

Rubrics as Tools for Speaking Assessment

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Karol Milena Lasso Rosero

University of Nariño

Submitted to the School of Human Sciences in partial

Fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

B.A. Linguistics and Languages Department

English and French Program.

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NOTA DE RESPONSABILIDAD

“Las ideas y conclusiones aportadas en el Trabajo de grado, son de responsabilidad exclusiva de la autora”

Artículo 1° del acuerdo No. 324 de octubre 11 de 1966, emanado del honorable Consejo Directivo de la Universidad de Nariño.

Nota de Aceptación

ASESORA

JURADO

JURADO

Dedication

To God for giving me wisdom, persistence and strength to make my dreams come true.

*Thanks to my wonderful parents, Fabian and Socorro for supporting me with their
endless love on each stage of my life.*

*To my beloved sister Lorena for always telling me that with responsibility and
perseverance everything is possible. To my dear friend Johana for her true friendship
and support. To my family and everyone who supported me in this academic journey.*

Finally, to myself for never giving up.

Resumen

El presente artículo es un análisis académico de los aspectos más importantes en el aula Colombiana cotidiana, como la evaluación de la capacidad de expresión oral mediante el uso de rúbricas. Este estudio incluye, en primer lugar, la revisión de la literatura del habla como una habilidad muy importante en la comunicación. En segundo lugar, se presenta una descripción general de la evaluación como parte integral del proceso de aprendizaje de idiomas extranjeros, como el inglés. En tercer lugar, se incluye el análisis del uso de las rúbricas como herramientas para evaluar el desarrollo del habla y, finalmente, se incluye una propuesta didáctica para implementar las rúbricas como herramientas de evaluación de la habilidad de habla con el fin de permitir que los maestros las apliquen e involucren a los estudiantes en su propio proceso de aprendizaje de idiomas.

Abstract

The hereby article is an academic analysis of the most important aspects in everyday Colombian classroom, the assessment of speaking ability through the use of rubrics. This study includes in the first place, the literature review of speaking as a very important skill in communication. Secondly, an overview of assessment is presented as an integral part of the learning process of foreign languages such as English. Third, the analysis of the use of rubrics as tools to evaluate speech development is included and finally, a didactic proposal to implement rubrics as assessment tools for speaking skill in order to enable teachers to apply them and engage students in their own foreign language learning process.

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Introduction

Global growth asks citizens to communicate effectively in order to relate to people around the world, and to make meaningful exchanges within the different areas of knowledge and with different purposes (e.g., studying abroad, working for multinational companies, teaching foreign languages). These exchanges are usually carried out through speaking, more specifically, speaking a lingua franca such as English. Learning to speak another language is then a requirement for expanding one's academic or professional horizons, and many people are aware of this requirement, which takes them to study languages and to take standardized tests such as TOEFL, IELTS, FCE, MET, PET, or KET, among others.

All standardized tests evaluate the test takers' performance in the four communicative skills: listening, reading, writing and speaking. The last one is highly relevant since is the most evident aspect considered to assure if the communication in the target language is effective since it requires the student knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, fluency, accuracy, among other language components.

In Colombia, "Pruebas Saber 11" are standardized tests compulsorily applied to all high-school students before they graduate. This test contains a section addressed to evaluate the communicative skills of high-schoolers as foreign language learners. However the students are only tested on components which do not provide evidence that communication takes place. Since the main goal of the government is to develop bilingual proficiency in Colombia, assessing speaking will become more and more important. If the assessment of speaking is not present in the Colombian standardized tests, at least oral exams need to be used in classrooms. Teachers have to start thinking about how to make speaking assessment reliable and effective, and

understand the importance of mastering the speaking skill. In Colombia, teachers need to give speaking and speaking assessment more importance, since as Richards (2008) states:

It is a priority for many second-language (L2) or foreign-language (FL) learners, since learners often evaluate their success in language learning as well as the effectiveness of their English course on the basis of how much they feel they have improved in their spoken language proficiency (p.19)

The fact that learners may need to be ready to take standardized tests in the future, that the Colombian government has communication as the goal of English learning and that oral exams are not included in the “Pruebas Saber 11”, leads us to think about how to improve the assessment of speaking as one of the skills that better showcases the learner’s performance in the target language. For this reason it is worth pondering about the Colombian setting regarding speaking learning and assessment where teaching and formal assessment of the L2 learning is focused only on components such as vocabulary and grammar.

Assessment, in general, needs to be seen as an essential part of the learning process since it provides the information of the levels of understanding and awareness that students achieve when they communicate effectively in a FL. As, Pellegrino, Chudowsky and Glaser (2001) state “assessment provides timely and informative feedback about the effectiveness and efficiency on students’ accuracy in the learning process” (p.87). Students then need to be assessed because once they are conscious about their level and know what needs to be worked on their language acquisition process they can improve it.

Nowadays, in some oral tests, learners are not clear about what is specifically being assessed (e.g. fluency, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and so on). This disconnection between the type of test used, the purpose of the test and the lack of information or instruction

about it may cause students feel unsure about their progress or it might make them believe that a score or positive result is enough. However a score, number or percentage does not give them accurate feedback of their level of communication specifically in the speaking skill. Therefore, there must be a connection between classroom activities, the proficiency levels expected from learners and the assessment tasks that teachers administer.

