed having done several pauses.]
Peer-assessment: 5 [/]

COHERENCE AND COHESION (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 5 [My peer and I tried to use linking expressions in order to create a well structured speech.]
Peer-assessment: 5 [/]

INTERACTION (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 4 [I noticed that I ask her very few questions.]
Peer-assessment: 5 [/]

My feedback on SA's (pair 15) oral performance:

GRAMMAR: 5 [You express yourself with a good grammatical control and you self-correct your errors (ex. present tenses vs. past tenses). Moreover, you avoid mistakes which could impede comprehension. Tip! You could use some question tags during your conversation. In addition to this, pay attention to word order in sentences.]

VOCABULARY: 5 [You express yourself with a good range of vocabulary and, when you don't know a word, you paraphrase. Tip! You could use some synonyms in order to avoid frequent repetitions and use more idiomatic expressions (ex. 'I think/believe/realize/assume/consider', 'to go to/attend a lecture', 'a

course offered online', 'in-person lectures', 'in-person attendance', 'chance/opportunity/possibility'). Moreover, you could create a list of words/expressions that you are going to use to discuss these topics.]

CONTENT: 5 [You express and support your opinions with a high degree of precision. Moreover, you give relevant examples of different themes on the topic. Tip! Remember to make reference to the materials on Moodle to express your viewpoint on a topical issue considering pros and cons.]

PRONUNCIATION: 5 [Your pronunciation and intonation are good. Moreover, you nearly always use sentence stress and word stress correctly. Tip! If you have any doubts concerning pronunciation, consult an online dictionary (ex. https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/) since it can be very useful to improve this aspect. In addition to this, pay attention to how to use intonation in questions.]

FLUENCY: 4 [You communicate spontaneously and you are fluent. Tip! You could brainstorm your ideas in advance in order to know how to organise your conversation.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION: 5 [You use a variety of linking words and discourse markers that help you convey the relationships between ideas and gain time to formulate what to say. Moreover, you react appropriately and you are able to continue a topic or to introduce another topic. Tip! You can always find other linking words and discourse markers (ex. Moreover, in conclusion, likewise, hence, in other words, in spite of, to sum up, etc.). In addition to this, you could think about how to introduce the topic and conclude the conversation.]

INTERACTION: 5 [You interact well with the other speaker. In fact, you participate actively, and you react and intervene appropriately during your conversation. You use effective turn-taking strategies and different stock phrases. Tip! You could use some question tags to involve more the other speaker in the conversation.]

Self- and peer-assessment of SB's (pair 15) oral performance:

GRAMMAR (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 4 [/]
Peer-assessment: 5 [I didn’t notice any important mistakes.]

VOCABULARY (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 4 [/]
Peer-assessment: 4 [My Peer and I tried to use the vocabulary which was linked to the topic chosen and that we had studied during classes.]

CONTENT (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 4 [/]
Peer-assessment: 5 [She expressed her ideas with relevant descriptions. My peer and I discussed the topic by expressing pros and cons.]

PRONUNCIATION (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 4 [/]
Peer-assessment: 5 [I didn’t notice any problem with her pronunciation and, as I did, she changed her pitch.]

FLUENCY (average = 4):
Self-assessment: 3 [/]
Peer-assessment: 4 [She was fluent and she did very few pauses.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION (average = 5):
Self-assessment: 4 [/]

Peer-assessment: 5 [My peer and I tried to use linking expressions in order to create a well structured speech.]

INTERACTION (average =5):
Self-assessment: 5 [/]
Peer-assessment: 5 [She tried to involve me by asking me a lot of questions.]

My feedback on SB's (pair 15) oral performance:

GRAMMAR: 5 [You express yourself with a good grammatical control and you self-correct your errors (ex. present tenses vs. past tenses). Moreover, you avoid mistakes which could impede comprehension. Tip! You could use some question tags during your conversation. In addition to this, pay attention to word order in sentences.]

