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ASSESSING SPEECH PRODUCTION IN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE: AN ANALYSIS OF INTERNATIONAL PROFICIENCY TESTS AND GUIDELINES

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ABSTRACT
ASSESSING SPEECH PRODUCTION IN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN
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The present study investigated the components of speaking ability that are assessed in the speaking scales of two proficiency tests of English as a foreign language (TOEFL and IELTS) and two guidelines for orientations in teaching, learning, and testing (ACTFL and CEFR). In the pursuit of the objective of the study, firstly, each speaking scale was analyzed through the use of Bachman's (1995) communicative language ability (CLA) checklist and rating instrument. This analysis demonstrated the degree of involvement of the components of CLA in the speaking scales. Secondly, the speaking scales were analyzed with regard to Fulcher's (2003) framework for describing the speaking construct. With the help of these analyses, I concluded that the speaking components of the TOEFL and IELTS speaking scales are similar to each other and that the ACTFL and CEFR speaking scales are highly comparable in terms of the speaking construct. Moreover, the IELTS speaking scale is more comparable to the ACTFL and CEFR speaking scales than to that of the TOEFL. The main findings of the present study may contribute to teachers and students' better understanding of the aspects of speaking ability that are addressed in widely used English proficiency tests and guidelines for orientations in teaching, learning, and testing.

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RESUMO
AVALIAÇÃO DA PRODUÇÃ ORAL EM INGLÊS COMO LÍNGUA
ESTRANGEIRA: ANÁLISE DE TESTES INTERNACIONAIS DE
PROFICIÊNCIA E DIRETRIZES

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2010

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Este estudo investigou os componentes da habilidade oral que são tratados nas escalas orais de dois testes de proficiência em inglês como lingual estrangeira (TOEFL e IELTS) e duas diretrizes para orientações em ensino, aprendizagem e testagem (ACTFL e CEFR). Para alcançar o objetivo do estudo, primeiramente, cada escala de produção oral foi analisada através da lista de verificação e instrumento de avaliação da habilidade comunicativa de linguagem proposta por Bachman (1995). Esta análise revelou o grau de envolvimento de cada componente da habilidade comunicativa de linguagem em todas as escalas de produção oral. As escalas de produção oral foram analisadas pelo framework para descrição do construto oral proposto por Fulcher (2003). As análises demonstraram que os componentes da habilidade das escalas do TOEFL e do IELTS são similares enquanto aquelas do ACTFL e CEFR são também muito comparáveis. Além disso, a escala oral do IELTS é mais comparável às escalas orais do ACTFL e CEFR do que à escala oral do TOEFL. Os principais resultados deste estudo podem contribuir para o melhor entendimento, por professores e estudantes, dos componentes da habilidade oral que estão presente em exames internacionais de proficiência em inglês e em diretrizes internacionais para orientações em ensino, aprendizagem e testagem.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is much more than language knowledge. It is also about the skill to use it. To be able to speak, learners have to learn the grammar and vocabulary of an L2 as well as to practice pronunciation. They also have to know how to open and close conversations appropriately and to be able to maintain roles and relationships with their interlocutors. These roles and relationships are dependent on numerous variables, including social distance, power, and authority. Bygate (1987, as cited in Fulcher, 2003) compares speaking to driving a car and demonstrates the distinction between knowledge and skill, as can be seen in the quote below:

> What knowledge does a car driver need? Clearly he or she needs to know the names of the controls; where they are; what they do and how they are operated….However, the driver also needs the skill to be able to use the controls to guide the car along a road without hitting the various objects that tend to get in the way; you have to be able to do this at normal speed; you have to drive smoothly and without getting too close to any dangerous obstacles. And it is not enough to drive in a straight line: the driver also has to be able to manage the variations in road conditions safety…. In a way, the job we do when we speak is similar (p.47).

The ability to speak in an L1 is developed gradually and naturally in the process of socialization through communication (Hall, 1995, as cited in Fulcher, 2003). Learning how to speak a foreign language is different. Three major differences between L1 and L2 production are explained by Poulisse (1999). These are the amount of language knowledge, the level of automaticity, and the presence of the L1 traces in L2 speech.

The first difference between L1 and L2 speech production is in the amount of knowledge speakers have. L2 speakers have more difficulty to express themselves due to incomplete knowledge, whether grammatical and/or lexical, than L1 speakers. The second difference concerns the level of automaticity or fluency. The significant differences between L1 and L2 speech are related to temporal aspects of speech, such as speech and articulation rate (Ejzenberg, 2000; Fortkamp, 2000; Riggenbach, 1991), pause length and length of run (Fortkamp, 2000; Riggenbach, 1991), and disfluency markers, such as repetitions (Ejzenberg, 2000), self-corrections (Lennon, 1990), and hesitations (Fortkamp, 2000). Finally, the third difference mentioned by Poulisse

(1999) is that the L2 system is incomplete and as a consequence, L2 speakers may make a use of a fully developed L1 system, whether deliberately or accidentally. There are various reasons why L2 speakers switch to the L1 deliberately. Poulisse (1990) explains these switches as the use of compensatory strategies when a lack of lexical knowledge occurs. Such switches may take place when the L2 speaker wants to show his identity, to draw the attention of others to a specific message, and in other situations (Giesbers, 1989; Grosjean, 1982).

According to Poulisse (1999), the first two differences between L1 and L2 speech can be accounted for by the monolingual models of speech production. Levelt's (1989) monolingual model, for example, can explain incomplete L2 knowledge by supposing that the lexicon of the L2 speaker is based on the L2 lexical items that s/he has acquired. Moreover, different lexical items may not have fully established relationships. Poulisse (1999) claims that the second difference, the lack of automaticity, can be explained by assuming that L2 speech production is serial, step-by-step processing at the morpho-phonological and articulatory levels that demands a lot of attention from the speaker. Thus, this leads to non-automatic processes. The existing monolingual models of speech production cannot give an explanation for the third characteristic of L2 speech, that is, the fact that L2 speech carries traces of the L1. On the whole, bilinguals are able to separate the two languages. However, there are also bilinguals that mix the languages. Models of L2 speech production tend to explain the possibility to mix and the ability to separate the two languages. Both Levelt`s (1989) monolingual model and De Bot's (1992) bilingual model of speech production will be discussed at a greater length in Chapter 2.

Various language testers (e.g., Allison, 1999; Fulcher, 2003; Hughes, 1989; Luoma, 2004) suggest that speaking is the most difficult skill to assess[1] reliably because there are various systematic and unsystematic variables that may affect raters` decision on test scores. Bachman (1990) claims the systematic factors can be of three types: communicative language ability, test method, and personal attributes. Among these factors, communicative language ability is considered to be the central one.[2]

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[1] The terms *assessment* and *evaluation* are sometimes used interchangeably, but erroneously. The term *assessment* is closely related to the term *testing*. It is an instrument to collect language and test information (Davies et al., 1999, as cited in Schadrack, 2004). As for the term *evaluation*, it goes beyond assessment in order to make judgments or decisions (Davies et al., 1999, as cited in Schadrack, 2004)

[2] Bachman's framework of communicative language ability (CLA) is presented in Chapter 2.

Test method refers to the characteristics of the test that are important when eliciting test performance. Bachman (1990) proposed a framework of test method facets that includes five major categories: the testing environment, the test rubric, the input the test taker receives, the expected response, and the relationship between input and response (p.119). This variation is systematic because, for example, if the format of the test is consistent, it will not be affected in any aspect whether given in the afternoon or evening.

Personal attributes that influence test performance include test-taker characteristics, such as sex, age, nationality, resident status, native language, level and type of general education, and type and amount of preparation or prior experience with a given test (Bachman & Palmer, 1996, p.65). These characteristics are also systematic because they have a steady influence on test performance. If an individual demonstrates his knowledge of politics in one test, it seems obvious that this knowledge can affect his performance on another test.

Moreover, performance on language tests can be affected by some unsystematic or random factors that refer to some circumstances that cannot be predicted or these are temporal. These factors may include the emotional state of a test taker on the day of the exam or some changes in the test environment, such as the place or time of testing.

When developing a new language test, a major test developer's concern is to minimize the effects of the factors that may lead to errors in measurement of language ability, that is, test method, personal attributes, and random factors. According to Bachman (1990), if the effects of test method and random factors are minimized, that is, measurement error is minimized, the reliability of language test scores is maximized. Personal attributes are seen as sources of test bias, or test invalidity (Bachman, 1990, p.166).[3]

Thus, considering all these issues, I became interested in investigating the assessment of speech production in widely used proficiency tests - the Test of English as a Foreign Language Test (TOEFL), the International English Language Testing System (IELTS),

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[3] Bachman (1990) sees the concepts of reliability and validity as "complementary aspects of a common concern in measurement – identifying, estimating, and controlling the effects of factors that affect test scores" (p.160). Bachman (1990) argues that reliability and validity are two characteristics of test scores that are closely connected. However, validity is the most important characteristic where reliability creates necessary conditions for it. Thus, we may think about test scores as valid if they are reliable (Bachman, 1990).

and guidelines for orientations in assessing language skills - the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). In this study, I attempted to define the speaking constructs of these tests and guidelines and to determine whether there is comparability across them.

When talking about language tests, I could not but discuss their importance in our society. Shohamy (2007) refers to tests as power tools, which are used in two areas: in the realm of society and in the realm of education. International language tests have become primary tools for immigration purposes in a number of developed countries such as the USA, the UK, Japan, and Australia. These and a number of other countries administer language tests for residency and especially for citizenship. IELTS, for instance, is an immigration requirement for non-native English speaker in Canada, New Zealand, and Australia. Moreover, international language tests are widely used by governments, institutions, and central authorities all over the world for educational purposes. Here, they serve as an educational tool through which immigrant students are admitted to many English speaking colleges and universities. Both IELTS and TOEFL are admission requirements for non-native English speakers who want to enter academic institution at many English speaking countries such as the USA, the UK, and Australia.

In order to make inferences about the individual's language ability based on the scores s/he has obtained on a language test, the relationship between performance on language tests and on non-test tasks (Bachman & Palmer, 1996). The next section will therefore address this issue.

1.1 Language use and language test performance

Bachman and Palmer (1996) claim that it is essential to demonstrate the correspondence between general language use and specific use of language in a testing situation if we want to make inferences about speakers' language ability. The researchers argue that a framework where performance on a language test is treated as a distinct sample of language use is of great importance. As a result, they provide a framework where the same characteristics are critical for both general language use and language test performance.