One way to make the purposes of assessment more transparent to learners is to use rubrics, and apply them in oral exams. A rubric can be defined as a coherent set of criteria for students' work that includes descriptions of levels of performance quality on the criteria. The main purpose of rubrics is to assess performances (Brookhart 2013, p. 4). Likewise and additionally the use of rubrics can be as a tool to strengthen the assessment principles of reliability, validity and authenticity that Brown (2004) declares aims at supporting learners by clarifying the assessment parameters. This may contribute to help learners identify the gaps in their knowledge and identify what is the path to follow to reach their academic goals and fill those gaps in a way that their oral proficiency is improved.

Considering the goals of the Colombian government and CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) the challenge is to prepare learners to be more communicatively competent either in an oral test or any context where they are required to use the FL, particularly the speaking skill. The constant use of rubrics from the beginning of instruction could help to reinforce the speaking skill since their flexibility can help learners see more clearly which aspects are being assessed, what are their strengths and their weaknesses (e.g., a rubric can focus on some aspects such as pronunciation, fluency, accuracy, turn-taking, intonation, etc.) The purpose of this paper is to present rubrics for oral assessment in order to enhance the speaking

skill learning process to meet the CEFR standards. Rubrics in EFL settings intend to provide teachers with a more accurate assessment tool than traditional written tests.

One important solution for improving students' speaking ability can be the use of rubrics in FL classrooms. This paper presents a study that comprises, first the review of the literature related to speaking as a skill needed for communication. Second, this paper talks about a review of assessment as an integral part in the process of foreign language learning. Third, this study also includes the analysis of rubrics as useful tools for the development of speaking and finally, a didactic proposal is presented for teachers and students of EFL.

Literature Review

The present section aims at reviewing three terms which are considered the spine of this research paper: Speaking, Assessment and Rubrics. Each term is going to be defined and contextualized within the Colombian setting.

Understanding Speaking as a Communicative Skill

Learning a language different from the mother tongue implies acquiring knowledge in the four communicative abilities of any language: listening, speaking, reading and writing. This paper focuses on one of these abilities: Speaking.

In accordance with, Brown (2001) and El-Koumy (2004), speaking has been defined as an oral process of meaning construction and expression. At the same time it has also been thought as a series of micro-skills, such as vocabulary, fluency, grammar and pronunciation (El-Koumy 2004, Brown 2001, Guoqiang 2009, Brown 2010, among others). This ability also requires from its users some knowledge about social aspects like turn-taking, exchange of feelings, risks-taking and interaction. This communicative ability sometimes might be difficult to be mastered since as Brown (2001) points out, the learner is in total charge of the oral utterance which implies the prior domain of the speaker in spoken-language characteristics such as: clustering, redundancy, reduced forms (like contractions, elisions) performance variables, colloquial language, stress, rhythm, intonation, rate of deliver and interaction.

In the process of learning English as a foreign language (EFL) the oral production ability gains importance since it seems to be intuitively the most important of the four communicative skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) as people who know a language are referred to as 'speakers' of the target language (Ur, 1996). Also because as mentioned by Celce-Murcia

(2001), gaining mastery in speaking is a synonym of proficiency since is the most basic means of human communication.

Similarly to learning how to drive, riding a bike or swimming, speaking another language requires more than just theory-based instruction since people needs to communicate all the time in the real life situations; that is, speaking is the skill that facilitates people interaction. Then, it is needed that teaching be thought as an outdoor skill performance that needs to be fostered. It demands the teacher to ditch the traditional way of teaching repetition drills and grammar structures; as if they were the only components of the language. That is to say that the teacher must consider the Communicative competence of the learner which is more than just knowing the grammar rules to organize sentences or paragraphs, or being able to employ such rules to assemble expressions bottom-up when the occasion requires. Communicative competence cannot be seen as a mechanical process; it is a process that focuses on knowing a stock of partially pre-assembled patterns, formulaic frameworks, and a kit of rules, so to speak and also being able to apply the rules to make any adjustments required regarding the contextual demands.

The main purposes of FL learning are communicative competence and effective performance in an L2. For this reason teachers need to understand the speaking performance development. In this extent, Brown (2001) describes six stages of oral performance as follows; Imitative stage, in this stage, speakers only imitate words, phrases or sentences, but they are not capable to understand in a whole the meaning of what is being repeated. High phonetic acquisition is wide since the teaching is pronunciation-focused. Intensive stage, students have short language output and low interactional level, through basic questions to elementary conversations that indicate narrow communicative competence. Speakers are more aware of the words' meaning that helps them to respond. Responsive stage. In this stage Speakers are able to

reply in a short but sufficient way to teacher or students initiated comments or questions.

Transactional stage. In this stage learners are able to convey or exchange specific information in order to maintain a social relationship which implies more complexity and length of speaking interaction. Interpersonal stage. Learners acquire a speaking casual register, use colloquial language, and identify humor among other sociolinguistic conventions. Finally, Extensive stage where speakers can start deliberative extended monologues for situations like reports, anecdotes, stories or summaries which can be planned or impromptu.