VOCABULARY: 5 [You express yourself with a good range of vocabulary and, when you don't know a word, you paraphrase. Tip! You could use some synonyms in order to avoid frequent repetitions and use more idiomatic expressions (ex. 'I think/believe/realize/assume/consider', 'to go to/attend a lecture', 'a course offered online', 'in-person lectures', 'in-person attendance', 'chance/opportunity/possibility'). Moreover, you could create a list of words/expressions that you are going to use to discuss these topics.]

CONTENT: 5 [You express and support your opinions with a high degree of precision. Moreover, you give relevant examples of different themes on the topic. Tip! Remember to make reference to the materials on Moodle to express your viewpoint on a topical issue considering pros and cons.]

PRONUNCIATION: 5 [Your pronunciation and intonation are good. Moreover, you nearly always use sentence stress and word stress correctly. Tip! If you have any doubts concerning pronunciation, consult an online dictionary (ex. https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/) since it can be very useful to improve this aspect. In addition to this, pay attention to how to use intonation in questions and to the correct pronunciation of the following words: 'advantage' /ədˈvɑːntɪdʒ/ and 'stage' /steɪdʒ/.]

FLUENCY: 4 [You communicate spontaneously and you are fluent. Tip! You could brainstorm your ideas in advance in order to know how to organise your conversation.]

COHERENCE AND COHESION: 5 [You use a variety of linking words and discourse markers that help you convey the relationships between ideas and gain time to formulate what to say. Moreover, you react appropriately and you are able to continue a topic or to introduce another topic. Tip! You can always find other linking words and discourse markers (ex. Moreover, in conclusion, likewise, hence, in other words, in spite of, to sum up, etc.). In addition to this, you could think about how to introduce the topic and conclude the conversation.]

INTERACTION: 5 [You interact well with the other speaker. In fact, you participate actively, and you react and intervene appropriately during your conversation. You use effective turn-taking strategies and different stock phrases. Tip! You could use some question tags to involve more the other speaker in the conversation.]

4.3 An analysis of the data

Thanks to the data reported in the previous section, it is possible to highlight the importance of self- and peer-assessment of speaking skills. In this regard, it is fundamental to note that self- and peer-assessment can be more helpful for students if they are conducted simultaneously, in the sense that the speaker assesses himself/herself, but at the same time his/her oral performance is assessed by his/her peer. Consequently, the results and observations of both self- and peer-assessment must be combined together with a view to providing the student with a more detailed description of his/her speaking skills since sometimes students tend to underestimate themselves or, on the contrary, overestimate themselves. SA (pair 7), for example, tends to underestimate his/her language level, in particular with reference to vocabulary, content and interaction, but, taking account of his/her peer's observations, he/she can perceive his/her speaking skills adopting a different point of view. Moreover, as revealed by the data, vocabulary, pronunciation, and coherence and cohesion are the aspects that the students who took part in the project found more difficult and, as a consequence, more challenging to assess. In this respect, it is possible to observe that sometimes the participants wrote no comments/observations on these aspects as they probably did not know how to assess them or they did not feel confident about assessing themselves and/or their peer.

Furthermore, I decided to provide the participants with my feedback so that they could compare their and their peer's observations on their performance with mine and, as can be observed, in most cases my feedback confirmed the results of students' self- and peer-assessment. Therefore, it is possible to note the effectiveness of the use of my self- and peer-assessment grid (B2 level) on speaking skills since the students made the most of it, taking account of this grid as the starting point for reflecting on the different aspects of speaking skills and, as a consequence, becoming autonomous learners.

However, in view of future studies on self- and peer-assessment of speaking skills, it would be useful to provide students with this grid, or a similar one, at the beginning of the academic year so that both attending and non-attending students could become familiar with it and, consequently, use it properly. Moreover, EFL students should know the concepts of 'self-assessment' and 'peer-assessment' in order to

understand the role of them in improving a foreign language and, in particular, their English speaking skills.

CONCLUSION

Although a considerable amount of literature has been published on self- and peer-assessing of speaking skills, most of it tends not to provide EFL students with specific assessment grids for both self- and peer-assessment. In light of this, relying on previous studies, the dual aim of this dissertation was to emphasise the importance of self- and peer-assessment of speaking skills, as well as to show the effectiveness of students' use of a B2 level assessment grid in order to promote their autonomy in learning and, in particular, in improving their speaking skills.

