The construct of Speaking

Nivja de Jong
The construct of Driving

Nivja de Jong
Construct of driving a car

• What is the ultimate goal of learning how to drive?

• Which knowledge and skills underlie good driving?

• Which factors may impact on driving?
Knowledge of traffic rules
Be able to apply the rules
Knowing how to drive
In different settings
In interaction with other road users
Special manoeuvres

PARALLEL PARKING

1. Stop even with car ahead and about a foot and a half away from it.
2. Turn wheel sharp right and back slowly straight toward car behind.
3. When clear of car ahead turn wheels sharp left and back slowly to car behind.
4. Turn wheel sharp right and pull toward curb in center of parking space.

Wheels adjacent to curb must not be more than 12 inches from the curb.
Individual characteristics

- How I parallel park when cliff is in the car.
Ultimate goal of learning to drive: getting (safely) from A to B

- Knowledge of traffic rules
- Ability to apply the rules (under time pressure)
- Knowing how to drive
- Applying knowing how to drive (under time pressure)
- In different settings
- In interaction with different road users
To test car driving skills:

• What should the ideal car driving test look like?
To test car driving skills:

• Test knowledge: off-line? (traffic rules / car mechanics / dangerous situations)

• Test skills on-line:
  - Construct a test that samples different
    - Tasks (special manoeuvre, driving from A to B)
    - Settings (highway, city-road, busy traffic, ...)
    - In interaction with other road users
Measure car driving skills:

• Off-line test: count errors / set cut score (objective measure)

• On-line skills:
  Examiner rates examinee using certain criteria (subjective measure)
Testing driving skills

Turn right, now!
McNamara (1996, p. 86)
Construct of speaking impacts on:

1. Candidate
2. Task
3. Interlocutor
4. Performance
5. Scale/Criteria
6. Rater
7. Rating
What is ‘speaking’?

1. Speaking and the other skills
2. Speaking from different viewpoints: teacher, learner, researcher, tester
3. Construct of speaking depends on purpose
1. Speaking and the other skills

- Reading
- Listening
- Writing
- Speaking
RECAP RECAP

Characteristics of written language

- Permanent – can be re-read
- Time for production – planning, editing
- Distance to reader – need to be more explicit (than in direct interaction)
- Context, communicative goals: production vs. interaction
- Communicative functions
- Linguistics realisations: complexity, formal style, vocabulary

e.g. Brown, 1994
(Reading &) Writing vs Speaking?

• Orthography vs phonology
• Time is on our side
• Distance between writer – reader
Listening vs Speaking?

• Time? Is even worse for listening: not under speaker’s control

• Role of context:
  – Listening can be done ‘good enough’/shallow by using contextual cues
  – Speaking: shallow processing does not suffice
Interaction: speaking and listening

• Time? 2/3 words per second!
• Predict listener’s utterance, end-of-turn
• Plan, formulate, and execute own speech
• Monitor listener’s reactions

• This list makes you wonder how we are capable of doing this – even in our native language
Speaking and the other skills

• *Speaking is a skill under high time pressure*
What is ‘speaking’?

1. Speaking and the other skills

2. Speaking from different viewpoints: teacher, learner, researcher, tester

3. Construct of speaking depends on purpose
2. Speaking from different points of view

• Teacher’s point of view
• Learner’s point of view
• Researcher’s point of view
• Tester’s point of view
Teacher’s viewpoint

• How do I train students to become better speakers?
• What constitutes ‘better’?
• Which tasks do I give my students?
• How do I give feedback?

• I want my students to pass the test
Mini-history of Teaching speaking

• Previously:
  – Grammar
  – Vocabulary
  – Pronunciation

• Now: communicative language teaching with Focus on form
Conclusion from teacher’s viewpoint

• What teachers do reflects their viewpoint on the speaking construct
• Then – Now has changed
  (has the construct of speaking changed?)

• Plus (has stayed the same):
  • I want my students to pass the test!
Learner’s viewpoint

• I want to be able to do X and Y in the language

• I want to pass the test!
Researchers’ viewpoint

- Is there one general skill for language ability or are there separate skills?
- How does speaking in the L1 differ from speaking in the L2?
- What are the underlying knowledges and skills for speaking in an L2?
- Why do individuals differ in success in learning to speak an L2?

- *I want to test the theories!*
Theories on speaking

• Hymes’ SPEAKING and Canale & Swain’s (1980) communicative competence (in reaction to Chomsky’s linguistic competence)
  ➔ Bachman & Palmer (1996)

• Psycholinguistic models: Levelt et al. (1999), Segalowitz (2010)
  ➔ Hulstijn (2011)
  ➔ Van Moere (2012)
Hymes’ SPEAKING model (1974)

- To identify and label components of linguistic interaction or discourse:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting/Scene</th>
<th>The setting refers to the time and place, while scene describes the “psychological setting” or “cultural definition” of a scene.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>Speaker and audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ends</td>
<td>Purposes, goals, and outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act sequence</td>
<td>Form and order of events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key</td>
<td>The “tone, manner, or spirit” of the speech.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumentalities</td>
<td>Channels, forms, and styles of speech.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norms</td>
<td>Social rules governing the event and the participants’ actions and reaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genres</td>
<td>The type of speech or event.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bachman & Palmer (1996): model of language ability