As established by the definitions above, the speaking teaching implications can be inferred. A clear understanding of the appropriate instruction is needed in order to satisfy the students' needs and align them with a Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach to help students be ready to manage and to face a real-life situation.

In favor of fulfilling the FL Learner's demands regarding efficient speaking training, it is necessary to review the national context for which the Ministry of Education (MEN for its acronym in Spanish) has proposed Bilingual Colombia as an educational program.

The mentioned program has shown not to be the most adequate for this country as revealed by a recent diagnosis "only 2% of Colombia's population have a mastery of English as a second language" (DANE, 2008, de Mejía, 2002; Gamboa, 2007; Ministry of National Education, 2006; in Usma, 2009", (as cited by Gustin 2014, p. 13). From these results it can be inferred that there are a lot of gaps between real setting and the program expectations neglecting its difficulties to fulfill the current communicative competence aims. This is likely to happen given several factors which delay the process, for instance: inside-classroom conditions (weekly exposure time to the target language, large size groups, disagreement between curriculum and real-life setting, lack of resources, lack of continuity and consistency) or the national budget

addressed to satisfy the bilingual needs; seizing up students to carry on their process of becoming competitive in this communicative world.

Considering the EFL contexts such as the Colombian one, they have a lot of challenges to overcome in order to reach the new communicative world demands. Then, it is necessary the implementation of useful programs and strategies to accomplish the FL learning process aims. The next section deals with assessment processes in ESL an EFL.

Getting Acquainted with Assessment

In order to define what assessment is, let us cite first Brown (2004) who argues that it is an ongoing process used to encompass the students own learning process aspects. Brown also exemplifies assessment as those very common chances in classroom when the student responds to questions, comments or takes part of the class and the teacher subconsciously assesses the student performance. Afsahi and Tabrizi (2017) present assessment as different ways of collecting information regarding learner's language learning. They also mention the different information sources such as: test results, portfolios, interviews, peer assessment and self-assessment. It is worth mentioning that assessment can have different objectives for instance to place learners in the right class, to evaluate learners' language proficiency, to measure student's overall level, progress, how well students have learnt the courses material, or to determine learner's weaknesses and strengths. By stating this, it can be inferred that assessment does not necessarily refer to tests as the only way to assess. This is supported by Brown (2004) who says "tests are a subset of assessment, they are certainly not the only form of assessment that a teacher can make" (p.4). Tests can be useful devices, but they are only one among many procedures and tasks that teachers can ultimately use to assess students. It can be said that through assessment,

the teacher gets information in order to adapt his/ her teaching practices, so that the student may have a better training.

Then, assessment importance lies in the fact that it permits to collect information to make decisions that might produce consequences for learners, teachers, the language program and also in the educational context in which assessment happens; therefore, the intention is to make decisions that have beneficial consequences (Bachman and Palmer 2010, as cited in Afsahi and Tabrizi (2017, p. 284).

For this reason, the new challenge of teaching a FL might be intended to make students really produce language and communicate effectively. For assessment to take place as Brown (2004) states, non-stop, constant and accurate students' assessment is a good teachers' target/task. Such assessment can lead teachers to a satisfying experience since only this might guide the students towards the main specific goal: learning a language. In this extent, one of the main assessment process purposes is to foster both teachers' and students' awareness about the learning process improvement and supervise their performance through the mutual contribution between them (Hancock, 1994).

It is important to mention the two main assessment branches, the traditional one and the alternative one; Traditional assessment measures students' performance based on simplistic instruments, which are practical but they lack validity and reliability (Wiggins, 1990).

Additionally, Kwako (2003) considers scoring or grades as the main quality sources, that is to say, these give teachers the chance to determine students' progress and level of knowledge through pre-established averages or percentages, submitting students to a summative assessment which limit students' curiosity to go beyond a qualification, focusing only on completing the assignments.

To sum up, Kwako (2003) states that traditional assessment is designed to follow a curriculum, reach academic goals, cover broad contents and apply extensive and complex tests to get a final grade, which is frequently considered by the students as the central part and the most relevant aspect of the learning process. This path does not contribute to learners' progress. The same author says, that although the traditional assessment strengths are their practical design and application, the most relevant aspect is that this kind of assessment gives teachers chance to measure learners knowledge in a more objective way, when they include only one chance to answer correctly, avoiding misunderstandings or confusions and focusing students' interest on content more than on scoring.

In contrast, Alternative Assessment (AA) focuses on measuring students understanding of the contents or its internalization through the use of tools which assess learners acquisition of contents in a more authentic and functional way (Kwako, 2003). Indeed, alternative assessment should be handled carefully as an innovative measurement method but at the same time as a way that permits to accomplish the learning process demands (Brown and Hudson 1998, p.657).

Further, one of the main AA advantages is the favorable environment which involves students through complex strategies, encouraging their analytical thinking instead of limiting their cognitive process through pre-established and conditioned responses, only to meet curricular standards. In addition, it supports teachers to apply, develop and accomplish the academic purposes according to students needs (Callison, 1998).

In addition, Allwright (1988) affirms that the quality of learning might be better accredited when students are involved in the assessment stage since the conscious and cognitive process of the learning process takes place in their minds (as cited on Hancock, 1994, p.3).

