

EMPOWERING PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT RUBRICS FOR ORAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

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Abstract

Designing and using rubrics for scoring language skills, particularly oral communication skills, seems to be not a popular job for teachers and lecturers. This is because of several reasons: less confidence in constructing own rubrics, hard to get suitable and feasible rubrics, and time-consuming. As a matter of fact, most of teachers and lecturers tend to measure students' works based on the following approaches: participation, honesty, presence, diligence, order, request, friendship, kinship, and seriousness. The implication of this sort of approach is that the given score/mark is not fair even inaccurate. This paper provides a rubric that is known as COLP which is not only current but also integrated for the assessment of oral communication skills. COLP as a current and integrated rubric stands for content, organization, language, and physical performance. It means that for the correction of oral communication skills, a rater is recommended to involve these four major aspects correspondingly. Content refers to whether or not fulfills the problem being discussed (topic); organization refers to whether or not the contents meet the correct rules of public speaking/writing; language refers to whether or not the oral communication as a whole containing accurate language components including grammatical structure, dictions, and fluency; and physical performance refers to the aspect of presentation. This is due to the fact that this rubric has been very useful when it was used for the assessment of Speaking/writing subject and Speech competition at the Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris FKIP Universitas Riau (UR) Pekanbaru.

Key words: *content, organization, language, physical performance, rubric*

A. INTRODUCTION

Teaching and assessing including scoring students' performance in terms of oral communication skills seem to be one of the most challenging works for English teachers and lecturers as well particularly at secondary and higher education in Indonesia. Challenging here means that firstly, both teachers and lecturers need to spend their time for designing or choosing special rubrics even though lots of rubrics are available and can be adopted or adapted from various sources. In addition to this, performance in terms of oral communication is really subjective skills; so that both teachers and lecturers should be very careful in determining the aspects to be assessed and measured in that kind of rubric. The next one is that both teachers and lecturers should keep in mind that one rubric does not mean that it can be used for many kinds of oral communication skills. Last but not least, both teachers and lecturers should be honest, objective, and consistent with their designed rubrics, even they should try to update the rubrics from time to time. The reason for this is that oral communication skills is a part of authentic assessments that really depends on the quality of physical performance; however, without ignoring language aspects, content, and organization as well. In short, for the assessment and measurement of students' performance as a part of authentic assessment, both teachers and lecturers need to construct a rubric that joins four aspects respectively: content, organization, language, and physical performance. This paper provides a rubric that is known as COLP which is not only current but also integrated for the

assessment of oral communication skills. COLP as a current and integrated rubric stands for content, organization, language, and physical performance.

B. DISCUSSION

O'Mally and Pierce (1996) agreed that performance assessment as a part of authentic assessment is a terminology that can be used to analyze various kinds of assessments reflecting teaching, learning achievement, motivation, and attitude of both teachers and students during teaching-learning process. In line with this, Darling and Hammond (2000) explained that authentic assessment has four specific criteria: (a) it is a sample of competence, performance, and disposition of teachers in learning process; (b) it needs integration from various kinds of competence and performance as well; (c) it is dependent on various sources and evidences that have been collected within specific time and context; and (d) it operates standard, structured, and professional rubrics. Newmann and Wehlage (1993) also agreed that authentic assessment helps learners producing scientific papers, products, and performance that are very useful for them after accomplishing their education.

Refer to what has been discussed above, it can be inferred that performance assessment, as a part of authentic assessments, plays an important role in training learners to be good at content, organization, language, and physical performance or presentation practice. Therefore, in order to obtain better results as well as trustful information to what extent about learners' achievement in these four major aspects, COLP rubric is recommended to be used as a rating scale. The reason for this is that in operating performance assessment, these four major aspects are supposed to take into account at similar time or coincidentally. Now, let us discuss the grand concepts of COLP respectively.