The correspondence between language use and language test should be considered in the way one designs, develops and uses language tests. The characteristics of the language use tasks and situation and of the language users and the test takers should also be

taken into account when designing a language test. Task characteristics should be considered in order to show the ways in which test tasks corresponds to language use tasks. Moreover, individual characteristics should be looked at in order to elicit the involvements of these characteristics into language use tasks and test tasks.

According to the framework proposed by Bachman and Palmer (1996), the characteristics of the language user and that of the test taker involve topical knowledge, affective schemata, and language ability (p.12). Topical knowledge, or knowledge schemata, embodies real-world knowledge of the individual such as cultural knowledge or knowledge of a specific area. Affective schemata are understood as the affective or emotional correlates of topical knowledge. Bachman and Palmer (1996) argue that these two characteristics can influence both language use and language test performance. Moreover, language tests can be designed so that these characteristics do not affect adversely the performance – quite the contrary - language testers may benefit from these characteristics. Finally, an individual characteristic that is of great interest to language testing is language ability. The purpose of language tests is to make inferences about it.[4]

1.2 The study

The present study attempts to analyze the components of speaking ability that are assessed in the speaking scales of two proficiency tests and guidelines. The analysis of the speaking construct was based on Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) communicative language ability (CLA) checklist and rating instrument and Fulcher's (2003) framework for describing the speaking construct, which will be reviewed in chapter 2.

The following two research questions were pursued:

1. How do the TOEFL, IELTS, ACTFL and CEFR speaking scales assess speech performance?[5]

2. Is there comparability of the speaking construct across these proficiency tests and guidelines?

The first research question addresses the components of CLA in the speaking scales as well as the extent to which these components are involved in these scales. In order to answer this question, I analyzed the

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[4] Language ability will be discussed in the context of Bachman's (1990) Communicative language ability (CLA) in Chapter 2.

[5] TOEFL is an abbreviation for the Test of English as a Foreign Language Test; IELTS- the International English Language Testing System; ACTFL - American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages; and CEFR - the Common European Framework of Reference.

four speaking scales with the help of Bachman et al.`s (1995) CLA checklist and rating instrument. This checklist is based on Bachman' (1990) framework of CLA, which was developed for the purpose of test analysis. Based on the findings of the test content analysis, Bachman *et al.* (1995) concluded that although the ratings could be possibly subjective, they were highly consistent across different raters. He explained the consistent results by the rating instrument itself, which enabled the raters to focus attention on very specific aspects, rather than on general categories. Analyzing the speaking scales of TOEFL, IELTS, ACTFL, and CEFR, it was essential to pay particular attention to each facet of communicative language ability. The second research question aims at comparing the proficiency tests and guidelines in terms of their speaking constructs. To answer this question, I made use of Fulcher's (2003) framework for describing the speaking construct. This framework is an adaptation of Bachman and Palmer's (1996) model of language ability. I consider this framework to be very relevant to the present study because Fulcher (2003) has made important modifications regarding specifically the aspects of the speaking construct.

The materials under analysis were the speaking scales of the TOEFL and IELTS proficiency tests and the ACTFL and CEFR proficiency guidelines. For each proficiency test and guideline' speaking scale the analysis consisted of determining whether there was involvement of the CLA components at each proficiency level, and if there were, to what extent. Then, the aspects of speaking, as proposed by Fulcher (2003), were analyzed in order to see the degree of comparability across the speaking scales.

1.3 Organization of the thesis

This thesis is organized in 5 chapters. In chapter 1, I present an introduction to some of the issues that motivated me to carry out the present study. Here, I also present the aim of the study and its research questions and the organization of the thesis.

Chapter 2 brings a review of the literature that was found relevant for the present study. The monolingual model of speech production proposed by Levelt (1989) and the bilingual model proposed by De Bot (1992) are considered. I also discuss Bachman's (1990) framework of CLA and Fulcher's (2003) framework for describing the speaking construct, which was based on the work of Bachman and Palmer (1996). Information about the proficiency tests and guidelines, whose speaking scales were submitted to the analysis, is also presented. Finally, some studies in the area of speaking assessment are reviewed.

In chapter 3, I describe the method employed in this study and present the context of the study and research questions, the materials analyzed and the instruments and procedures chosen for the analysis.

The results of the analysis are presented in chapter 4. The TOEFL speaking scale is analyzed first. Then, I turn to the IELTS speaking scale. Finally, the results of the ACTFL and CEFR speaking scales are introduced.

Chapter 5 consists of a general conclusion about the analyzed speaking scales, Pedagogical implications are also specified. The limitations of the study and suggestions for further research are addressed in the last section of this chapter.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

The present review of literature aims to provide the theoretical base for this study which, as already said, investigates the assessment of speaking ability in two international proficiency tests of English (TOEFL and IELTS) and two guidelines for orientations (CEFR and ACTFL). Therefore, this review of literature is organized into eight subchapters: the present introduction (2.1), models of speech production (2.2), Bachman's theoretical framework of communicative language ability (CLA) (2.3), defining the speaking construct (2.4), international proficiency tests and guidelines (2.5), and research on speaking assessment (2.6).

In order to understand L2 speech production, it seems essential to start the discussion with the process of speech production both in L1 and L2. Thus, Levelt`s (1989) influential monolingual model of speech production is presented first, and then the bilingual model proposed by De Bot (1992) is discussed.

The aim of a language test is to assess test taker's knowledge about a foreign/second language and the ability to use it. In order to describe the test taker's language ability, Bachman (1990) proposes a theoretical framework of communicative language ability (CLA). In addition, in designing tests test developers should define the ability, that is, the construct that they attempt to measure. For the purpose of the present study, Fulcher`s (2003) framework for describing the speaking construct will be presented. Moreover, information about the tests and guidelines, whose speaking scales are under analysis, is provided. Finally, a review of selected empirical studies on speaking assessment is provided.

2.2 Models of speech production

The language modality under investigation in this research is speech production. Speaking is considered to be a highly complex skill that involves the interaction of several processing components (De Bot, 1992; Fulcher, 2003; Levelt, 1989, 1995; Luoma, 2004). This view is supported by two speech production models: a monolingual model proposed by Levelt (1989, 1995) and its bilingual version proposed by

De Bot (1992). Levelt's (1989) blueprint for the speaker[6] describes the processing components involved in the generation of L1 speech production, whereas De Bot (1992) explains how L2 speech production operates. These two models will be reviewed next.

2.2.1 Levelt's (1989) monolingual model

Levelt (1989) proposes a monolingual model that has been very influential in the area of Speech Production (see Figure 1). The model involves four components: a Conceptualizer, a Formulator, an Articulator, and a Speech-comprehension system. To understand how the speech production process operates, these components will be discussed next.

According to Levelt (1989), the speaker undergoes the planning phase before producing speech. This phase is described as the first component in his model, which is labelled the Conceptualizer. It is in the Conceptualizer that the intention to speak originates. As an intentional activity, speaking involves generating the message to be expressed and monitoring what is being said and how. These activities demand the speaker's high attention. The output of the Conceptualizer is called a preverbal message.

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[6] Levelt's (1989) blueprint for the speaker is not the only model of L1 speech production (for example, Dell (1986) has also proposed a model). For the purpose of the present proposal, only Levelt's monolingual model of language production is reviewed as it attempts to integrate independent, automatic modules into a complete speaking system and is, therefore, a much more comprehensible model.
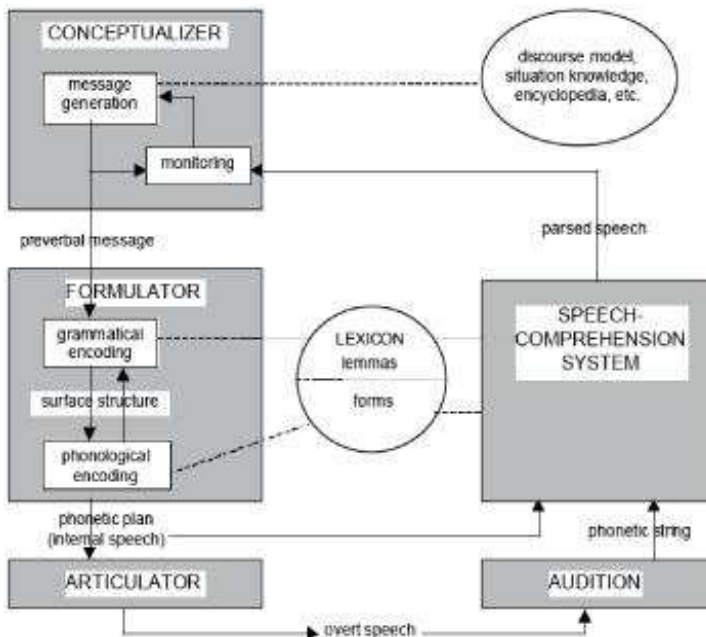
Figure 1. A blueprint for the speaker. (Levelt, 1989, p.9)

Levelt (1989) assumes that the planning of a preverbal message operates in two stages: macroplanning and microplanning. Macroplanning involves the elaboration of the communicative intention, which means that this stage is responsible for planning the content. During the second stage - microplanning - the speaker plans the form of the message.

The product of the Conceptualizer, that is, the preverbal message, is the input of the next component, the Formulator, which is in charge of two processes: grammatical encoding and phonological encoding. Grammatical encoding is in charge of formulating syntactic constructions, whereas the function of phonological encoding is to build a phonetic or articulatory plan. To activate these processes, the Formulator needs to access the mental lexicon where all lexical items (lemmas) are stored. Lexical items represent all the information about a particular word, that is, its syntactic, morphological and phonological properties.

The result of grammatical encoding is a surface structure, which is defined as "an ordered string of lemmas grouped in phrases and subphrases of various kinds" (Levelt, 1989, p.11). This surface string is

further processed by the phonological encoder. The result of phonological encoding – a phonetic or articulatory plan – provides the speaker with a chance to see how the planned utterance is going to be articulated. Levelt (1989) calls this phonetic plan internal speech.

In the next processing component of Levelt's (1989) model, the Articulator, internal speech is transformed into overt speech. Overt speech is the actual speech that is available to both the speaker and the interlocutor. The Articulator executes overt speech with the help of the articulatory apparatus, which controls the movements of lungs, larynx, pharynx and mouth.