Then, there are other types of assessment ways to measure learners' progress such as formative assessment and summative assessment. According to Harmer (2007) and Brown (2004), formative assessment permits teachers to gather information about students' performance through a progressive monitoring of their learning process to subsequently give feedback in order to identify their strengths and weaknesses, in order to facilitate the acquisition and the improvement of the linguistic abilities.

Regarding summative assessment, Harmer (2007) argues, it tests students through grades or some kind of scoring, but it is sometimes not accurate since in some cases it does not reflect students' knowledge or their performance in the language in general terms (p. 379). Brown (2004) affirms that it determines learners' competence and progress level through scoring.

Traditional approaches based only on scoring and cumulative results may restrict the learning process. Alternative assessment tools are more practical, easier, cheaper and feasible to implement since it is focused on measuring students' progress in a direct and accurate way.

Brown and Hudson (1998) contemplate three categories of alternative assessment: 1. Select-response assessment, 2. Constructive-response assessment, 3. Personal-Response assessment (p. 653); lets focus on the last category, which includes conferences, portfolio, and self- or peer assessment (Brown and Hudson 1998, p.663). This alternative in assessment allows learners to be aware of their proficiency level in a L2 which might measure learners' progress accurately, in order to give them a meaningful feedback or a useful diagnosis of their advancements.

Accordingly, alternative assessment tools may create a beneficial learning environment for teachers and learners. Brown (2004) states, it is important to identify what the purpose of an alternative assessment instrument is since the new educational demands require more reliable

and authentic measurement tools to provide useful results with the purpose of enhancing the learning process. For the purposes of this document, it will focus on rubrics as alternative assessment tools for speaking skills, as will be seen below.

How to Assess Speaking:

This paper aims at making the reader reflect on the speaking skill, usually seen as the core skill for communication to take place since it gives people the chance to express by themselves genuinely. Moreover, the main objective is to apply an assessment tool that really identifies students' difficulties in the speaking skill, with the aim to improve it.

Seong (2017) asserts saying that to assess speaking, it is necessary to identify its components in order to design useful and accurate tools which allow identifying what is necessary to improve and how to do it; besides test items or tasks can assess this skill, and discretely help the teacher to make inferences on the learner is speaking ability.

The same author considers that the evaluation should be a process focused on improving the ability to speak. In this sense, well-designed assessment tools can help achieve that goal, giving students the opportunity to identify their weaknesses to improve their communication skills, preventing students feel overwhelmed through the assessment process.

As mentioned before, the communicative demands are growing. English programs and courses are increasing, and learners also search for more chances to improve their speaking skill through useful lessons and tools so to communicate effectively (Seong, 2017). As a result, speaking assessment should be a process that measures the competencies through meaningful instruments and processes according to current communicative aims.

The next section is going to provide us a didactic proposal for the application of rubrics in assessing students speaking skill.

Rubrics to Foster Self-Awareness

In agreement with several authors, a rubric is an assessment tool used as guideline to assess learners' performance. Such guideline is considered reliable since it is a set of criteria or pre-established rules designed to understand what is expected from the task (Brookhart and Nitko 2008, Ulker 2017, Brookhart 2013, Wolf and Sevens 2007). Rubrics as assessment instruments are commonly estimated as effective ones given its power to transform subjective judgments into objective and critical concepts.

Most of the available literature about rubrics mentions the reasons to consider this tool as being very efficient. For instance, Bargainnier (2003) highlights how positive is the use of rubrics in the learning process of any discipline since the purpose of them is mainly to identify the weaknesses or strengths of students' performance in the FL. By means of using rubrics the teacher assures his/her students are going to receive fair feedback about what to improve. Rubrics provide learning with a professional record of the students' progress.

Using and Designing Rubrics: Analytic or Holistic?:

Rubrics are extensively beneficial to language learning, but their effectiveness resides in their design. It is highly important that teachers decidedly establish what they want to assess or evaluate to choose between one of the two types of rubrics that Bargainnier (2003) presents Holistic and Analytic. The teacher must differentiate between these types as they offer different kind of assessment and subsequent feedback.

According to Brookhart (2013), the key of choosing the most suitable rubric kind is to state the objective or intention of the task to assess. Once the target is placed, the teacher has to choose between A) Analytic rubrics, whose criterion is stated in dependant items, which aims at obtaining detailed information of particular aspects in the task. This type of rubric is better for

instructions and for formative assessment since this shows the learners where to draw their attention to but also for summative assessment since this provides with accurate marks on specific features. Or B) Holistic Rubrics, which yield an overall judgment about the learners' work quality. This type of rubric enables the teacher to see whether the learner' outcome meets the target of the task or criterion, what seems to be more summative/assessment profitable. Both types offer advantages talking about the learning process in terms of quality and effectiveness to assess, however the teacher has to consider class features and particularities, for instance; class size, time of exposure and class objectives, among others.

The plethora of rubrics types or options can burden even the most experienced teachers. Authors such as Berger (2011), Brookhart (2013), Walvoord (2010) and Orlich (2010) cited by Ulker, (2017) suggest bearing in mind two main components of rubrics to design the most appropriate one. First, the criteria which establish the assessment parameters, and second, the standards also called scoring scales, which establish the achievement degree and performance scale on each task with the aim to measure the learners' progress (p.135).