C stands for content. To evaluate whether or not the content of the learners' papers is on the right tract/context, teachers as well as lecturers (functioning as raters) are recommended to have a special attention to important critical instructions in justifying a paper. Schlegel (1992) provides a table of brief summary showing critical instructions as in the following:

No	Critical Instructions	Activities to do...
1	Compare	Look for similarities and differences between the things mentioned
2	Contrast	Stress the dissimilarities
3	Criticize	Make your judgement about the item in question. Stress the deficiencies.
4	Define	Give a concise and accurate definition.
5	Describe	Mention the chief characteristics of a situation or retell the essential features of a story.
6	Diagram	Provide a drawing, chart or plan.
7	Discuss	Be analytical. Give reasons pro and con. Give the issue some thought and provide an opinion.
8	Evaluate	Provide both positive and negative sides of the topic. Assess the subject.
9	Explain	Give reasons for what is asked of you. Provide the causes. (e.g. Explain the reason for the Greenhouse effect.)
10	Illustrate	Use examples, or where appropriate, provide a diagram or figure.
11	Interpret	Translate, solve, or comment on a subject, usually giving your judgement about it.
12	Justify	Provide the reasons for your conclusions or for the

		statement made in the question.
13	List	Provide an itemized list. The items should be numbered.
14	Outline	Organize your answer into the main points and subordinate points. While it is not necessary that your answer be in outline form it helps to prepare it that way.
15	Prove	Provide factual evidence or where appropriate, a logical or mathematical proof.
16	Relate	Show the connection between the things mentioned in the question. Note this does not mean to compare, so if you are asked to relate the British and Australian Constitutions, you are not to compare them but to show them how one influences the other.
17	Review	Provide a summary, usually a critical one. A review usually also implies commenting on important aspects of the question.
18	Summarize	Provide a summary, usually without comment or criticism.
19	Trace	Describe the progress of some historical event or where it is appropriate, describe the causes of some event.

Once learners have already understood about the above critical instructions, it will be easier for them to decide what to do and start writing their papers. Here are some examples taken from IELTS: Practice Topics (2006) that can be used for practical purposes particularly using critical instructions as well as the activities to do.

1. *Some people believe that only pupils of similar interests should be given admission in schools. Others are of the opinions that schools should be open to all children with varied interests. How far you agree or disagree with this view.*
2. *Should poor countries continue to receive International Aids? Give your views.*
3. *Children are the impressions of their parents' behavior. If a child behaves badly his parents should be considered responsible and should be punished. How far do you agree with this?*
4. *Internet has made information so handy, but at the same time, it is spoiling our children with all of the adult content. Should children be kept away from internet?*
5. *Sex education in schools is only introducing conflicting ideas and confusion among the immature minds and should be immediately stopped. Give your opinion about this.*

The next thing to be taken into account is to what extent learners are able to explore, elaborate, and confirm the given topics through the selection of critical instructions followed by activities to do as the content of learners' works. Therefore, the recommended rubric to measure the content of learners' works, that is, the suitability between the chosen critical instruction followed by activities to do will be as in the following:

Direction: Choose only one description in each aspect.

Aspect	Description	Points
Exploration, elaboration, and confirmation of the critical instructions followed by activities to do...	Strongly accurate	4
	Accurate	3
	Inaccurate	2
	Strongly inaccurate	1

O stands for organization. In this context, organization concerns with two major aspects: paragraph organization and essay organization. Oshima and Hogue (1999) agreed that a good paragraph should have followed a rule of paragraph organization. This rule said that a good paragraph is supposed to cover three sub-aspects: topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence. In addition to this, a good paragraph should also be in the form of unity, coherence, and cohesion. Then, in terms of essay organization, Oshima and Hogue (1999) mentioned about three things: introduction, body, and conclusion. In order to measure to what extent learners are able to fulfill the rules of paragraph organization as well as essay organization, the recommended rubric that can be used is as in the following:

Paragraph organization

Aspect	Description	Points
Topic sentence	Strongly accurate	4
	Accurate	3
	Inaccurate	2
	Strongly inaccurate	1
Supporting sentences	Strongly accurate	4
	Accurate	3
	Inaccurate	2
	Strongly inaccurate	1
A Concluding sentence	Strongly accurate	4
	Accurate	3
	Inaccurate	2
	Strongly inaccurate	1
Unity	Strongly accurate	4
	Accurate	3
	Inaccurate	2
	Strongly inaccurate	1
Coherence	Strongly accurate	4
	Accurate	3
	Inaccurate	2
	Strongly inaccurate	1
Cohesion	Strongly accurate	4
	Accurate	3
	Inaccurate	2
	Strongly inaccurate	1

Essay organization

Aspects	Description	Points
Introduction	Strongly accurate	4
	Accurate	3
	Inaccurate	2
	Strongly inaccurate	1

Body	Strongly accurate	4
	Accurate	3
	Inaccurate	2
	Strongly inaccurate	1
Conclusion	Strongly accurate	4
	Accurate	3
	Inaccurate	2
	Strongly inaccurate	1