Levelt's (1989) model includes a Speech-comprehension system that is in charge of monitoring and correcting dysfluencies in speech. With its help, the speaker can check the preverbal message before producing overt speech, that is, before it is sent to the Articulator, in order to detect any errors (Dell, 1980). However, self-correction occurs in overt speech as well. Moreover, the Speech-comprehension system allows the speaker to notice any failures in the interlocutor's speech.

Admitting that speaking is normally an intentional activity and that this intentional activity is controlled by the speaker, Levelt (1989) claims that the speech production process is largely automatic. Levelt (1989) argues in favor of this idea as follows. The first component of the model, the Conceptualizer, is a highly controlled process because it takes much attention from the speaker to construct the message and further control it in internal or overt speech. However, the speaker can easily retrieve the information and modify it if necessary. All the other components of the model are considered to be largely automatic because the speaker barely controls formulating and articulating of the message. These components process in parallel without interacting with each other. Thus, the high degree of automaticity allows the speaker to produce fluent speech.

Although there have been many attempts to explain the process of speech production (e.g., Dell, 1986; Dell & Reich, 1980; Fromkin, 1971; Garrett, 1975, 1976, 1980; Shattuck-Hufnagel, 1982, 1987), Levelt's (1989) model is considered to be the most important and influential and has been greatly cited both in L1 and L2 speech production literature. The model reveals how complex the speech production process is and how the four autonomous components operate incrementally.

Having reviewed the model of L1 speech production (Levelt, 1989), I will now move on to De Bot's (1992) proposal for L2 speech production and how it operates.

2.2.2 De Bot's (1992) bilingual model

Supposing that a bilingual production model should not qualitatively differ from the monolingual one, De Bot (1992) adopted Levelt's model[7] and proposed a bilingual production model to account for L2 speech production. In De Bot's (1992) proposal, Levelt's (1989) model underwent only necessary changes. These changes will be described next.

As has been seen in Levelt's (1989) model, it is in the Conceptualizer that the message is generated. Thus, De Bot (1992) argues that the decision of the language to be used is made in this component. This decision is influenced by the situation, which the speaker analyses before speaking in a particular language. De Bot (1992) assumes that the process of macroplanning that runs in the Conceptualizer is language-independent, whereas the process of microplanning is specific for each language. According to De Bot (1992), concepts are not lexicalized similarly in all languages. Poulisse (1999) brings an example of the Spanish language and compares it to the English language (p. 59). These languages have different specifications for terms of spatial reference. In Spanish we have three words to talk about spatial distance: proximal/*aquí*, medial/*ahí*, and distal/*allí*. In English there are two words to express distance relation: proximal/*here* and distal/*there*. De Bot (1992) argues that the preverbal message should already carry this language specific information to be lexicalized in the Formulator. This view has been supported by the theory of bilingual lexicons[8] as well (Kroll & de Groot, 1997).

As for the second component of Levelt's (1989) model, the Formulator, De Bot (1992) suggests that it is language-specific, that is, there are different processes for grammatical and phonological encoding. For example, languages from different categories of morphological typology such as English and Finnish do not have the same syntactic and morphological encodings.[9] To account for such phenomenon as code-switching, De Bot (1992) proposes that there are

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[7] There are other models that have Levelt's model (1989) as a basis. Examples include the models of Bierwisch and Schreuder (1992) and Poulisse and Bongaerts (1994).

[8] Kroll and de Groot (1997) proposed a model, which explains that the lexical representations for two different languages are independent, but their conceptual representations are shared. In other words, a bilingual has two lexical stores and one primary conceptual store.

[9] Finnish uses possessive suffixes. One can express the number of the possessors and their persons in singular or in plural by changing the suffix, except for the third person. For instance, *taloni* means *my house(s),* where *talomme – our house(s)* for the first person, *talosi – your*(sing.) *house(s)* and *talonne - your*(pl.) *houses(s)* for the second person; and *talonsa – his/her/their house(s)* for the third person.

two speech plans that bilinguals produce simultaneously: one for the language spoken at the moment and one for the language not used at the moment of speech. This explains why bilinguals are able to stop producing one language and switch to another for some reason or other. Moreover, De Bot (1992) adopted Paradis' (1987) "Subset Hypothesis" and argues that the lexicon is language independent. For him, bilinguals rely on one single lexicon, where lexical elements of each language are stored in different subsets.

Finally, the output of the Formulator is sent to the Articulator, which does not have systematic division for the two languages. De Bot (1992) argues that this explains phonological interference from the L1, that is, foreign accent. But he admits that bilinguals who have regular contact with the L2 can develop their own language-specific sounds and produce speech accurately.

Based on Levelt's (1989) monolingual model, De Bot`s (1992) proposal accounts for the following L2 phenomena: different lexical items, different grammatical and phonological encoding, phonological interference from the L1, and code-switching. Although De Bot's (1992) model seems to provide a possible account for L2 speech production, it is not without limitations. De Bot realized that and, as a result, De Bot and Schreuder (1993, as cited in Poulisse, 1999) revised the bilingual model. Firstly, this revision concerns the information about language choice that is presented in the form of a language cue in the preverbal message, where each language cue may have different values. Secondly, the revision involved a new component Verbilizer that appears in between the Conceptualizer and the Formulator. The Verbilizer maps fragments of conceptual structure from the preverbal message to semantic representations of lexical items in the lexicon. After the process of dividing the message into lexicalizable chuncks, lexical access takes place. Here, De Bot and Schreuder (1993, as cited in Poulisse, 1999) supported their assumption that two languages lexicalize in a different way.

Having described both monolingual and bilingual models of speech production, I turn now to an influential framework proposed by Bachman (1990) in the area of Language testing (LT), which presents the components of communicative language ability (CLA). This framework was the basis of Bachman`s (1995) CLA checklist and rating instrument as well as of Fulcher's (2003) framework for describing the speaking construct. Thus, this framework will be reviewed next.

2.3 Bachman's theoretical framework of communicative language ability

In an attempt to describe communicative language ability (CLA), Bachman (1990) proposes a theoretical framework, which expands on earlier models of communicative competence, such as Canale and Swain's (1980) and Savignon's (1983) models. This framework of CLA agrees that "the ability to use language communicatively involves both knowledge of or competence in the language, and the capacity for implementing, or using this competence" (Bachman, 1990, p. 81). Moreover, this framework extends previous models in a way that tries to explain how CLA components interact with each other as well as with the language use context.

The framework of CLA proposed by Bachman (1990) consists of three components: language competence, strategic competence, and psychophysiological mechanisms. Language competence refers to specific knowledge components that are used in communication through language. Strategic competence represents the mental capacity for utilizing the components of language competence in a communicative situation. Finally, the psychophysiological mechanisms involve the neurological and psychological processes that occur during the language execution. Involved in language use, psychophysiological mechanisms are distinguished between the channel (auditory, visual) and mode (receptive, productive). Nevertheless, the description of this framework will focus on two broad areas: language knowledge, or competence, and strategic competence because it is "this combination of language knowledge and metacognitive strategies that provides language users with the ability, or capacity, to create and interpret discourse, either in responding to tasks on language tests or in non-test language use" (Bachman & Palmer, 1996, p. 67).

In the context of CLA framework, Bachman (1990) discusses the components of language competence, which is comprised of organizational competence and pragmatic competence (see Figure 2). Each of these competences consists of several categories. Although Bachman (1990) utilizes a diagram that represents the hierarchical relationship, the components function all together and have effect on each other. A brief description of how these components interact with each other in language use situation will be provided next.

LANGUAGE COMPETENCE

ORGANIZATIONAL COMPETENCE

PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE

GRAMMATICAL COMPETENCE

TEXTUAL COMPETENCE

ILLOCUTIONARY COMPETENCE

SOCIOLINGUISTIC COMPETENCE

Voc. Morph. Synt. Phon/Graph.

Cohes. Rhet. Org.

Ideat. Functs. Manip. Functs. Heur. Functs. Imag. Functs.

Sensit. to Dial or Variety   Sensit. to Reg.   Sensit. To Nat.   Cultural Refs.& Figs. Of Speech
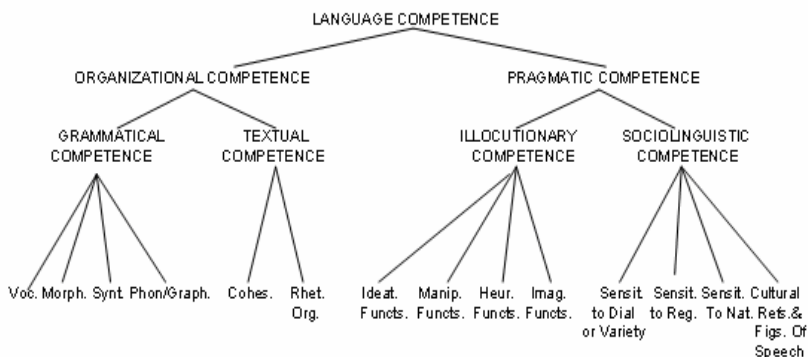
Figure 2. Components of language competence (Bachman, 1990, p.87).

Organizational competence is in charge of controlling the structure of language in order to produce and comprehend grammatically correct utterances[10] and organize them into oral text. Thus, organizational competence includes grammatical competence and textual competence.

Grammatical competence consists of to knowledge of vocabulary, morphology, syntax and phonology/graphology, which is involved in order to produce and comprehend accurate utterances. In regard to textual competence, it is comprised of knowledge of cohesion and knowledge of rhetorical organization. Cohesion involves explicitly marked relationships within utterance or sentence as well as among utterances or sentences. Rhetorical organization is responsible for the overall developments in conversations or written texts.

Another component of language competence, pragmatic competence, concerns the relationship between utterances and their

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[10] Bachman and Palmer (1996) accept the distinction between "utterances" and "sentences" provided by Brown and Yule (1983), where "utterances" are spoken and "sentences" are written. In this proposal I will follow this distinction and use "utterances" to refer to oral language.

meanings. Thus, pragmatic competence consists of two categories: illocutionary competence and sociolinguistic competence.

Illocutionary competence addresses four language macro-functions. Ideational functions are used to transfer or interpret meaning activating our life experience. With these functions we are able to express ideas, feelings, and knowledge. Manipulative functions are used when we want to affect a situation. Manipulative functions can be of three types: instrumental, regulatory, and interactional. We use instrumental functions to have people do something, such as request, order, and commands. Regulatory functions are employed to control people's behavior, for example, a statement of rules, laws. Interactional functions are used when dealing with interpersonal relationships, such as greetings, compliments, apologies. Heuristic functions allow us to extend knowledge about the world, for example, during teaching, learning, problem solving, and memorizing. Finally, imaginative functions enable us to bring life to language in the use of metaphors, telling jokes, attending plays or films, which extend our knowledge for humorous or esthetic purposes.