In pursuance of choosing or designing the most suitable rubric for any academic purposes Partnership (2000) states seven attributes of quality rubrics such as, Criteria as detailed lists of the assignments goals to guide learners how to be acquainted with teachers. Gradations of quality or rating scales are related to standards levels established that include specific comments or concepts from low to high performance level, commonly rubrics contain 4 to 6 gradation levels. Rubrics' descriptions give measure and give clear information about assignments, providing learners' the chance to validate and understand their scores. Continuity shows and helps to build a sequential path to follow, for that reason the quality range difference should oscillate in the same interval. Reliability, the application of well-designed and trustworthy rubrics helps to reach

the same goals in similar task or assignments to assess and measure students' progress and evolution of the learning process. Validity provides more accurate scores about central objectives in terms of performance and assignment goals, instead of be based on an isolated mark (or grade) provided by teachers. Finally, teachers may keep a series of rubrics' models with several levels of achievement and save them nameless.

As many different teaching alternatives, rubrics also count on advantages and disadvantages to consider. Arter and McTigue, (2001) insist on the use of rubrics as a profitable chance to focus on the main objective of an assignment or task. In this way either teachers or students are aware about the goals and how to reach them. The criteria give students more detailed information about what they need to accomplish, what kind of skill they need to improve, or focus and how to be successful. Then, teachers may use rubrics to determine learning process targets and also their own expectation of their class according to the curriculum and setting.

Rubrics are also student-centered which can be interpreted as another advantage given the fact these tools guide learners through the assignments and point out the purpose of the task in reachable terms, this makes learners to freely work on the task as the language and teacher expectations are explicit. In the case of teachers, rubrics can be quick to apply, objective and efficient as the scoring is less tedious, and they will help track down students' progress. In case of large-size courses, rubrics help save time because it can take 10 minutes to assess over 25 students at a time instead of assessing them one by one. Finally, in addition to the bright side of rubrics, they make learners to be more conscious and autonomous in their performance on assignments.

On the contrary, the drawback of rubrics is addressed to teachers work itself, because designing rubrics requires a considerable investment of time and patience meanwhile the teachers get used to work with them, specifically when they design an analytic rubric type. Furthermore, analytic rubrics can be misinterpreted if the language is not clear or user-friendly. Although implementing a holistic rubric is easier than an analytic one as the holistic rubrics are an overall judgment of performance, limited results and the restricted feedback are the biggest disadvantages because it is not detailed, and it mainly focuses on the student meeting the goal of the assignment.

At following section, intends to provide a general overview of the design and implementation of rubrics as assessment tools specifically for the speaking skill in the Colombian setting.

Designing and Implementing Rubrics in Colombia

In previous sections a background was provided describing how rubrics might be suitable measure tools for assessing speaking. Additionally, considering that as CEFR, rubrics design also includes scales, series of criteria and descriptors which facilitate the use and application of these tools in the assessment stage. Further, rubrics design adjust in some sort to CEFR standards, which might be taken as bases for rubrics design in terms of criteria and scales of levels performance. In this way, teachers and students may monitor the progress of the learning process since a well-designed rubric may help and facilitate teachers' work drawing their attention towards the identification of the most common students' mistakes and problems and saving teachers' assessing time.

Rubrics have the following characteristics. A rubric should be comprehensive from descriptor to descriptor in terms of language to objectively indicate the variance of quality.

Valid, as the differences in quality scales should: reflect on whether successful delivery of the assignment based upon samples of work across the whole presentation, exhibit qualitative assessment rather than quantitative appreciations, and avoid mistaking situational behaviour e.g. use of note cards with actual errors in language proficiency utterances e.g. speaking effectiveness; and Reliable, as the evaluation criteria and consequent final score can be analyzed by other teachers and across time, the evaluative language needs to be highly-descriptive in order to allow any judge to recognize the distinctive features of each level of any performance. (Relearning by Design, 2000)

Similarly, and accordingly to Ayhan and Türkyilmaz (2015), assessing rubrics is not a matter of only numbers to say whether the performance was good or bad; according to these authors rubrics need to count on 2 pieces of information: first, the Scores used to objectively assess the learners giving them a clear overview on how well or poor their performance was. Second, the Language Categories are included. These categories describe or give enough and precise information about the different expectations the teacher has on their students output. Such categories provide the information needed to understand the way in which a task must be developed.