L stands for language. In terms of language component, Stanley (1983) proposed ten points that should be assessed: subject-verb agreement, tense-form, subordination, verbal, pronoun-reference, word form, word order, parallel structure, unnecessary repetition, and correct usage. In addition to this, to construct grammatical structures, the rules of capitalization and punctuation are also needed to take into account. Therefore, both teachers and lecturers should focus the design of the rubric on these language components. The recommended rubric for each language component can be drawn as in the following:

Aspect	Description	Points
Subject-verb agreement	Strongly correct	4
	Correct	3
	Incorrect	2
	Strongly incorrect	1
Tense-form	Strongly correct	4
	Correct	3
	Incorrect	2
	Strongly incorrect	1
Subordination	Strongly correct	4
	Correct	3
	Incorrect	2
	Strongly incorrect	1
Verbal	Strongly correct	4
	Correct	3
	Incorrect	2
	Strongly incorrect	1
Pronoun – reference	Strongly correct	4
	Correct	3
	Incorrect	2
	Strongly incorrect	1
Word form	Strongly correct	4
	Correct	3
	Incorrect	2
	Strongly incorrect	1
	Strongly correct	4

Word order	Correct	3
	Incorrect	2
	Strongly incorrect	1
Parallel structure	Strongly correct	4
	Correct	3
	Incorrect	2
	Strongly incorrect	1
Unnecessary repetition	Strongly correct	4
	Correct	3
	Incorrect	2
	Strongly incorrect	1
Correct usage	Strongly correct	4
	Correct	3
	Incorrect	2
	Strongly incorrect	1

Finally, P stands for physical performance. Many experts including Brualdi (1999), Burke (1999), Hughes (2003), Foster & Masters (1996), and Quellmalz, *et al.* (1999) agreed that physical performance can be assessed and measured by teachers and lecturers from various aspects. Therefore, it can be concluded that this aspect is really dependent on teachers' and lecturers' taste, opinion as well as needs analysis. However, the most important aspect that has to be assessed and measured is focused on the manner/confidence of the learners during the presentation/practical activities. The following is the recommended rubric that can be used to assess learners' physical performance. (adopted from Dinas Pendidikan Provinsi Riau 2006).

Aspect	Description	Points
Manner/ confidence	Speaks very confidently, loudly and natural (with no indication of memorizing a text), and uses appropriate non verbal language (e.g. gestures and mimics) to strengthen messages.	6
	Speaks confidently, loudly and quite naturally (with some indications of memorizing a text), and occasionally uses appropriate gestures and mimics to strengthen messages.	5
	Speaks fairly confidently, quite loudly and quite naturally (with some indications of memorizing a text), and uses some appropriate gestures and mimics to strengthen messages.	4
	Does not speak confidently, loudly nor naturally (speech is memorization of a text), and almost no use of appropriate gestures and mimics to strengthen messages	3
	Does not speak confidently, voice hardly heard, speech is a memorization of text, no use of appropriate gestures and mimics to strengthen messages.	2
	Does not speak confidently, a lot of pauses, speech is absolutely a memorization of text, no use of gestures and mimics.	1

C. CONCLUSION

Rubric, in general context can be defined as a set of rules or instructions that has to follow in conducting any activities including assessing and measuring learners' written works as well as physical presentation (Collins cobuild dictionary, 1989). COLP is a rubric that covers four major aspects: content (refers to exploration, elaboration, and confirmation of the critical instructions followed by activities to do...), organization (refers to paragraph and essay), language (refers to grammatical points, capitalization, and punctuation), and physical performance (refers to manner/confident). However, Hughes (2003) mentioned that at least there are five steps that can be done in constructing a rating scale either analytic or holistic. Firstly concerns with the purpose of the assessment. In this context, there are four elements that should be taken into account: the amount of distinctions in ability that have to be made, the way to report the score, the ability components to be measured, and its intention whether or not for feedback. Secondly concerns with three elements: scoring system (holistic or analytic), the amount of components of scales involved, and the amount of separate levels in that scale. Thirdly concerns with the design, construction, and the availability of the rubric (self-design or tailor-made). Fourthly concerns with the modification or adaptation of available rubric; finally, it concerns with the findings of the try-out. In conclusion, rubric is really useful to assess and measure learners' works as well as physical performance. The reason for this is that rubric can prevent teachers and lecturers' scoring systems that is sometimes based on participation, diligence, seriousness, order, request, friendship, kinship, honesty, presence, and the like. However, rubric makes teachers and lecturers more professional in their works.

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