The use of language according to a particular sociocultural and discourse context is possible due to sociolinguistic competence. This competence is comprised of sensitivity to differences in dialect or variety, sensitivity to differences in register[11], sensitivity to naturalness, and ability to interpret cultural references and figures of speech.

Sensitivity to differences in dialect or variety is defined as knowledge of conventions that establish the appropriate use of regional and social varieties or dialects. An ability to use language according to variations in register is important for language users because these variations can be noticed, such as variations in spoken or written discourse. A third ability under sociolinguistic competence, sensitivity to naturalness, is related to the use of language in a natural way, that is, utterances are not only linguistically correct but also sound native. Finally, the ability to interpret cultural references and figures of speech allows language users to understand correct meanings of speech figures as well as to know some cultural aspects specific to the context. For example, to understand a certain figure of speech, language users should know more than the meaning of words.

Having discussed the components of language competence, I now turn to strategic competence. Bachman (1990) extended the definition

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[11] The term *register* means a variation in language use within a dialect (Halliday, McIntosh & Stevens, 1964).

formulated by Færch and Kasper (1983). Bachman (1990) considers strategic competence to be "an important part of all communicative language use, not just that in which language abilities are deficient and must be compensated for by other means" (p.100). According to this extended definition, strategic competence consists of three components: assessment, planning, and execution.[12]

The assessment component enables language users to obtain the communicative goal. Thus, in order to do this, language users need to a) identify the information necessary for the communicative goal in a specific context; b) determine the most effective language competences (native language, second or foreign language), which lead to communicative goal accomplishment; c) find out the common abilities and knowledge of the interlocutor; and d) evaluate whether the communicative goal has been accomplished, and if yes, to what extent.

The planning component involves language users' decision about how to use the items from their language competence in order to accomplish the communicative goal. For example, if language users participate in a monolingual conversation, relevant items from their native language competence are retrieved. In the case of a bilingual, second or foreign language conversation, language users search for the relevant items in the native language, interlanguage rule system, or the second or foreign language.

Finally, the execution component considers the relevant psychophysiological mechanisms in order to plan the channel and mode relevant to the communicative goal and context.

In summary, the language competence model shows the relationships between its components: organizational competence and pragmatic competence. Organizational competence, which consists of grammatical competence and textual competence, enables language users to create and interpret grammatically accurate utterances, and produce a set of utterances that are cohesive and rhetorically organized. Pragmatic competence, which is formed of illocutionary competence and sociolinguistic competence, provides language users with knowledge of language functions, of sociolinguistic norms, and of cultural references and figurative language. Strategic competence has

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[12] A recent expansion of Bachman's framework is the one proposed by Bachman and Palmer (1996), which provides a further expansion of the role of strategic competence as a set of metacognitive components: goal setting, assessment, and planning, and the role of topical knowledge (knowledge schemata) and affective schemata in language use.

three functions, which determine the most effective means to accomplish the communicative goal. They are assessment, planning, and execution.

Bachman's (1990) has become the basis for the development of English proficiency tests for non-native speakers (McDowell, 1995). Clarkson and Jensen (1995) applied this framework to the development of rating scales, for the purposes of assessing learners' achievement in English. Bachman's (1990) framework of CLA is relevant for the purposes of the present study, which analyzes the speaking scales of international proficiency tests and guidelines regarding speaking assessment. This framework became the basis for the two instruments utilized for the analysis. These instruments are Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist and rating instrument, and Fulcher's (2003) framework for describing the speaking construct.

Having presented the framework of CLA proposed by Bachman (1990), I now want to consider Fulcher's (2003) framework for describing the speaking construct. This framework is an adaptation of Bachman and Palmer's (1996) model especially for assessing speaking. The next section presents this framework.

2.4 Defining the speaking construct

The ability to speak in a foreign language is generally the main goal of many learners (Luoma, 2004; Mota, 2003; Riggenbach, 1991; Lennon, 1990; Bygate, 1987). Back in 1961, Lado recognized the importance of this skill, saying that "[t]he ability to speak a foreign language is without doubt the most highly prized language skill" (as cited in Fulcher, 2003, p.18). As has been said above, speaking is a highly complex matter and this explains the difficulty teachers and raters have when dealing with its assessment (Fulcher, 2003; Luoma, 2004). In order to provide reliable assessment, one has to understand what constitutes the speaking ability that is going to be measured. Thus, the speaking construct should be defined (Fulcher, 2003).

First of all, it is necessary to understand the word *construct* and distinguish it from the word *concept* (Fulcher, 2003). The researcher claims that the word *concept* refers to some abstract matter, whereas the word *construct* defines something evident. He brings an example to illustrate this difference. In the learning context, the word *achievement* is an abstraction because it cannot be observed directly. On the other hand, the word *achieved* that is used by teachers to show students' achievement can be observed and also graded (Fulcher, 2003, p.18). Thus, the word *achievement* is a concept, and the word *achieved* is a

construct. According to Fulcher (2003), when we want to define the construct of speaking "it is therefore necessary for this construct to be associated with 'things' that can be observed, and that these 'things' can be scored" (p.18).

Speaking is a *verbal* use of language that serves for communication (Fulcher, 2003). As in writing, the purpose of speaking is to transmit information to others. Although both involve productive mode, they differ in terms of channel: visual channel (written) and audio channel (spoken). Moreover, there are a number of other aspects in which speaking is different from writing. Speech being a 'real-time' phenomenon should be produced with a certain speed (Bygate, 1987). On the other hand, writing requires time to think, plan, produce, and sometimes correct (Fulcher, 2003). This explains why speech is characterized by less formal use of vocabulary[13], short sentences, repetitions, repairs that are not appropriate in writing.

Based on the Bachman and Palmer model (1996), Fulcher (2003) proposes a framework for describing the speaking construct. As can be seen, Fulcher (2003) made some necessary changes to this model in order to use it for assessing speaking. This framework describes the aspects that, according to the researcher, should be included into a construct definition (see Appendix A). These are language competence, strategic capacity, textual knowledge, pragmatic knowledge, and sociolinguistic knowledge. Each of these aspects will be presented next.

Language competence includes phonology, accuracy, and fluency. Phonology deals with the patterns of speech sound used in a particular language. Thus, this component of language competence involves pronunciation, stress, and intonation. Pronunciation is an important aspect of speaking because the intelligibility of particular words is dependent on it. Stress is also essential in speech as it may provide an additional meaning to the words in the utterance. When a word is stressed it indicates that this word carries the most important information. Finally, variations of tone (voice movement) and pitch are associated with intonation.

Another aspect of speaking ability is accuracy. According to Fulcher (2003), accurate speaking is associated with error free

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[13] However, the speed pressure on the speaker does not seem to be the only explanation for this particular trait of oral production. Choices of such kind of the lexicon are better explained in terms of lexical access, which in turn depends on aspects such as the nature of input previously received and the frequency of a certain type of item in the input.

discourse. Of course, L2 learners make errors while speaking but these errors may vary in their seriousness. There are slight errors that do not interfere with understanding, for example, an omission of the morpheme [s] in the third-person- singular verb. Serious errors lead to misunderstanding of the intended message, for instance, wrong word order or subject omissions are not acceptable in English. Having this in mind, raters should be aware of the types of errors they may ignore or pay attention to and 'punish' when assessing speaking.

The last aspect of speaking ability that is discussed in the context of language competence is fluency. According to Fulcher (2003), the notion of fluency is associated with the level of automaticity to produce speech. When we talk about fluent speech it means that the process of planning what to talk about and retrieving the necessary knowledge of vocabulary, syntax and phonology is automatic. Lack of fluency is therefore characterized by a slow, halting pace that also may cause misunderstanding. Fulcher (2003) enumerates the phenomena that may be associated with non-fluent speech. They are hesitations (filled or unfilled pauses), repetition of syllables or words, reselecting inappropriate words, restructuring sentences, and correcting the use of cohesive devices to link the ideas.

Fulcher (2003) argues that both accuracy and fluency are necessary for successful communication because the listener's understanding may be affected by lack of accuracy and/or fluency. However, fluency and accuracy are seen as two opposite aspects of speaking. The learner may achieve oral fluency at the expense of accuracy, that is, speech can be fluent but inaccurate, or accurate but dysfluent (Fulcher, 2003). Rating scales distinguish them as separate components of assessment: accurate use of vocabulary and grammar and spontaneous and well-paced speech flow.

Fulcher (2003) includes strategic capacity in the construct definition where achievement and avoidance strategies can be noticed in the learner or test-taker's speaking. Achievement strategies are used when there is a lack of language knowledge that interferes with communication. Thus, in order to achieve a communicative goal the learner applies the following strategies: overgeneralization, paraphrase, word coinage, restructuring, cooperative strategies, code switching, and non-linguistic strategies.[14] Each of these strategies will be explained next.

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[14] Fulcher (2003) didn't include the strategy of approximation in a framework for describing the speaking construct, though he discusses it in his book. Approximation strategy is used

Fulcher (2003) explains that overgeneralization occurs when the learner assumes that there are no exceptions to the grammar and uses her/his general knowledge. For instance, the '-ed' rule for the English past tense is typically overgeneralized and irregular verbs get the morpheme [ed] like in "holded". Paraphrasing happens when the learner cannot remember a needed word and uses a synonym or tries to explain it with other words. Word coinage takes place when the learner invents a new word for an unknown one, for example, "air ball" for "balloon". The learner uses a restructuring strategy when s/he realizes that her/his utterance has not been understood and s/he tries to explain it using different words. Cooperative strategies help the learner in the situation when s/he does not know a word and asks the interlocutor for help as well as when s/he wants to make sure that his message has been understood. Code switching in conversation is common when the learner has difficulty to remember a needed word or phrase and he uses his L1. Other non-linguistic strategies, such as mime or gestures are also benefited by speakers (Fulcher, 2003).

Another type of strategies that Fulcher (2003) considers is avoidance. Avoidance strategies are used in order to avoid certain language use that presents difficulty. Thus, the utterance is based on the language system that the learner has control of. Avoidance strategies can be formal and functional. Formal avoidance is difficult to detect. For instance, the learner can avoid the use of passive voice in speech but this can be detected only by the overuse of active voice, or avoid a certain topic due to the lack of appropriate vocabulary. Functional avoidance occurs when the learners abandons a conversation without even trying to complete the utterance.