As regards the importance of self- and peer-assessment of speaking skills, my project and the subsequent analysis of the data showed that both self- and peer-assessment play a crucial role in order to help EFL students improve their speaking skills. In particular, it is essential to note that self- and peer-assessment can be more helpful for students if they are conducted simultaneously, as I did in my project, in the sense that the speaker assesses himself/herself, but, at the same time, his/her oral performance is assessed by his/her peer. Then, providing them with the average of the results of both self- and peer-assessment, they can be offered a more detailed description of their speaking skills since sometimes students tend to underestimate themselves or, on the contrary, overestimate themselves. Moreover, as previously observed, these types of alternative assessment promote students' motivation and this can be revealed paying particular attention to the comments/observations that the students reported in the grid. Thanks to the use of my self- and peer-assessment grid, both attending and non-attending first-year students reflected on the English language and, in particular, on the various aspects of speaking skills. Therefore, the students made the most of this grid, taking account of it as the starting point for becoming autonomous learners and, as a consequence, it is possible to note the effectiveness of students' use of my self- and peer-assessment grid (B2 level) on speaking skills.

Furthermore, it is important to remember that, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this project was carried out via Zoom and, to a certain extent, it was an example of distance learning. In this case, first-year students experienced a different type of learning in order to learn how to become autonomous learners.

However, this project has undoubtedly some limitations and, for this reason, in view of future studies on self- and peer-assessment of speaking skills, it would be useful to provide students with this grid, or a similar one, at the beginning of the academic year so that both attending and non-attending students could become familiar with the use of both a self- and peer-assessment grid and, consequently, use it properly. At the same time, more students would take part in the project and, as a consequence, it could be possible to compare attending students' observations on the different aspects of the grid with those of non-attending students in order to understand how they could improve their speaking skills and become autonomous learners.

As a consequence, future studies on self- and peer-assessment are suggested with a view to refining the research territory taking account of EFL students' needs in order to help them improve their speaking skills. Moreover, even though the importance of speaking in English is clear, it is fundamental to consider that this communicative competence is very complex and it takes a long time to develop. For this reason, professors, CELs and tutors should provide their students with some self- and peer-assessment grids that consider the different aspects that contribute to a brilliant oral performance since the way we speak can reveal who we are and our knowledge of the world.

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APPENDIX A:

My self- and peer-assessment grid (B2 level) on speaking skills

My self- and peer-assessment grid (B2 level) on speaking skills

Name:
Surname:

Name:
Surname:

ASPECT	*SELF-ASSESSMENT*	*COMMENTS/ OBSERVATIONS*	*PEER-ASSESSMENT*	*COMMENTS/ OBSERVATIONS*
Grammar	I express myself with a good grammatical control (ex. the correct use of different verb tenses and modal verbs). I avoid mistakes which could impede comprehension and I self-correct my errors.		He/she expresses himself/herself with a good grammatical control (ex. the correct use of different verb tenses and modal verbs). He/she avoids mistakes which could impede comprehension and he/she self-corrects his/her errors.	
Vocabulary	I express myself clearly, with a good range of vocabulary and my lexical accuracy is generally high. I paraphrase when I don't know a word and I vary words to avoid frequent repetitions.		He/she expresses himself/herself clearly, with a good range of vocabulary and his/her lexical accuracy is generally high. He/she paraphrases when he/she doesn't know a word and he/she varies words to avoid frequent repetitions.	
Content	I express and support my opinions with precision and talk about the issues convincingly. I give clear, detailed descriptions and relevant examples of different themes on the topic. I express a viewpoint on a topical issue considering pros and cons.		He/she expresses and supports his/her opinions with precision and talks about the issues convincingly. He/she gives clear, detailed descriptions and relevant examples of different themes on the topic. He/she expresses a viewpoint on a topical issue considering pros and cons.	
Pronunciation	I speak with clearly intelligible pronunciation and appropriate intonation even though sometimes a foreign accent is evident and occasional mispronunciations occur. I nearly always use sentence stress and word stress correctly.		He/she speaks with clearly intelligible pronunciation and appropriate intonation even though sometimes a foreign accent is evident and occasional mispronunciations occur. He/she nearly always uses sentence stress and word stress correctly.	
Fluency	I communicate spontaneously and I am fluent. I avoid long pauses while searching for words.		He/she communicates spontaneously and he/she is fluent. He/she avoids long pauses while searching for words.	