Figure from Hulstijn (2011) – based on Bachman & Palmer (1996)
Psycholinguistic theories (Segalowitz, 2010 based on Levelt et al., 1999)
## Hulstijn: Core vs Periphery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Proficiency</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CORE</strong></td>
<td><strong>PERIPHERY</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Linguistic cognition (knowledge and speed) in the phonetic-phonological, morphonological, morphosyntactic, and lexical domains:  
  * Basic language cognition  
  * Higher language cognition | Metacognitive competences  
  * Metalinguistic knowledge  
  * Knowledge of various types of oral and written discourse with their own characteristics  
  * Strategic competences  
  * … |

Hulstijn (2011)
Hulstijn: Basic Language Cognition vs Higher Language Cognition

Hulstijn (2011)
If we want to assess whether a candidate has attained the C1 level of Overall Oral Production (“Can give clear, detailed descriptions and presentations on complex subjects [...]”), a 5-min oral interview in which the candidate is asked to talk about several level-appropriate topics does not suffice.

Hulstijn (2011)
Hulstijn (2011), continued

- A level-appropriate productive vocabulary test should complement the interview simply because it is impossible to ascertain in a 5-min interview that the candidate has a command of, say, the 15,000 most frequent content words of the language, required when one wants to give “clear, detailed descriptions and presentations on complex subjects”.

BLC

1. (implicit) knowledge in the domains of phonetics, prosody, phonology, morphology and syntax
2. (explicit) knowledge in the lexical domain (form-meaning mappings)
3. the automaticity with which these types of knowledge can be processed.
   - BLC is restricted to frequent lexical items and frequent grammatical structures, common to all adult L1-ers.
HLC

Extension of BLC:
• includes low-frequency lexical items and grammatical structures
• Includes written language
Van Moere: “A psycholinguistic approach to oral language assessment”

Processing competence has been neglected:
• Language is lexical rather than grammatical (chunking)
• Memory plays a large role in language processing
• Automatization is necessary for proficiency in L2

Based on (e.g.,) Pawley & Syder (1984); Ellis (2001); Skehan (1998); Hulstijn (2001); Dekeyser, 2007) etc.

How to measure “processing competence”?
Figure 1. A ‘three way model’ for measuring processing competence in real-time oral tasks
Conclusion (?) from researchers’ point of view

Speaking is a multifaceted construct, you need knowledge **and skills** of:

1. Lexicalized items and phrases
2. Morphosyntax
3. Pronunciation
4. Nonverbal gestures
5. Pragmatic knowledge
6. Problem solving mechanisms
Testers’ viewpoint

- Testing speaking is best when it is
  - Fair
  - Efficient
  - Valid
  - Reliable
Testers’ viewpoint

• Testing speaking is best when it is
  – Fair
  – Efficient

  – Valid
  – Reliable

• *I want to sell my test*
Testers’ viewpoint

• Testing speaking is best when it is
  – Fair
  – Efficient
  – Valid
  – Reliable

• *I want only the good speakers to pass the test*
Conclusion from different viewpoints

• Teachers may teach to the test

• Learners want to be taught to the test

• Researchers show that speaking is a multi-faceted construct. And that it may be impossible to sample enough speech in 5 minutes to test C1-level underlying knowledge.

• Testers want efficient, fair, valid, and reliable tests
What is ‘speaking’?

1. Speaking and the other skills
2. Speaking from different viewpoints: teacher, learner, researcher, tester
3. Construct of speaking depends on purpose
Four purposes of (speaking parts of) tests of English:

1. Testing health practitioners

2. Testing applicants for Canadian citizenship

3. Testing pilots and air traffic controllers in aviation

4. Testing applicants for MA-program Epidemiology at Utrecht University
Four purposes of (speaking parts of) tests of English:

1. Testing health practitioners
2. Testing applicants
3. Testing pilots and air traffic controllers in aviation
4. Testing applicants for MA-program Epidemiology at Utrecht University

There is no such thing as “Speaking”


For a good test:

• Good test = fair, efficient, valid, reliable

• ‘Only’ sample those permutations that are relevant for your purpose:
  – Your test takers current actions/functions
  – Your test takers future actions/functions
• http://www.occupationalenglishtest.org/
  E.g., dentistry: https://www.occupationalenglishtest.org/test-information/healthcare-professions/dentistry/

• http://www.eurocontrol.int/services/english-language-proficiency-aeronautical-communication-elpac

• Or: http://www.liveatc.net/search/?icao=ams

• http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/citizenship/become-eligibility.asp#language

• http://www.uu.nl/masters/en/epidemiology/admission-and-application/non-eu/ndu#quicklinks
• “The role-plays are based on typical workplace situations and reflect the demands made on the professional in those situations. Different role-plays are used for different candidates at the same test administration. The interlocutor follows a script so that the Speaking test structure is similar for each candidate. The interlocutor also has detailed information to use in each role-play.”