Textual knowledge is the next aspect that Fulcher (2003) includes in a construct definition. Admitting that speaking is a structured activity, he distinguishes the learner's ability to take turns, use adjacency pairs, and openings and closings in conversations.

In L1 conversation, learners know when they can speak or when it is the interlocutor to hold the turn. This seems more difficult for them in the L2 context because, firstly, the learner should be a good listener to know when it is her/his turn to speak and, secondly, different rules about turn taking may be used by the target-language society. For example, social rank in such countries as Japan and Korea plays an important role

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when the learner lacks a specific word and replaces it with a more general one, for example, "eagle" for "bird".

in conversation, and a person of a high rank cannot be interrupted by the lowest rank

Adjacency pairs are fundamental in conversation structure, in which the first part predicts the second part (Goffman, 1976; Schegloff & Sacks, 1973). The following examples of adjacency pairs are very common: question-answer, greeting-greeting, invitation-acceptance (refusal), complaint-apology (Fulcher, 2003, p. 36).

New topics in conversation are introduced and brought to an end. For speakers, it is important to know how to do this. This knowledge shows speakers' ability to structure conversations and control them. Fulcher (2003) illustrates this by an example of opening a conversation with regular greeting such as "Hi, how are you?" when two people meet, and an example of closing a conversation, for instance, with the use of "bye" (p. 38).

Fulcher (2003) argues that knowledge of the grammatical and phonological system of the target language is not enough. Pragmatic competence is important for successful communication. Without knowing or by breaking these rules, the learner makes pragmatic errors that may lead to serious misunderstanding. Thus, pragmatic competence includes appropriacy, implicature, and expressing being.

An appropriate use of language according to the situation is very important. According to Fucher (2003), the word *appropriacy* is a construct that implies the degree to which a word or expression used by the speaker is acceptable in a particular situation. An example of this can be the use of address terms, that is, how people address their interlocutors when meeting or departing. Fulcher (2003) included pragmatic appropriacy in the speaking construct definition.

There are various ways to express the same idea. Fulcher (2003) offers as an example the utterance "close the door", which can be communicated in different ways, for instance, "We need a little less draught", "The room's cold", "I'm freezing" or "Were you born in a barn?" (Fulcher, 2003, pp. 42-43). He calls these utterances indirect speech acts.[15] Although they carry the same meaning, which is to close the door, they may have different impact on listeners. Fulcher (2003) calls this aspect implicature and includes it in the speaking construct.

Talking about expressing being, Fulcher (2003) suggests that test takers' language use can be restricted by the context. He illustrates this by referring to different social status. Language varies according to the person's position, whether superior or junior. People define their status

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[15] The theory of speech acts was originally developed by Austin (1962).

and role through the kind of language they use. Test takers need to be sensitive to this peculiarity of the language especially when they need to participate in role-play or simulation during the test.

Sociolinguistic knowledge enables learner to use language appropriate to situations, topics or the culture of the target language. Oral performance is related to the situation and the topic of conversation may influence learner's speech. An unknown topic may lead to little participation in conversation. Finally, cultural knowledge and the use of cultural references or figures of speech help learners convey and understand meaning appropriately.

Overall Fulcher`s (2003) framework demonstrates that the construct of speaking ability is multifaceted. To speak a second/foreign language one should not only learn grammar and vocabulary (accuracy), pronunciation and intonation, but should also automatize the process of planning, formulating and producing the utterances fluently. In case of difficulty in conversation, learners have various strategies at their disposal such as overgeneralization, paraphrasing, code-switching, non-linguistic strategy, etc. Moreover, the speaker should know how to open and close conversations, when to begin and when to stop speaking. In addition, cultural and social conventions seem to be essential in communication.

Let us now draw attention to international proficiency tests and guidelines whose speaking scales are the subject of analysis in the present study. A brief background of each test and guideline will be provided in the next section.

2.5 International proficiency tests and guidelines

Before talking about proficiency tests and guidelines, I would like to discuss the term *proficiency*. Proficiency in an L2 is one of the most fundamental concepts in Applied Linguistics (Iwashita et al., 2008). In the literature, the term "proficient" is generally used interchangeably with other terms, such as "fluent", "knowledgeable", "competent", but there is no clear consensus among applied linguists on a definition for "proficiency" (Canale & Swain, 1980; Davies, 1989; Ingram, 1985; North, 2000; Stern, 1983; Taylor, 1988; Vollmer, 1981). This term may be used differently by different researchers. For instance, Hadley proposes a very broad definition of proficiency as *knowing* a language (1993). Accordingly, the purpose of general proficiency tests is to see if the candidate has an appropriate level of English to cope with everyday or academic situations. The examples of such tests would be the Cambridge examinations (First Certificate Examination and Proficiency

in English Examination), the General English Proficiency Test (GEPT), The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), and The International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

Hughes defines proficiency as "sufficient command of the language *for a particular purpose*" (1989, p. 9). There are also tests and guidelines that define the concept of proficiency according to their purpose. An example of this would be a test designed to elicit the test-taker's level of English when applying for courses in specific subject areas: business (for instance, the Business English Certificates (BEC), the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC); law (for instance, the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT); medicine (for instance, the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT), Professional and Linguistic Assessment Board (PLAB).

The proficiency tests whose speaking scales have been selected for the present study are the TOEFL and IELTS[16]. This choice is supported by their wide use and recognition in countries where English is an influential language. For example, one can take the TOEFL test in more than 7000 institutions in 130 countries (ETS, 2010).[17] As for the IELTS test, over 1,2 million candidates take this test annually. It is recognized by more than 6000 institutions in 120 countries (IELTS, 2010).

The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is an international English proficiency test. According to the information provided in the TOEFL official website, the test was first administered in 1964 and since that time it has undergone many changes (ETS, 2010). The test has already had three different formats: computer-based, internet-based and paper-based. Introduced in July 1998, the computer-based test (CBT) had almost the same content as the traditional paper-based test with the exception of some types of questions that could be offered only on a computer screen. In 2006, the CBT was replaced by the internet-based test (iBT) and now is widely used around the world. In the regions of the world where the iBT is not available, the paper-based test (PBT) is provided. Both tests are taken in one day. The difference between the TOEFL PBT and iBT is in the structure. The

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[16] The TOEFL and IELTS tests are tests for specific purposes as well. Both assess the ability of an individual to use and understand the English language in an academic setting.

[17] The official website of Educational testing Service (ETS) does not provide the information about the number off candidates that take TOEFL annually. The number of around 750.000 candidates is mentioned in some website resources. In fact, ETS administers more than 50 million tests every year, including the TOEFL and TOEIC tests, the GRE test and the Praxis Series assessments (ETS, 2010)

PBT measures the candidate's skills in reading, listening and writing. Writing skills are measured with the Test of Written English (TWE), which is a part of the TOEFL PBT. The candidate can take the Test of Spoken English (TSE) as an additional part to the PBT to measure the speaking skills of those who need a speaking score. The iBT includes four sections to measure the four skills: reading, listening, speaking, and writing.

As for scores, these are given for each section and then a total score is provided. In addition, test takers receive feedback on their performance as well as advice for improvement for each type of skill. Test scores are claimed to be objective and unbiased because they are provided anonymously by ETS certified raters (ETS, 2010). No passing or failing score is reported. The requirements for scores are established by institutions. In addition, TOEFL iBT scores are valid for two years.

The International English Language Testing System, IELTS, is another English language proficiency test, whose speaking scale will be analyzed in the present study. IELTS is jointly administered by University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations (Cambridge ESOL), the British Council and IDP: IELTS Australia, and it became operational in 1989. Although the test went through revision in 1995, its development is continuous, and in July 2001 its Speaking Test was revised. Since 2005, candidates have been able to take a computerized version of IELTS in some IELTS centers (IELTS, 2010).

There are two formats of IELTS: Academic and General Training. The difference between these two formats is related to the purpose of candidates in taking the test. The Academic Module is intended for those who intend to study or obtain training through English at an undergraduate or graduate level. Candidates who are going to an English-speaking country to gain work experience or for immigration purposes to Australia, New Zealand or Canada should take the General Training Module (IELTS, 2010).

IELTS is designed to assess the language ability of non-users (score 0) as well as of expert users (score 9). The test is comprised of four tests: Listening, Reading, Writing, and Speaking. Listening and Speaking tests are the same for both formats, that is, Academic and General Training.[18] Reading and Writing tests are different because of

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[18] Back in 1989, IELTS had four modules, where Listening and Speaking were non-specialized, and Reading and Writing were specialized. The non-specialized modules were intended to measure general English. The specialized modules tested candidates' skill in particular areas, according to their study course.

the purposes of a format. The topics of Listening and Speaking tests in the Academic Module are related to education, whereas the topics of these tests in the General Training Module are essential for living and working in an English speaking country (IELTS, 2010). The first three tests - Listening, Reading and Writing - must be completed in one day. Candidates may choose whether to take the Speaking Test in the period of seven days before or after the day of the other three tests. As there is just one Speaking Test for both formats, the same speaking scales are administered in the process of assessment. The results of the tests can be used within two years. In addition, there is no restriction on the candidate re-taking the test.

Having provided some general background information on the TOEFL and IELTS tests, I will now turn to two proficiency guidelines, whose speaking scales have been chosen for investigation. These are the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign languages (ACTFL) Proficiency Guidelines and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, or short CEF). Choosing these two guidelines is not a neutral decision. Their influence in the areas of SLA and LT has been recognized by many researchers (e.g., Brindley, 1998; North, 2000; North & Schneider, 1998). It is important to highlight that course designers, textbook writers, testers, teachers, and teacher trainers - in fact, all who are directly involved in language teaching and testing - tend to follow the orientations given in these documents. The guidelines define teaching and learning objectives and methods, and provide necessary tools for proficiency assessment.

The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines were developed in 1986 by Amerian Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language for use in academic environments in the United State. Since then the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines have been used as a means of assessing the proficiency of a foreign language speaker in each of four language skills: speaking, writing, reading, and listening. In 1999 the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines-Speaking were revised. The changes in these guidelines were a result of years of oral testing and use of the guidelines as well as of various research projects and academic contributions. The revision of the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines-Speaking led to a better interpretation of the levels' descriptions. A significant change was made related to the Advanced level, where it was subdivided into High, Mid, and Low. This division was intended to describe speakers' progress through the Advanced level more finely.