Coherence and Cohesion	I use a variety of linking words and discourse markers (ex. "then", "well", etc.) to convey the relationships between ideas and to gain time to formulate what to say. I react appropriately and I am able to continue a topic or to successfully introduce another topic (ex. "by the way", "changing the subject", etc.).		He/she uses a variety of linking words and discourse markers (ex. "then", "well", etc.) to convey the relationships between ideas and to gain time to formulate what to say. He/she reacts appropriately and he/she is able to continue a topic or to successfully introduce another topic (ex. "by the way", "changing the subject", etc.).	
Interaction	I interact well with the other speaker. I ask and answer questions. I participate actively and intervene appropriately in usual and unusual formal discussions. I use effective turn-taking strategies. I use stock phrases (ex. "I totally agree with you!", "Really?", etc.) to show I am listening. I react appropriately and, if necessary, I ask for clarification.		He/she interacts well with the other speaker. He/she asks and answers questions. He/she participates actively and intervenes appropriately in usual and unusual formal discussions. He/she uses effective turn-taking strategies. He/she uses stock phrases (ex. "I totally agree with you!","Really?", etc.) to show he/she is listening. He/she reacts appropriately and, if necessary, he/she asks for clarification.	

A 1 to 5 grading scale:

1 = need/needs improvement
2 = acceptable
3 = satisfactory
4 = good
5 = excellent

RIASSUNTO IN LINGUA ITALIANA

La mia tesi, dal titolo *Self- and Peer-Assessment of Speaking Skills: Students' Use of a B2 Level Assessment Grid*, tratterà il tema dell'autovalutazione e della valutazione tra pari in riferimento alle abilità orali e, più nello specifico, dell'utilizzo da parte di un gruppo di studenti dell'Università di Padova di una griglia (livello B2) per la valutazione.

Come spiegato da Fulcher (2003: 23), parlare significa utilizzare la lingua al fine di comunicare con altre persone per raggiungere determinati scopi. Grazie a questa prima considerazione, quindi, è possibile comprendere l'importanza della comunicazione orale all'interno della nostra società poiché essa rappresenta il mezzo più efficace per esprimerci, per spiegare i nostri bisogni e, essenzialmente, per poterci aprire al mondo. Di conseguenza, tutti coloro che studiano l'inglese come lingua straniera devono avere delle buone abilità orali, ma allo stesso tempo, come sottolineato da Florez (1999: 1), è necessario che comprendano la complessità del processo comunicativo, tenendo presente l'insieme degli elementi che contribuiscono alla corretta trasmissione di informazioni.

Oggi la lingua inglese riveste un ruolo fondamentale all'interno della società, ma, secondo Luoma (2004), spesso ci si dimentica che per avere una buona padronanza dell'inglese orale sia necessario dedicargli molto tempo perché il processo comunicativo è molto complesso. Proprio per questo motivo, quindi, è fondamentale comprendere la complessità della lingua orale prendendo in esame alcuni modelli di riferimento mirati a chiarire quali siano i vari stadi attraverso i quali si possa giungere all'atto comunicativo. Secondo il modello di Bygate (1987: 50), ad esempio, il discorso orale consisterebbe in un processo caratterizzato da tre stadi specifici: la pianificazione, la selezione e la produzione. Allo stesso tempo, però, il linguista britannico spiega che sia l'abilità (*skill*) che la conoscenza (*knowledge*) sono necessarie per parlare. Prendendo in esame, invece, il modello di Canale e Swain (1980) è possibile comprendere come la competenza comunicativa (*communicative competence*) sia il risultato derivante dall'unione tra competenza grammaticale (*grammatical competence*), competenza sociolinguistica (*sociolinguistic competence*) e competenza strategica (*strategic competence*). Proprio da questo modello deriverà il modello di Bachman e Palmer (1996: 63) riguardante l'abilità