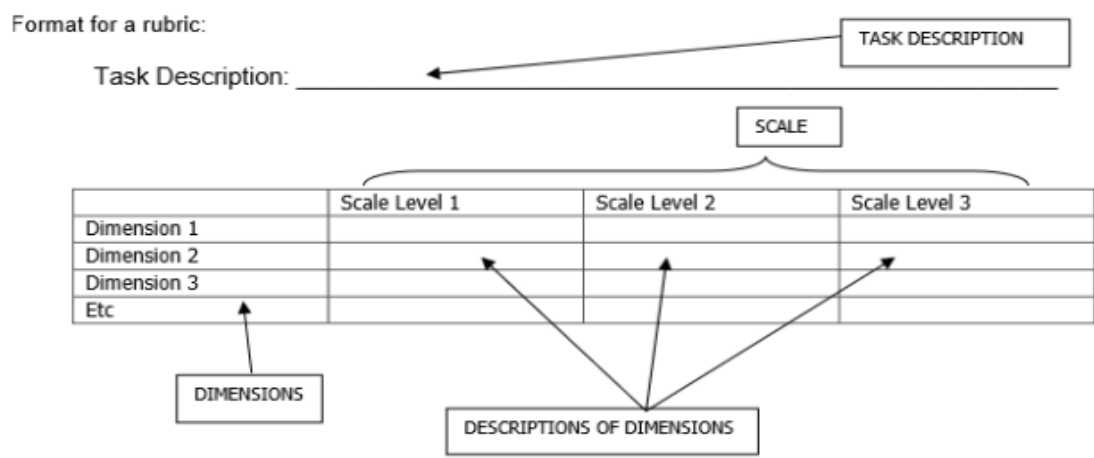
The same authors state that when designing a rubric the teacher must pay attention to the following 4 features to make an efficiently clear rubric.

1. Task description: it is needed to define and clarify the task under assessment.
2. Scale: These features go on the Scores side. The scales can be from 1 to any number the teacher finds necessary. These scales function indicate the evaluative goal of the task. The scales denomination needs to be tactful and objective at the same time, for instance:

“mastery, partial mastery, progressing, emerging”. They must supply differences to each other.

3. Dimensions. They mention the aspects being assessed in the performance. The dimensions are the components of language. Here the teacher needs to mention either the grammar use, (determined) target vocabulary, Comprehension or any other component being evaluated.

4. Descriptions of dimensions: these descriptors help to understand where the learner failed to the expected level of command of a determined activity. These are also known as the criteria used to assess the performance of the learner within the use of pertinent terminology. Many times as their name say, these describe or indicate what the performance was like in the level the scale suggests (p.83). See figure 1.



Taken from Ayhan and Türkyilmaz (2015). Key of Language Assessment: Rubrics and Rubric Design. International Journal of Language and Linguistics

A teacher can choose between Holistic or Analytic type of rubric depending on the class needs. However, the main objective of this document is to offer quick instructions about the design of general rubrics according to the Colombian environment; First, considering English as

a foreign language (ESL) in public schools and second, considering that ESL teachers must design an alternative assessment tool for 45 students per classroom on average. To illustrate teachers on how to design a general rubric, Ayhan and Türkyilmaz (2015) recommend three steps to follow:

First, define the behaviour to be assessed. Since the students expect the teacher to guide about the skill to master, the teacher must pose goals to reach with the assignment. Questions such as: -What concept, skill or knowledge am I trying to assess or consider?

Second, choose the activity. Once the 'What' to assess, the teacher needs to think on 'How' to assess that 'What'. Then the activity to assess has to grant essential details like: time constraints, class-size, resources, and the learners' background necessary to perform.

Finally, defining the criteria. Now, it is time to define the elements to fulfill the assignment expectations. As the authors propose, the criteria here need to avoid ambiguous words but also express the performance quality in observable learner's behaviour or characteristics.

A Rubric Based Proposal to Assess Speaking

Rubrics are scoring tools that includes criteria and rating scales to specify the expectations or what is aimed at from a task. Hence, rubrics divide a task into its components and establish parameters to assess learners' performance levels of those components. This paper proposal is focused on providing teachers useful information about the stages to follow when EFL teachers are to create rubrics for assessing speaking activities.

Considering the previous recommendations to design useful rubrics, , teachers should elaborate or propose one assignment that might be described, establish some levels to be reached in each assignment or task; moreover, levels may include some marks or grades. Finally, the

assignment should be delimited, that is, the knowledge and skills needed for the assignment should be specified.

The description of the task at this point might be established by the English teacher and might focus on the learners' performance in a speaking task according to what is expected at each level. The use of the syllabus or a language framework might be useful for providing the description of the task. By doing so, the rubric might become still valid when language teachers want to reuse them.

In this proposal some models of rubrics that aim to arouse students' curiosity at any level of performance are provided. The main objective is to provide teachers a clear overview of rubrics as measurement tools for the speaking skill. Rubrics provide an accurate and corrective feedback of an assignment if they are well-designed and applied. Thus, teachers may constantly monitor how students accomplish what the rubric is asking for in each specific assignment.

Following with the elaboration of rubrics, the second aspect to consider is the scale. A scale is to say how well or bad learners are doing in the task. The scale is usually another grid and here language teachers might use positive language to enhance students' performance towards the completion of the task.

Considering that students might change their mind then the scale contains words that are not judgmental but encouraging. Additionally, language teachers may be creative at this point since some marks or signs or even emojis could be used to give learners an idea on how high or poor their performance is. When talking about the scale, there might not be a formula for the number of levels, but it seems more recommendable using from three to five in terms of practicality.

It is important to mention that the more levels included in a rubric, the harder it gets to place students in one or another scale. For that reason, when the levels are specific, students might have a clear idea of what they are supposed to reach as well as teachers' grading and leaving comments time might be reduced.