These guidelines present descriptions of different levels of language proficiency. These levels were based on the five levels that

were developed by the US Foreign Service Institute. The description of these levels involves global characteristics of integrated performance in each language skill: listening, reading, writing, and speaking.

Interestingly, the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines were created in order to improve foreign language learning in the USA and this intention was realized. Shohamy (1990) claims that these guidelines are "successful in drawing attention to goals, standards, and accountability" (p. 385). Most importantly, Bachman and Savignon (1986) emphasize that "guidelines for measuring language proficiency can enhance accountability and strengthen the profession" (p. 380).

It is important to mention that the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines do not measure the students' achievement during the learning process. On the contrary, these guidelines are intended to recognize the proficiency levels, that is, what students are able or not to do with the language. In addition, they are used for global assessment.

The CEFR is an important framework for modern language education within the European context. Its guidelines are widely used in L2 teaching and learning because it provides a basis for language syllabus elaboration, curriculum guidelines, examinations, and textbooks (Council of Europe, 2001). Published in two draft versions in 1996 by the Council of Europe, the CEFR got feedback from its users, and as a result, the document was revised. Its commercial publishing was realized in 2001. The CEFR was available in two languages: English and French. Later, the translations of this document into 21 other languages appeared (Little, 2006).

The CEFR has multidimensional scales: the global scales, the self-assessment grid, and the illustrative scales for the activities of listening, reading, spoken interaction, spoken production, written interaction, written production, note-taking, and processing text (Little, 2006). In addition, there are scales that have analytic criteria that concentrate on linguistic features.[19]

The purpose of the CEFR is to help teachers, learners, course and book designers, examining bodies work with the language and its use in order to elaborate "language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe" (Little, 2006, p.169). In relation to testing, the CEFR can be used:

1) for the specification of the content of tests and examinations;
2) for stating the criteria to determine the attainment of a learning

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[19] For the purpose of the present study, analytic descriptors of spoken language have been selected for the analysis.

objective;
3) for describing the levels of proficiency in existing tests and examinations thus enabling comparisons to be made across different systems of qualifications

(Council of Europe, 2001, p. 178).

I cannot but mention that the impact of the CEFR on the international scenario is noticeable. The number of languages to which this document was translated says it all. The development of the Threshold level, which meets the needs of adult language learners, made an impact on language teaching at school. Thus, the major advance in language teaching across Europe in the last decade was the inclusion of the first foreign language in the curriculum of lower grades. The application of the CEFR to curricula of various kinds has been discussed in two papers by Alderson (2002) and Morrow (2004, as cited in Little, 2006). The examples of such curricula are the Swiss Instruments for Assessing Foreign Language Competences (IEF) Project and the curriculum for English as a second language in Irish primary schools.

Having introduced some background on the proficiency test and guidelines, I want to finish this chapter with the section devoted to the research on speaking assessment.

2.6 Research on speaking assessment

Nowadays a great variety of studies in the area of LT addresses the assessment of speaking. One of them is the study conducted by Elder, Iwashita and McNamara, (2002), who investigated the difficulty of oral proficiency tasks on the basis of the framework proposed by Skehan (1998) with 201 participants. The participants performed the speaking tests made up of eight narrative tasks with picture prompts. Their speech samples were rated using analytical rating scales for fluency, accuracy, and complexity specifically developed for the study. The results demonstrated little support for Skehan's (1998) framework for oral proficiency assessment. Presumably, the reason is that this framework had been applied before only in pedagogic contexts and not in language testing context. As a consequence, there were no systematic variations in different performance conditions for each task. Other studies which investigated the issues of oral task difficulty in the testing situation are Stansfield *et al.* (1990), Stansfield (1991), Brown(1993), Hill (1998), and Fulcher and Reiter(2003).

Gender aspects also affect the performance on oral proficiency tests. The results of one more study in language testing that examined the impact of gender in oral proficiency test are reported by O'Loughlin

(2002). The data for this study were collected with eight female and eight male test-takers, who performed on a practice IELTS interview under two conditions: with a female interviewer and a male one. Their speech performance was assessed by four raters (two males and two females). The score showed that gender did not influence the participants' oral performance. Other studies along the same line were conducted by Maltz and Borker (1982), Tannen (1990) and Coates (1993).

One important issue that Douglas and Selinker (1992; 1993) raised in their studies is raters' performance in tests. Although working with the same speaking scales for assessment, they assume that raters can provide similar ratings for quite different reasons. Their assumption is that test takers may provide qualitatively different speech samples and still get the same ratings. In his study, Douglas (1994) investigated the hypothesis that similar quantitative scores on a semi-direct speaking test represent qualitatively different performances. Various aspects of speech samples produced by six Czech graduate students were analyzed, such as local and global errors, vocabulary, fluency, content, and rhetorical organization. The results demonstrated very little relationship between the scores on the tests and the language actually produced by the participants. Douglas (1994) suggested that to understand better the process of speaking assessment think-aloud studies should be conducted. Other studies which address the same issue are Chalhoub-Deville (1996), Upshur and Turner (1999), and Brown, Iwashita and McNamara (2005).

The issues reviewed in the present chapter are very relevant for the present study because they present a general view of the area of speech production and language testing. Levelt`s (1989) monolingual model and De Bot's (1992) bilingual model of speech production explain the process of L1 and L2 speaking, respectively. Bachman's (1990) theoretical framework of CLA and Fulcher`s (2003) framework for describing the speaking construct are very influential in the area of language testing and specifically in the area of testing second language speaking. It is worth remembering that speaking assessment is rather challenging and many researchers are still seeking the best way, that is, a more objective one, to assess this type of ability. Various proficiency tests and guidelines are results of such attempts. For the purpose of the present study, some background information about international proficiency tests (TOEFL and IELTS), and guidelines (the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines and the CEFR) was reviewed in section 2.5. Finally, it seemed important to review some research on speaking

assessment in order to present the main findings in the area (2.6). The following chapter, Chapter 3, is devoted to the method of the present study. There, I will present the context of the study and research questions, the materials that I have selected for the analysis, the instruments and procedures of the analysis.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

3.1. Introduction

The field of second language acquisition (SLA) has been developed greatly in recent years. A growth of the journals that introduce readers to the topics of second and foreign language learning such as *Second Language Research*, *Applied Linguistics*, *Language Learning*, *Language Testing* and many others is an example of the interest in this field. Vital questions that SLA researchers try to investigate lead to the refinement and expansion of SLA research methods. An increasing number of research methods not only enable SLA researchers with many forms of inquiry, but provide them with research instruments appropriated to the needs of a given inquiry.

The present study is a qualitative research that has been based on interpretative analysis. Interpretative studies have been carried out widely. Detailed information about context, participants, and actions are closely associated with this type of studies. Interpretative analysis implies that the research results are "the product of the researcher's subjective interpretation of the data" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 38). According to Miles and Huberman (1994), various interpretations of the same data are possible; though "some are more compelling for theoretical reasons or on grounds of internal consistency" (p. 7). It is important to highlight that they consider the researcher as "essentially the main 'measurement device' in the study" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.7)

The main aim of this chapter is to present the method used for the analysis of the selected tests and guidelines rating scales. Thereby the chapter is divided into the following subsections: 3.1 Introduction, 3.2 The context of the study and research questions, 3.3 Materials, 3.4 Instruments, and 3.5 Procedures.

3.2 The context of the study and research questions

With the growing interest to learn a second or a foreign language, language researchers and teachers started to see the need to test and assess learners' language ability. As a consequence, various language tests and guidelines have been developed. According to McNamara and Roever (2006), language testing has been practiced in our society for a long time. Tests have been used as a tool for making decisions about test takers and this decision-making has been served for various educational

and employment purposes. Possessing language certificates, test takers are able to get into an international University or be chosen for a better position. However, it is difficult to assess language skills reliably. There are various aspects that affect the process of assessment. One of them is construct definition. The language skill under investigation in the present study is speaking.

This study analyzes the speaking rating scales of two international proficiency tests - the Test of English as a Foreign Language Test (TOEFL) and the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) - and two guidelines for orientations - The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) proficiency Guidelines. These materials were collected from the official websites of the respective tests and guidelines that have free access.

The present study pursued the following research questions:

1. How do the TOEFL, IELTS, ACTFL and CEFR speaking scales assess speech performance?

2. Is there comparability of the speaking construct across these proficiency tests and guidelines?

3.3 Materials

The materials under analysis are four speaking scales. There are two from the international proficiency tests and two from the guidelines for orientations. The criteria for selecting these materials are the following: their respective tests and guidelines are widely used as measures of English as a foreign language (EFL) proficiency, and they have been highly influential in the area of language testing and assessment. A general description of each speaking scale and its levels will be presented next.

3.3.1 The TOEFL speaking scale

The TOEFL speaking sub-test has two types of tasks: independent and integrated. According to Brown *et al*. (2002), an independent speaking task is based on a stand-alone statement or question, that is, no input is provided. Independent tasks may ask to describe a particular situation or person, state and support personal opinion on a specific topic. An integrated speaking task involves combinations of skills such as listening and reading with speaking. These tasks are on an academic topic. To answer the second research question, the speaking scales will be compared across each other. As the IELTS speaking sub-test does not

integrate skills, the TOEFL rating scale for assessing test takers' speaking ability on independent task has been selected for analysis.

The TOEFL speaking sub-test consists of six tasks: two independent and four integrated. Each of these tasks is rated from 0 to 4, where 0 refers to "no attempt to respond OR response is unrelated to the topic". The scores of the tasks are summed up and then the average is converted to a scaled score from 0 to 30. Based on the final score, test takers are subdivided into weak (0-9), limited (10-17), fair (18-25), and good (26-30). The speaking scale of TOEFL is analytic and is divided into separate categories, which represent different criteria or dimensions across all levels. These criteria are Delivery, Language use and Topic development. Moreover, it includes general description of the test taker's response (see Appendix B). Each criterion provides one, two or maximum three sentences describing test takers' responses. Further details on these criteria are provided next.

The first criterion, Delivery, involves the pronunciation, intonation, rhythm, rate of speech, and clarity of speech. The pace and degree of hesitancy are examined as well. For example, the response of the score of 4 should have "[g]enerally well-paced flow (fluid expression). Speech is clear. It may include minor lapses, or minor difficulties with pronunciation or intonation patterns, which do not affect overall intelligibility" (ETS, 2004).

