

Article Review
Example Based on the work of Mary Lynn Sharisky
Foun 3710 – Educational Assessment

The Spanish Spoken Test (SST) Assessing Oral Proficiency for L2 Spanish

Assessment is a widely debated topic in the world of Foreign Language teaching. A big part of learning a foreign language is being able to speak the target language. The main debate in the field comes when assessing a student's oral proficiency. In some cases, the teacher of the target language (TL) is not a native speaker of that language, this makes assessing true oral proficiency difficult especially when the teacher may not have complete oral proficiency him/herself. In modern times, with the advancement of technology, there are more effective ways of assessing oral proficiency in the process of development. One such method of assessing oral proficiency in Spanish (my field in foreign language), is found in the Spanish Spoken Test, abbreviated the SST. The SST "is a telephone test to measure a students' oral ability and it takes about 20 minutes" (Cetto & Pardo-Ballester, 1). This new method of assessment will help teachers give students a true assessment of where his/her oral proficiency in Spanish is. With a non-biased, native-like look on the oral ability of the speaker/student, it will help the teacher assess the oral development of the student. One drawback to this method of assessment is that at the current moment it is still in the developing stages and is only used in universities for research purposes.

"A computer-based Spoken Spanish Test (SST) was developed to provide an accurate and convenient assessment of speaking and listening for learners of Spanish. The SST is intended to measure a candidate's receptive familiarity with a variety of forms of Spanish and the candidate's facility in speaking Spanish. The SST test takes between 15 and 20 minutes to complete, all the items are presented in spoken Spanish, and the test is administered and scored

completely automatically” (Bernstein, Barbier, Rosenfeld & Jong). The source also provides that the SST tests students over seven different areas of Spanish including storytelling, vocabulary and opinion questions. The plan is that with further research and development, the SST will be able to be used with higher-level speakers in a high school setting.

Spanish is not the only language that a test like this is being developed for. A test to assess English oral proficiency is also being developed right now; this test is being called the Spoken English Test (SET). The SET is modeled after the same framework that the SST was modeled after. A test such as this would be useful to language teachers that are also used as English as a Second Language teacher in the building or district in which he/she is employed. This would also be helpful for any person who is trying to learn English through community classes or on his/her own. English and Spanish are not the only languages benefitting from this technology. Currently, tests such as these are being developed for the Dutch and Japanese languages (Suzuki & Harada, 115).

In my opinion, a technological advancement such as this is great for the world of foreign language teaching. I do not believe that this is taking assessing and grading responsibilities away from the teachers. In the future, I would hope that the test material could be designed by the teacher in order for very specific aspects of the language to be tested at one point in time and other aspects at another. However, I do believe that this is an extremely promising and helpful method of testing that could benefit both teachers and students alike. With places like the University of California, Davis, believing in this method of testing and using it as research in its own foreign language department, this provides me with hope that one day it will be available to all teachers teaching Spanish or other foreign language classes in a middle school or high school setting (Blake & Delfore).

Works Cited

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