In this way, the models of rubrics for grading speaking skill proposed in this paper might contain from three to five levels for each dimension. Dimensions should be stated in a comprehensible language to avoid ambiguity, emphasizing the importance of each aspect that is being evaluated. Further, the dimensions should show what aspects teachers are evaluating on a speaking task such as vocabulary, range, accuracy, interaction and coherence.

Thus, elaborating on the dimensions might be crucial for students as well as for teachers since it might be the due time for benefiting from the feedback rubrics provide. Additionally, rubrics design or creation may be a collaborative work between teachers and students, or each one of them could structure one with the aim to articulate the goals according to the learning process expectations.

Four activities are presented as recommendations to work with Foreign Language learners and rubrics as measurement tools to the activities. The following tables contain the activities, the CEFR parameter to speaking skill and some samples of rubrics.

Table A

CEFR General Standard: Overall Speaking Production.
<p>Production activities The categories for spoken production are organized in terms of three macro-functions (interpersonal, transactional, evaluative), with two more specialized genres: Addressing audiences and Public announcements. Sustained monologue: Describing experience focuses mainly on descriptions and narratives whilst Sustained monologue: Putting a case (e.g. in debate) describes the ability to sustain an argument, which may well be made in a long turn in the context of normal conversation and discussion. Sustained monologue: giving information is a new scale, created by transferring certain descriptors from the scale for Information exchange that implied monologue rather than dialogue.</p>
<p>Key parameter: overall spoken production (CEFR)</p>
<p>Resources: <i>Common reference levels: Global Scale and qualitative aspects to spoken language.</i></p>

Taken from: Council Europe (2011). Common European Framework of reference for languages (p.69).

Table A1

A1 Level: General Criteria
CEFR General Standard- Overall Spoken Production- A1: Can produce simple mainly isolated phrases about people and places.
<p>Key parameters: Self-assessment Speaking (CEFR): Common Reference Levels: Global Scale:</p> <p>Basic Users A1: Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.(p.24)</p>
<p>Self-Assessment Criterion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spoken Interaction: I can interact in a simple way provided the other person is prepared to rephrase things at slower rate of speech and help me formulate what I'm trying to say, I can ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics. • Spoken Production: I can use simple phrases and sentences to describe where I live and people I know.
<p>Directions: Choose and stick the correct Emoji to self- assess your performance on each speaking category. Next, check what your level in the checklist is.</p>

Taken from Council Europe (2011) Common European Framework of reference for languages (p.69).

A1 Activity: Introduce yourself: Formal and Informal Greetings and Farewells.

In this activity students may use the formal and informal greetings to introduce themselves in their first day in the classroom according to three steps.

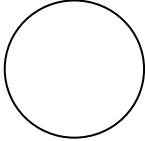
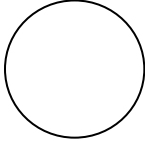
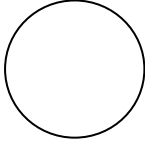
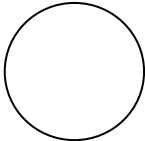
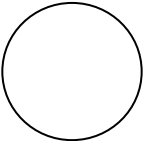
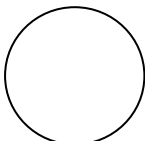
Directions:

First the teacher introduces the vocabulary, (see the chart 1.) explains the different and hypothetical situations (chart 2) which will be assigned by the teacher to students; second, the students introduce themselves to their classmates using the appropriate vocabulary taking into account the assigned situation. Finally, the teacher gives them a self-assessment speaking rubric and the emoji stickers to the learners could check their progress and get an accurate and functional feedback.

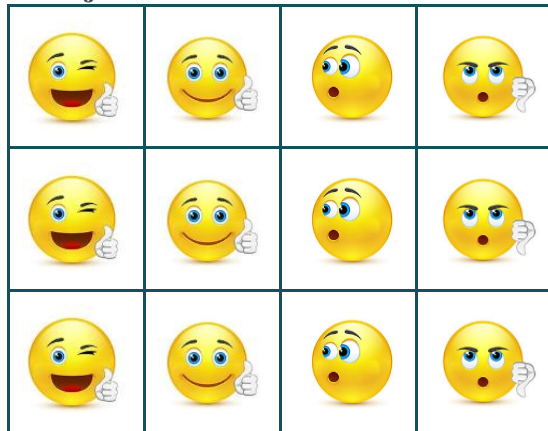
Next, the teacher makes the last revision and he or she should determine which emoji-sticker is prevalent and check the criteria grid (Chart A1) to compare their result and identify the students' level of proficiency. The criteria grid was designed considering the *Common European Framework* CEFR qualitative aspects of spoken language use (p.28).