Precision of grammar and vocabulary use as well as complexity and range are examined in the Language Use criterion. For instance, test takers obtain the score of 1 when their responses have the following features: "Range and control of grammar and vocabulary severely limit or prevent expression of ideas and connections among ideas. Some low-level responses may rely heavily on practice or formulaic expressions" (ETS, 2004).

Finally, the Topic development criterion describes the relevance of information produced by test takers, coherence of their ideas, and fullness of the response. For example, the response can be graded as 3 if it is "mostly coherent and sustained and conveys relevant ideas/information. Overall development is somewhat limited, usually lacks elaboration or specificity. Relationships between ideas may at times not be immediately clear" (ETS, 2004).

The TOEFL speaking scale does, however, include the overall criterion for each level named General description. General description provides a general picture or description of test takers' speech samples. It also informs raters about the involvement of three criteria. For example, test takers can obtain the score of 1 if their response "is

characterized by at least two" criteria (ETS, 2004). In order to obtain the highest score, that is the score of 4, test takers' oral performance should be "characterized by all" criteria (ETS, 2004).

3.3.2 The IELTS speaking scale

The IELTS speaking scale is composed of ten levels, ranging from 0 to 9. When test takers do not attend the test, they receive 0. If test takers are unable to communicate anything or their language is impossible to rate they obtain level 1. Level 9 is the highest level. Tests takers at this level are considered to be expert users of the English language. The speaking scale is analytic because while assessing test takers' speech samples, four criteria are taken into consideration by test raters: Fluency and Coherence, Lexical Resource, Grammatical Range and Accuracy, and Pronunciation (see Appendix C). Each of these criteria describes what test takers actually do with the language orally, and this description is given in one up to three phrases. Next, these criteria are reviewed in more details.

The Fluency and coherence criterion assesses how well test takers speak in English and how well their topics are developed. For example, to obtain level 6 test takers should show their willingness to produce lengthy discourse. However, they "may lose coherence at times due to occasional repetition, self-correction or hesitation" (IELTS, 2006). In addition, they use "a range of connectives and discourse markers but not always appropriately" (IELTS, 2006).

The next criterion under discussion is Lexical Resource. Here, test takers demonstrate their knowledge of vocabulary as well as their ability to paraphrase in case of some vocabulary gaps. For instance, test takers, at level 5 "[manage] to talk about familiar and unfamiliar topics but [use] vocabulary with limited flexibility" (IELTS, 2006). Moreover, they "[attempt] to use paraphrase but with mixed success" (IELTS, 2006).

The Grammatical range and accuracy criterion looks at sentence forms produced by test takers, that is how complex and error-free they are. Thus, test takers can get level 7 in case they "[use] a range of complex structures with some flexibility" and "frequently [produce] error-free sentences, though some grammatical mistakes persist" (IELTS, 2006).

Finally, the Pronunciation criterion assesses test takers' speech samples in terms of pronunciation features and how these features affect interlocutors' understanding. For example, test takers at level 4 "[use] a limited range of pronunciation features" (IELTS, 2006). As a

consequence, "mispronunciations are frequent and cause some difficulty for the listener" (IELTS, 2006).

3.3.3 The ACTFL speaking scale

The ACTFL speaking scale is holistic because it responds to oral language performance as a whole, that is it is not divided into separate aspects of performance (see Appendix D). This speaking scale provides characteristics of four proficiency levels: Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, and Superior. Furthermore, Novice, Intermediate, and Advanced levels are subdivided into three sublevels each: Low, Mid, and High. The level descriptors are continuous texts with the types of situations and activities speakers can deal with. The strong and weak points of speakers' language are also discussed. In addition, the strategies utilized by speakers when gaps in language knowledge occur are included as well. However, the following aspects of language competence have been recognized: knowledge of vocabulary, accuracy, fluency, topic development, and pronunciation. Each of these aspects will be considered next.

Knowledge of vocabulary is very important as it enables speakers to express themselves on a variety of topics. The more words and phrases they know, the more freedom they have to communicate. As for Intermediate-Mid speakers, they "are able to handle successfully a variety of uncomplicated communicative tasks in straightforward social situations. Conversation is generally limited to those predictable and concrete exchanges necessary for survival in the target culture" (ACTFL, 1999).

Accuracy and fluency always come together in the level descriptors. The ability to use language accurately and without constant hesitations is essential if the speaker seeks to get a high proficiency level. For example, Intermediate-low speakers' "utterances are often filled with hesitancy and inaccuracies as they search for appropriate linguistic forms and vocabulary while attempting to give form to the message. As for Advanced-high speakers, they "narrate fully and accurately in all time frames. …may construct hypotheses, but patterns of error appear….often show great fluency and ease of speech" (ACTFL, 1999). Comparing these two levels, we can perceive the difference in language quality in terms of accuracy and fluency.

The ACTFL speaking scale emphasizes the importance of topic development. Here, speakers should show how well they are able to prove a connected discourse. For instance, Advanced-low speakers "combine and link sentences into connected discourse of paragraph

length. When pressed for a fuller account, they tend to grope and rely on minimal discourse" (ACTFL, 1999).

Finally, speakers' pronunciation is also included. Its role in oral speech is undeniable as it may affect general intelligibility. For example, speakers at the Superior level "command…intonational features such as pitch, stress and tone" (ACTFL, 1999).

3.3.4 The CEFR speaking scale

The CEFR speaking scale is analytic. It is composed of six levels of attainment that are grouped into Basic Users - A1 and A2, Independent Users - B1 and B2, and Proficient Users - C1 and C2. The rating scale has five criteria that represent qualitative aspects of spoken language use: Range, Accuracy, Fluency, Interaction, and Coherence. Each of these criteria has descriptors of learners' speaking ability in few sentences across six levels (see Appendix E). These criteria will be considered next.

The first criterion, Range, assesses speakers' ability to use language across various topics, that is, how broad their range of language is. For example, B1 speaker "has enough language to get by, with sufficient vocabulary to express him/herself with some hesitation and circumlocutions on topics such as family, hobbies and interests, work, travel, and current events" (Council of Europe, 2001).

The CEFR speaking scale describes accuracy, which is the next criterion. It embodies speakers' control of grammar knowledge. For instance, B2 speaker "shows a relatively high degree of grammatical control. [He/She] [d]oes not make errors which cause misunderstanding, and can correct most of his/her mistakes" (Council of Europe, 2001).

As for the Fluency criterion, it examines speakers' ability to produce speech samples in a natural smooth flow. Unlike proficient speakers, A1 speakers "[c]an manage very short, isolated, mainly pre-packaged utterances, with much pausing to search for expressions, to articulate less familiar words, and to repair communication" (Council of Europe, 2001).

The Interaction criterion comprises, as its name says, the ability to interact, that is, to comprehend and contribute to conversation. For example, C1 speakers "[c]an select a suitable phrase from a readily available range of discourse functions to preface his remarks in order to get or to keep the floor and to relate his/her own contributions skilfully to those of other speakers" (Council of Europe, 2001).

And lastly, the Coherence criterion considers the overall development of discourse that speakers produce. This implies the

appropriate use of connectors and cohesive devices. For instance, C2 speakers "[c]an create coherent and cohesive discourse making full and appropriate use of a variety of organisational patterns and a wide range of connectors and other cohesive devices" (Council of Europe, 2001).

3.4 Instruments

The instruments used for the analysis consist of Bachman *et al.*'s (1995) communicative language ability (CLA) checklist and rating instrument and Fulcher's (2003) framework for describing the speaking construct. These instruments are described in detail in the following subsections.

3.4.1 Bachman's communicative language ability checklist and rating instrument

Based on the framework of CLA, which was discussed in the review of literature, Bachman *et al.* (1995) designed a CLA checklist and rating instrument. The checklist and rating instrument are applied with the purpose of revealing the components of CLA across proficiency levels of each speaking scale presented in section 3.3.

The CLA checklist has thirteen components of CLA. They are:

Grammatical competence
LEX: Lexis
MOR: Morphology
STX: Syntax
PG: Phonology/Graphology
Textual competence
COH: Cohesion
ORG: Rhetorical organization
Illocutionary competence
IDE: Ideational functions
MAN: Manipulative functions
HEU: Heuristic functions
IMG: Imaginative functions
Sociolinguistic competence
DIA: Dialect
REG: Register
Strategic competence (STC) (Bachman,1995, pp.191-192).[20]

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[20] Bachman *et al.* (1995) do not provide any explanation why two components of sociolinguistic competence have been omitted from his CLA checklist: sensitivity to naturalness and ability to interpret cultural references and figures of speech. Interestingly, the framework of CLA is included in appendices of the respective book by Bachman *et al.* (1995) and there is a reference to his influential work *Fundamental Considerations in*

The component of grammatical competence, Graphology, is not taken into consideration because the objective of this study is to investigate speaking ability. Thus, only the Pronunciation component will be looked at.

The CLA rating instrument is a single rating scale (see Table 1). It aims to reveal the degree to which the components of CLA are engaged, and, the approximate level of component required (Bachman *et al.*, 1995).

The degree of engagement of each CLA component being examined is revealed with the help of the following rating categories: "not involved", "somewhat involved", and "critical". They have numerical values of 0, 1, and 2, respectively. Thus, if a component is not required at a certain level of proficiency it is graded as zero. If it is involved, but not critically, it is graded as one. Then, if a component is very important at a given level of proficiency, that is critical, it is graded as two.

Language Testing (Bachman, 1990). Nevertheless, Appendix F does not contain these two components either (see Bachman *et al.*, 1995, p.188). Presumably, the researcher wanted to create a more effective means for assessing CLA components by abridging the official version to the framework of CLA (Bachman *et al.*, 1995).

Table 1

Communicative language ability checklist (Bachman *et al.*, 1995)

0 = not involved, 1 = somewhat involved, 2 = critical basic/very much,
3 = critical intermediate, 4 = critical advanced

	Item #	Proficiency level
Grammatical competence	LEX	
	MOR	
	STX	
	PG	
Textual competence	COH	
	ORG	
Illocutionary competence	IDE	
	MAN	
	HEU	
	IMG	
Sociolinguistic competence	DIA	
	REG	
Strategic competence	STC	

The last rating category, "critical", implies that the test taker cannot obtain a certain proficiency level without demonstrating this or that knowledge. As mentioned above, the CLA rating instrument attempts to inform about the approximate level of component required. Thus, this category involves three levels: *basic*, *intermediate*, and *advanced*. The names of these levels say it all. If a component is very important, but at a basic level, it is *critical basic*. If a component is important at an intermediate level, it is critical *intermediate*. If a component is very important, but at an advanced level, it is *critical advanced*. These three levels have numerical values of 2, 3, and 4, respectively.