linguistica, il quale, a sua volta, definisce le varie aree della conoscenza linguistica (Bachman e Palmer, ivi: 68): la conoscenza organizzativa (*organisational knowledge*), la conoscenza grammaticale (*grammatical knowledge*), la conoscenza testuale (*textual knowledge*), la conoscenza pragmatica (*pragmatic knowledge*), la conoscenza funzionale (*functional knowledge*) e la conoscenza sociolinguistica (*sociolinguistic knowledge*). Partendo da questi modelli fondamentali, grazie a ulteriori studi, si giungerà a identificare i principali aspetti delle abilità orali, ovvero la grammatica, il lessico, il contenuto, la pronuncia, la fluency, la coerenza e la coesione e, infine, l'interazione.

Dopo aver considerato la complessità del processo comunicativo e i vari aspetti delle abilità orali, è interessante comprendere come si possano verificare le abilità orali in modo tale che, attraverso l'autovalutazione e la valutazione tra pari, si possa promuovere l'autonomia dello studente di inglese come lingua straniera. A questo proposito, è utile notare come, secondo Oller (1979: 24), la verifica (*test*) debba essere un momento in cui le abilità linguistiche vengano valutate in relazione ai possibili contesti d'uso in cui la lingua straniera potrebbe essere utilizzata perché, come evidenziato da Bachman (1990: 2), ogni atto comunicativo nasce per raggiungere specifici obiettivi in determinati contesti. Tuttavia, come spiegato da Balboni (2002: 122), spesso la parola "verifica" preoccupa gli studenti perché tendono ad associarla a esperienze negative che hanno precedentemente vissuto in ambito scolastico. Di conseguenza, è fondamentale che il docente spieghi ai propri studenti che la verifica è una raccolta di dati che mira a misurare il raggiungimento di obiettivi specifici o di un dato livello. Inoltre, è importante evidenziare che la maggiore qualità di una verifica è proprio la sua utilità e per questo motivo Bachman e Palmer (1996: 17) parlano di utilità della verifica (*test usefulness*) e, di conseguenza, è fondamentale capire cosa renda una verifica utile. Secondo Bachman e Palmer (ivi: 18), l'utilità di una verifica è data da sei qualità: affidabilità (*reliability*), validità (*validity*), autenticità (*authenticity*), interattività (*interactiveness*), impatto (*impact*) e praticità (*practicality*). Per comprendere il significato di queste qualità è utile prendere in esame alcune verifiche e capire se queste qualità siano effettivamente presenti, così da confermare o meno l'utilità della verifica.

Oltre alla verifica, però, vi può essere anche la valutazione (*assessment*), ovvero quel processo continuativo che, secondo Porcelli (1992), è basato sull'analisi dei dati

che i docenti possono continuamente ottenere dai loro studenti. I dati ottenuti, quindi, devono essere valutati secondo dei parametri che devono essere chiari allo studente e, successivamente, vi deve essere un momento di confronto tra docente e studente per riflettere insieme sulla natura degli errori, così da poter comprendere come poter migliorare le varie abilità linguistiche (Balboni, 2002: 124). Inoltre, come indicato da Brown (2004: 5), la valutazione può essere di tipo informale o formale, sommativa o formativa, tradizionale o alternativa e quindi, in base alle esigenze degli studenti, il docente potrà decidere quale tipologia di valutazione adottare.