Rubrics A1

Table 1 - Level: Self-Assessment Speaking Specific Rubric-Introduce Yourself

A1 Emoji Specific Rubric: Introduce Yourself.		
Name: _____ <u>Student A</u> _____		
Directions: Use the emoji stickers to self- assess your speaking performance on the task. In this level, my speaking performance according each item is?		
Vocabulary Hi, hello, good morning, my name is- great, fine, very well, not too bad, nice... 	Grammar - To be: is/am/are - Personal pronouns (I, you, he, she, it, we , they) 	Expressions Good morning/Good afternoon /I'm fine, thanks... 
Interaction What is your name?/ How are you? 	Connector “And” 	Final Emoji which emoji prevails 
Final Emoji: Finally check which emoji prevails and stick it.		
My level of proficiency : underline your level - Advanced - Intermediate - Nearing Proficient - Novice		

Emoji -Stickers







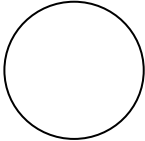
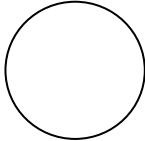
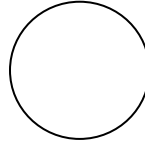
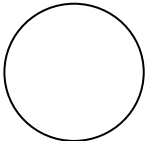
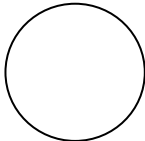
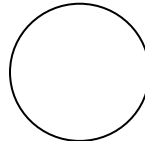
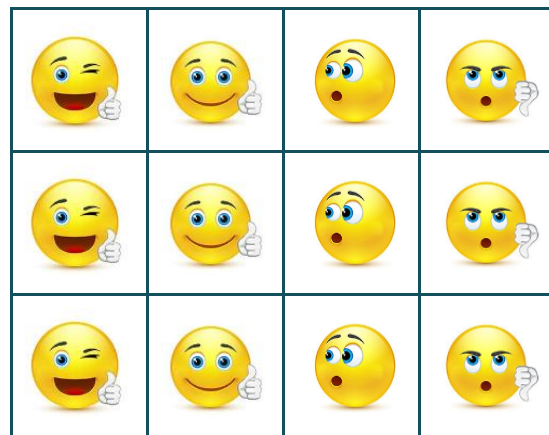
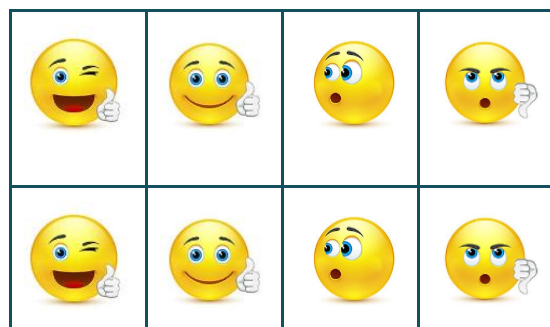
Teacher Chart A1 : Introduce yourself- Specific Rubrics Criteria Grid - A1 Level				
Emoji Criteria Criteria	Advanced 	Intermediate 	Acceptable 	Novice 
Vocabulary	Student can use greetings	I often use greetings	I sometimes greetings	I rarely use greetings
Grammar	Student can use verb to be forms (am-is- are) and personal pronouns.	Student often use verb to be forms (am-is- are) and personal pronouns.	I sometimes use forms (am-is- are) and personal pronouns.	I rarely use forms (am-is- are) and personal pronouns.
Expressions	I can easily express greetings	I often express greetings	I sometimes express greetings	I rarely express greetings
Interaction	Student greets the most part of his/her classmates	Student greets at least 2 students	Student greets some classmate	I rarely greets some classmate
Link word	I can use connector “and”	I often use connector “and”	I sometimes use use connector “and”	I rarely use connector “and”





Table 2 - Level: Self-Assessment Speaking Specific Rubric-Introduce Yourself.

A1 Emoji General Rubric - A1 CEFR Level		
Name: _____ <u>Student A</u> _____		
Directions: Use the emoji stickers to self- assess your speaking performance. In this level, my speaking performance in each item is?...		
Vocabulary 	Grammar 	Expressions 
Interaction 	Connectors 	Final Emoji 
Which of the emojis prevails? Finally check which emoji prevails and stick it.		
My level of proficiency : underline your level Advanced - Intermediate - Nearing Proficient - Novice		

Emoji –Sticker



Now verify your progress in each element of the following table and what you need to improve: Table 2.

Introduce yourself- Self-Assessment General Rubrics Criteria Grid - A1 Level				
Emoji Criteria	Advanced	Intermediate	Acceptable	Novice
Criteria				
Range: vocabulary	Student can use verb to be forms and personal pronouns.	Student frequently can use verb to be forms and personal pronouns.	Student sometimes can use verb to be basic forms and personal pronouns.	Student Rarely use verb to be basic forms and personal pronouns.
Accuracy: Grammar	Student control simple grammatical structures and sentences.	Student often shows limited control of simple grammatical structures and sentences.	Student sometimes shows limited control of simple grammatical structures and sentences.	Student rarely shows limited control of simple grammatical structures and sentences.
Fluency: Expressions	Student can express easily the basic familiar vocabulary.	Student usually expresses easily the basic familiar vocabulary.	Student sometimes express easily the basic familiar vocabulary.	Student rarely express easily the basic familiar vocabulary.
Interaction	Student can ask and answer questions using the basic grammar structures and vocabulary.	Student frequently ask and answer questions using the basic grammar structures and vocabulary.	Student sometimes ask and answer questions using the basic grammar structures and vocabulary.	Student rarely ask and answer questions using the basic grammar structures and vocabulary.
Coherence Connectors	Student can use main connectors “and” or “then”.	Student often use main connectors “and” or “then”.	Student sometimes use main Connectors “and” or “then”	Student rarely use main connectors “and” or “then”..

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