# *Book reviews*

## ASSESSING SPEAKING IN CONTEXT: EXPANDING THE CONSTRUCT AND ITS APPLICATIONS
*Salaberry, M. R., & Burch, A. R. (Eds.)*
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**Leila Zohali**
*University of Melbourne*

By reviewing the key features of the theoretical underpinnings of existing assessment frameworks, this edited volume applies a critical perspective to research on speaking assessment by examining how existing approaches could be reconceived for evaluating additional languages. The book aims to identify potential discrepancies between the type of test instrument and the characteristics of current models of language assessment.

The book's thirteen chapters focus on the challenges of integrating interactional competence (IC) with speaking tasks and how recent research on the dynamic nature of speaking can be integrated into assessment models and procedures. The book is based on the Rice University Centre for Languages and Intercultural Communication's May 2018 conference of the same name. It combines 22 contributors' research that is thematically organized into four parts: *conceptual and theoretical issues; collecting and rating speaking data; designing speaking assessment tests; and using new technology to assess speaking.*

Part one comprises three chapters, commencing with the editors' aim of reconceptualizing speaking in the redesign of testing instruments. In the next chapter, Roever and Dai discuss the difficulties in assessing IC, the importance of including it in major language tests, and how the IC construct can be expanded to include the social role as an underestimated sub-trait of IC. In the following chapter, Plough draws attention to the significant role of non-verbal behaviour in interactions and the necessity of embedding behaviours such as gestures or facial expressions in language tests.

The three chapters of part two present empirical research on speaking assessment by drawing on data from both test takers and

raters. This section opens with a chapter by Burch and Kasper that responds to the challenge of designing test tasks that encompass relevant dimensions of 'target language use tasks' (Bachman & Palmer, 1996). They discuss transitions between interview and role-play activities in oral proficiency interviews as a speaking assessment task. In the next chapter, Youn and Chen investigate trained raters' processes and strategies when awarding a score for role-play-based paired speaking performances. It is followed by Sandlund and Sundqvist's use of using membership categorization analysis to examine rater training as a factor in reducing rater variability in L2 English oral assessments.

The third part examines the design of speaking assessment tools for evaluating aspects of IC, such as repair strategies and turn-taking. Comprising of four chapters, it discusses and evaluates issues associated with IC assessment in different settings, including classrooms and situations in which there are limited resources. It begins with a chapter by Kley, Kunitz, and Yeh discussing the potential discrepancy between preconceived IC markers and actual usage by test takers in a classroom-based assessment of repair practice. Van Compernolle argues in the next chapter for using dynamic strategic interaction scenarios as an innovative method to assess IC. The next chapter by Dunkle provides a comparison of social deduction games. Next, Barth-Weingarten and Freitag-Hild focus on role-plays, which are used to exemplify an approach to assessing IC under the conditions of scarce assessment resources.

The last part of the book contains three chapters that focus on applying new technologies to assess speaking. In Chapter 11, Song and Hsu propose a classroom-based virtual reality oral assessment that has the potential to be used for placement or formative tests. Next, Iwashita, May and Moore examine how well computer-mediated speaking tests can account for IC. In the concluding chapter, the editors analyse the practicalities of employing both established and new testing instruments to accurately evaluate the new sociocultural construct of speaking ability in a post-COVID era.

This edited volume makes a significant contribution to the field of applied linguistics by exploring speaking constructs and integrating innovative technologies into the development of speaking ability assessment. As discussed in the volume, recent changes to the speaking construct, including a shift from a narrow definition of speaking to an expanded one, have substantial implications for how

the speaking construct is conceived and assessed and will play a role in its development in the years to come. One such implication will be more valid and reliable major language tests that incorporate new definitions of the speaking construct and IC assessment.

Furthermore, the edited volume is clearly a valuable resource for graduate students and early-career researchers. It provides thorough empirical research on numerous facets of spoken language proficiency, such as role-plays, turn-taking, and repair strategies. This detailed inclusion of empirical research will assist graduate students and early-career researchers to find critical approaches for their own research. Additionally, chapters on various approaches to designing speaking tests and the resources provided by modern technology open up new possibilities for individuals interested in developing innovative testing initiatives.

Notwithstanding the above-mentioned distinguishing features of the book, a few drawbacks are evident. The book's premise is that existing large-scale approaches to L2 oral assessment are inadequate, but little effort is made to give large-scale tests adequate consideration. Instead, chapters in part two and three describe relatively small-scale testing initiatives but, at the same time, aim to address the perceived deficiencies of large-scale oral testing operations. It would have been more engaging and informative if a broader range of real-world challenges in large-scale testing had been explored throughout the book.

In conclusion, this edited collection makes an essential contribution to the field as it broadens our understanding of construct definitions for speaking abilities by highlighting new challenges in speaking assessment and compiling an abundance of empirical research to address these challenges.

**References**
Bachman, L. F., & Palmer, A. S. (1996). *Language testing in practice: Designing and developing useful language tests*. (Vol. 1). Oxford University Press.