Per quanto riguarda la valutazione della lingua parlata, le abilità orali sono sicuramente quelle più difficili da valutare perché al contempo prevedono l'intervento di altre abilità (Harris, 1969: 81). Inoltre, come osservato da Brown (2004: 141-142), ci sono vari tipi di parlato, ovvero quello imitativo (*imitative*), intensivo (*intensive*), reattivo (*responsive*), interattivo (*interactive*) e dettagliato (*extensive*). Brown (2004: 142-144) distingue anche tra microabilità e macroabilità del parlato, le quali definiscono sedici diversi obiettivi che possono essere oggetto di valutazione. Sebbene le macroabilità siano considerate più complesse rispetto a quelle micro, è bene ricordare che in entrambi i casi la loro difficoltà è data dal contesto in cui lo studente si trova al momento della valutazione.

Tra le varie tipologie di valutazione vi sono l'autovalutazione e la valutazione tra pari. Secondo Roberts (2006: 3), l'autovalutazione è quel processo che prevede una riflessione da parte dello studente, così da poter comprendere come poter procedere con il suo percorso di apprendimento. In questo caso, quindi, lo studente è il protagonista del processo di valutazione e, di conseguenza, si sentirà molto più motivato ad apprendere e a monitorare il suo processo di apprendimento. Inoltre, l'autovalutazione permette allo studente di raggiungere un maggior grado di autonomia che lo aiuterà a migliorarsi proprio partendo da una riflessione personale. A questo proposito, grazie agli studi condotti da Brown (2004: 270), è possibile affermare che l'autovalutazione si basi sul principio di autonomia, ovvero una delle pietre miliari dell'apprendimento. Allo stesso tempo, grazie allo sviluppo di alcune strategie di autovalutazione (Schunk, 2000: 379), lo studente è in grado di monitorare costantemente il suo processo di apprendimento e di comprendere quali siano gli aspetti linguistici da migliorare. Tuttavia, come evidenziato da Falchikov e Boud (1989), non tutti gli studenti

potrebbero sentirsi all'altezza di un'autovalutazione e quindi potrebbero preferire di adeguarsi alla valutazione proposta dall'insegnante. L'autovalutazione riserva sicuramente molti vantaggi agli studenti, ma è necessario sapere come sviluppare un processo di autovalutazione, altrimenti i tentativi dello studente potrebbero sembrare invani. Come spiegato da Davis (1993: 291), quindi, c'è bisogno di educare all'autovalutazione in modo tale che essa possa rivelarsi uno strumento effettivamente adatto allo studente.

In contrapposizione al processo di autovalutazione si trova quello di valutazione tra pari che, secondo Roberts (2006: 6), consiste nel riflettere sul processo di apprendimento dei propri pari. Questa tipologia di valutazione è di fondamentale importanza perché permette agli studenti di confrontarsi tra di loro e di sentirsi protagonisti del loro processo di apprendimento. Inoltre, come spiegato da McConnell (2000: 127), molto spesso la valutazione fornita da un proprio pari può rivelarsi più utile rispetto a quella che potrebbe essere fornita dall'insegnante e, in questo modo, si instaura un processo di apprendimento cooperativo che è basato su una forte interazione tra i vari studenti al fine di raggiungere un obiettivo comune.

L'autovalutazione e la valutazione tra pari sono due strumenti che, se utilizzati insieme, possono contribuire in modo decisivo ad accrescere l'autonomia dello studente nel suo percorso di apprendimento e, allo stesso tempo, a motivarlo in modo significativo. Inoltre, come dichiarato da Brown (2004: 276-277), l'autovalutazione e la valutazione tra pari sono il migliore esempio di valutazione formativa, ma è essenziale che venga dichiarato agli studenti lo scopo della valutazione e che, allo stesso tempo, venga spiegata chiaramente l'attività che dovranno svolgere e che verrà successivamente valutata.

Dopo aver considerato e compreso l'importanza del contributo fornito dall'autovalutazione e dalla valutazione tra pari, ho deciso di creare una griglia (livello B2) per l'autovalutazione e la valutazione tra pari delle abilità orali. In particolare, questa griglia è stata pensata per gli studenti del primo anno del corso di laurea triennale in "Lingue, letterature e mediazione culturale" dell'Università di Padova, così da poter fornire loro uno strumento utile a migliorare le loro abilità orali in vista dell'esame orale di *General English*. A questo proposito, prima di progettare la mia griglia, ho considerato come punto di partenza la griglia (livello B2) di autovalutazione proposta

dal CEFR (*Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*). Questa griglia suddivide le abilità orali in interazione orale e produzione orale; per quanto riguarda l'interazione orale, attraverso questa griglia lo studente si può autovalutare considerando il suo grado di fluency e di interazione, mentre, in riferimento alla produzione orale, può autovalutarsi considerando il tipo di descrizioni che riesce a fornire e alla sua capacità di argomentare in modo convincente. Inoltre, ho consultato anche la descrizione dettagliata, fornita dal Consiglio d'Europa, riguardante le maggiori caratteristiche delle abilità orali.

Successivamente, i professori e i CEL degli studenti del primo anno mi hanno spiegato quali sarebbero stati gli obiettivi previsti per l'esame orale di *General English*. Agli studenti non era stata fornita una griglia di valutazione, bensì era stata data loro una lista dove erano state riportate alcune indicazioni per lo svolgimento della prova orale; l'esame avrebbe previsto una conversazione della durata di dieci minuti su uno dei sei argomenti (*Language and Identity, Food Ethics, Civic Duty vs. Civic Responsibility, Human Rights, Higher Education, Internet and Information*) trattati durante il corso. A questo punto, tenendo conto delle indicazioni che mi erano state fornite dai docenti, ho creato la mia griglia (livello B2) di autovalutazione e valutazione tra pari delle abilità orali, considerando i seguenti aspetti: *grammar, vocabulary, content, pronunciation, fluency, coherence and cohesion, interaction*. L'ordine in cui gli aspetti sono stati riportati nella griglia è puramente casuale perché non vi sono aspetti più importanti di altri, bensì questa griglia è volta a sottolineare l'importanza di ogni singolo aspetto al fine di poter migliorare le abilità orali. Inoltre, a differenza della griglia proposta dal CEFR, la mia griglia è stata pensata sia per l'autovalutazione che per la valutazione tra pari proprio per poter permettere a tutti gli studenti, frequentanti e non frequentanti, di servirsi di essa per confrontare la loro percezione delle abilità orali con quella dei loro pari. Inoltre, ho fornito loro una scala di valutazione da 1 a 5 per fare in modo che ogni studente avesse un criterio di valutazione di riferimento su cui poter basare la valutazione, dopo aver considerato i descrittori riportati nella griglia. Tuttavia, oltre a poter assegnare una valutazione di tipo numerico, la griglia permette di poter fornire eventuali commenti e osservazioni sia per l'autovalutazione che per la valutazione dei propri pari. Rispetto alla griglia (livello B2) di autovalutazione proposta dal CEFR, la mia griglia di autovalutazione e valutazione tra pari permette di considerare

individualmente ognuno dei sette aspetti proposti, così da poter dare la possibilità agli studenti di comprendere quali siano gli aspetti su cui dover lavorare maggiormente e in maniera autonoma.

Il progetto da me proposto prevedeva l'utilizzo da parte degli studenti, frequentanti e non frequentanti, della mia griglia (livello B2) di autovalutazione e valutazione tra pari delle abilità orali, così da poter fornire loro uno strumento capace di aiutarli a migliorare le loro abilità orali in vista dell'esame orale di *General English*. Nello specifico, il progetto aveva lo scopo di promuovere l'autonomia degli studenti e di accrescere la loro motivazione attraverso l'autovalutazione e la valutazione tra pari per favorire il miglioramento delle abilità orali. La prima parte del progetto prevedeva una conversazione della durata di dieci minuti sull'argomento *Higher Education* e, in questo caso, gli studenti dovevano partecipare a coppie per potersi autovalutare e valutare il loro pari utilizzando la scala di valutazione da 1 a 5 e lo spazio presente nella griglia per eventuali commenti od osservazioni in riferimento ai sette aspetti considerati. La seconda parte, invece, era dedicata al confronto tra i risultati riportati dall'autovalutazione e quelli della valutazione tra pari. A questo punto, quindi, ho fornito a ogni studente la media ottenuta dai singoli risultati dei due tipi di valutazione, riportando anche i commenti e le eventuali osservazioni degli studenti. Inoltre, ho fornito a ogni studente un mio feedback per fare in modo che potessero confrontarlo con i risultati ottenuti attraverso l'autovalutazione e la valutazione tra pari. Per l'intera durata del progetto ho cercato continuamente di motivare gli studenti ad adottare queste tipologie di valutazione perché potessero riflettere sui vari aspetti delle abilità orali e migliorare in maniera autonoma.

É importante ricordare che, a causa della pandemia di COVID-19, non è stato possibile svolgere il progetto in presenza e, di conseguenza, è stato proposto via Zoom. Inizialmente, non è stato facile pensare di poter svolgere un progetto di questo tipo in modalità a distanza, ma, nonostante le prime difficoltà, è stato comunque possibile svolgerlo grazie alla collaborazione e alla partecipazione degli studenti del primo anno del corso di laurea triennale in "Lingue, letterature e mediazione culturale" dell'Università di Padova. Nello specifico, nel mese di maggio 2020 trenta studenti, ovvero quindici coppie, hanno partecipato al mio progetto per esercitarsi in vista dell'esame orale di *General English* utilizzando la griglia da me proposta e che in sede

d'esame sarebbe stata utilizzata dai docenti per valutare gli studenti del primo anno. Ovviamente, prima del nostro incontro via Zoom, io avevo inviato loro la griglia in modo tale che potessero leggere i descrittori e chiedermi eventuali chiarimenti, dato che prima di utilizzare una griglia di valutazione è necessario avere chiari gli aspetti sui cui si verrà valutati e/o si valuterà un'altra persona così da poterla utilizzare adeguatamente. Durante il progetto ho ribadito più volte l'importanza dell'autovalutazione e della valutazione tra pari al fine di poter migliorare le proprie abilità orali in maniera più autonoma. Inoltre, ho assicurato loro che questa sarebbe stata un'ottima opportunità per riflettere sui vari aspetti delle abilità orali e per poter giungere, così, a una migliore performance orale.

Grazie ai dati raccolti, quindi, è stato possibile osservare che l'autovalutazione è molto più utile se proposta insieme alla valutazione tra pari, e viceversa, perché in questo modo lo studente può confrontare la sua autovalutazione con quella che il suo pari ha condotto su di lui. Spesso, infatti, vi sono studenti che sottovalutano le loro capacità o che, al contrario, si sopravvalutano. Analizzando i dati è stato possibile notare che gli aspetti che probabilmente sono risultati più difficili da valutare sono stati il lessico, la pronuncia e la coerenza e la coesione; in riferimento a questi aspetti, infatti, molto spesso gli studenti non hanno fornito commenti od osservazioni perché probabilmente non sapevano come poterli valutare. A conclusione del progetto ho fornito loro anche il mio feedback, il quale nella maggior parte dei casi ha confermato i risultati ottenuti dall'autovalutazione e della valutazione tra pari condotte dagli studenti.

Grazie a questo progetto, quindi, è stato possibile dimostrare l'efficacia dell'utilizzo della mia griglia per l'autovalutazione e la valutazione tra pari delle abilità orali. Gli studenti, sia frequentanti che non frequentanti, hanno considerato questa griglia non semplicemente ai fini dell'esame orale, quanto piuttosto come punto di riferimento per riflettere sui vari aspetti delle abilità orali e per poter sviluppare un processo di apprendimento più autonomo, volto soprattutto al miglioramento dell'inglese parlato.

Tuttavia, in futuro sarebbe interessante poter creare un progetto simile, prevedendo di fornire la griglia di autovalutazione e valutazione tra pari a inizio anno accademico; in questo modo tutti gli studenti, frequentanti e non frequentanti, avrebbero modo di utilizzare la griglia con una certa regolarità, così da poter familiarizzare con gli

aspetti considerati e, di conseguenza, fare di essa uno strumento essenziale al fine di monitorare il costante miglioramento delle loro abilità orali e favorire un apprendimento più autonomo.