It is important to highlight that the degree to which strategic competence is involved is assessed differently in comparison to language competence. Its rating scale contains three categories: *not at all*, *somewhat*, and *very much*. These categories have numerical values of 0, 1, and 2, respectively. If strategic competence is not required at a certain proficiency level, it is graded as zero. If it is involved, but not

critically, it is graded as one. And lastly, if it is very important at a given proficiency level, it is graded as two.

3.4.2 Fulcher's framework for describing the speaking construct

Fulcher's (2003) framework for describing the speaking construct reviewed in chapter 2 is another instrument utilized in the investigation of the aspects of speaking ability. As stated in this chapter, the framework is an adaptation of Bachman and Palmer's framework (1996) where necessary changes regarding assessing speaking have been made.

This instrument is used as a means of comparability of the speaking constructs across these proficiency tests and guidelines for orientations. To start with, the term "comparability" in the context of the present study should be defined. According to Bachman *et al*. (1988), comparability is not a simple equivalence of test score, but the examination of the abilities measured by tests (p.130). As the present study narrows its focus down to speaking ability, the aspects of speaking ability are examined. Moreover, "the examination of comparability must begin with an assessment of the extent to which tests [and guidelines] measure the same [aspects of speaking ability]" (Bachman *et al.*, 1988, p.130).

The aspects of speaking ability that are compared across the tests and guidelines' speaking scales are language competence, strategic capacity, textual knowledge, pragmatic knowledge and sociolinguistic knowledge.

3.5 Procedures

This subsection presents the procedures undertaken in order to answer two research questions. To answer the first research question that inquires about assessment of speaking ability in the TOEFL and IELTS proficiency tests, and the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines and the CEFR, Bachman *et al.*'s (1995) CLA checklist and rating instrument are employed.

Each component of CLA is rated across proficiency levels in both tests and guidelines. For example, the Lexis component is not involved at Band 1 in the IELTS speaking scale. It is graded as zero because test takers' language is impossible to rate and they provide no communication. As for the Phonology component at Level A1 in the CEFR, it is somewhat involved because speakers are able to pronounce memorized words and phrases without difficulty that leads to some basic interaction. For instance, Cohesion component at the Intermediate-Mid level in the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines is critical at a basic

level because speakers can make up just one sentence or few sentences by combining what they already know with the information they get from interlocutors. To demonstrate the rating category "critically intermediate", let us look at the Rhetorical organization component at Score 3 in TOEFL. Test takers at this level are able to provide sustained and coherent responses, though "overall development is somewhat limited". Finally, the Syntax component is critical advanced at Level C2 in CEFR because of their "consistent grammatical control of complex language" and ability to produce a lengthy discourse using various connectors and cohesive devices.

      To answer the second research question that inquires about comparability of the speaking construct across the proficiency tests and guidelines, Fulcher's (2003) framework for describing the speaking construct is applied.

      The aspects of speaking ability reviewed in Chapter 2 are compared across the levels of the tests and guidelines' speaking scales. First, this comparison is made between the TOEFL and IELTS speaking scales. Then, it is made between the ACTFL and CEFR speaking scales. Finally, the aspects of speaking ability are compared between the tests and guidelines' speaking scales. For example, in comparing the aspect of speaking ability, such as pronunciation between the guidelines, it is possible to show that this component starts to be addressed at Level A1 in the CEFR, which is the lowest level. In the ACTFL, this component starts to be addressed at the Novice-Mid level, the second lowest level.

      After carrying out the analysis and making comparisons across the tests and guidelines' speaking scales, I can present the conclusions regarding the aspects of speaking ability that are included in the tests and guidelines' speaking constructs.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I present the analysis of the TOEFL, IELTS, ACTFL, and CEFR speaking scales. In section 4.1, I will present and discuss the results of the analysis of the TOEFL speaking scale, and in section 4.2, those of the IELTS speaking scale will be dealt with. Section 4.3 and section 4.4 will provide the results of the analyses of the speaking scales of the two guidelines, ACTFL and CEFR.

In section 4.5 I will discuss the comparability of the aspects of speaking as assessed by TOEFL and IELTS. In section 4.6, I will discuss the comparability of the aspects of speaking as assessed by ACTFL and CEFR. Finally, section 4.7 will deal with the comparability of the aspects of speaking as assessed by both the proficiency tests and the guidelines.

4.1 The TOEFL speaking scale

The description of the test taker's performance at the score of zero is presented in Table 2. In this description, the test taker scores zero if s/he does not attempt to discuss the topic or if the response given is not associated with the topic. Here, the assumption is that the test taker is not able to articulate a response or that even if s/he speaks but the response is unrelated to the topic, the speaker's response will not be considered. This is an indication that, as we will see later, TOEFL places emphasis on content of speech more than on form, at least on the lower levels of proficiency.

Table 2

TOEFL Independent Speaking Rubrics for Score 0

Score	General Description	Delivery	Language Use	Topic Development
0	Speaker makes no attempt to respond OR response is unrelated to the topic.			

The next score is the score of 1. Its description across the criteria is presented in Table 3 and Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) communicative language ability (CLA) checklist is presented in Table 4.

Table 3
TOEFL Independent Speaking Rubrics for Score 1

Score	General Description	Delivery	Language Use	Topic Development
1	The response is very limited in content and/ or coherence or is only minimally connected to the task, or speech is largely unintelligible. A response at this level is characterized by at least two of the following:	Consistent pronunciation, stress, and intonation difficulties cause considerable listener effort; delivery is choppy, fragmented, or telegraphic; frequent pauses and hesitations.	Range and control of grammar and vocabulary severely limit or prevent expression of ideas and connections among ideas. Some low-level responses may may rely heavily on practiced or formulaic expressions.	Limited relevant content is expressed. The response generally lacks substance beyond expression of very basic ideas. Speaker may be unable to sustain speech to complete the task and may rely heavily on repetition of the prompt.

Table 4
Communicative Language Abilities checklist for Score 1
**0 = not involved, 1 = somewhat involved, 2 = critical basic/very much,
3 = critical intermediate, 4 = critical advanced**

	Item #	Score 1
Grammatical competence	LEX	1
	MOR	1
	STX	1
	PG	1
Textual competence	COH	2
	ORG	2
Illocutionary competence	IDE	2
	MAN	0
	HEU	2
	IMG	0
Sociolinguistic competence	DIA	0
	REG	0
Strategic competence	STC	0

As can be seen in Table 3, the speech of a TOEFL candidate, which is scored at 1, is characterized in the general description of the rubric as limited in terms of content and coherence. It is also important to mention that candidates are able to get score 1 if their response presents the characteristics of at least two categories out of three. These can be Delivery, Language Use, and/or Topic Development. According to the rubrics for score 1, the delivery of the speaker at this level is choppy due to frequent pauses and hesitations. From the perspective of the listener, a great effort has to be made to understand speakers because of the consistent difficulties mainly in pronunciation, stress, and intonation. In the category language use, the aspects of speaking assessed in the rubric are range and control of grammar and vocabulary, and use of formulaic expressions. Finally, in terms of development of the topic, speech production at the score of 1 is characterized as lacking substance and relevance as well as relying heavily on repetitions.

Thus, the rubric for the score of 1 on the TOEFL test seems to emphasize content, coherence, and relevance, but also pronunciation, stress, intonation and continuity of speech. In terms of lexicogrammatical aspect, the rubric mentions control of grammar and vocabulary, but except for the use of practiced or formulaic expressions, it does not specify components of these two dimensions of language. Therefore, at this point of the analysis it is possible to argue that for the very low levels of proficiency, it is content more than grammatical form and accuracy that receives the greatest emphasis in speaking. The rubric also emphasizes those aspects of speaking related to pronunciation, stress, and intonation.

The analysis of the rubric for score of 1 on the TOEFL test from the perspective of Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist shows that speaking at this score is assessed in terms of grammatical competence, textual competence, and illocutionary competence, as can be seen in Table 4. However, the components of each of these competences are not equally rated. For instance, as for grammatical competence, its components (lexis, morphology, syntax, and phonology) are rated 1 precisely because, as can be seen in the rubric, the speech of score 1 candidates displays very limited grammatical competence. Textual competence, on the other hand, is rated 2, since in at least 3 criteria (general description, language use, and topic development) coherence and connection of ideas as well as relevance and substance of content are mentioned. For the same reason, the components of illocutionary competence, ideational and heuristic functions, which are related to expression of ideas and extension of knowledge, are also rated 2. At this

score, the rubric does not make any explicit mention of the use of manipulative and imaginative functions in L2 speaking. Moreover, the components of sociolinguistic competence are not discussed explicitly in the rubrics of TOEFL. The same is true for strategic competence, which is not assessed in this proficiency test.[21] Taken together, this analysis shows that at score 1 speakers tested by TOEFL will be required to express ideas more than to display knowledge of linguistic items per se.

Table 5 presents the description of the speaker's oral performance at score 2 of TOEFL. The analysis of this rubric with respect to Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist is provided in Table 6.

Table 5

TOEFL Independent Speaking Rubrics for Score 2

Score	General Description	Delivery	Language Use	Topic Development
2	The response addresses the task, but development of the topic is limited. It contains intelligible speech, although problems with delivery and/or overall coherence occur; meaning may be obscured in places. A response at this level is characterized by at least two of the following:	Speech is basically intelligible, though listener effort is needed because of unclear articulation, awkward intonation, or choppy rhythm/pace; meaning may be obscured in places.	The response demonstrates limited range and control of grammar and vocabulary. These limitations often prevent full expression of ideas. For the most part, only basic sentence structures are used successfully and spoken with fluency. Structures and vocabulary may express mainly simple (short) and/or general propositions, with simple or unclear connections made among them (serial listing, conjunction, juxtaposition).	The response is connected to the task, though the number of ideas presented or the development of ideas is limited. Mostly basic ideas are expressed with limited elaboration (details and support). At times relevant substance may be vaguely expressed or repetitious. Connections of ideas may be unclear.

[21] Due to space limitations, the components of CLA that are not discussed in the scores' descriptions and, as a result, are graded zero in the CLA checklist will not be repeated further. Thus, two components of Illocutionary competence and Sociolinguistic competence as well as Strategic competence in the context of TOEFL will not be discussed in the present study.

Table 6
Communicative Language Abilities checklist for Score 2
0 = not involved, 1 = somewhat involved, 2 = critical basic/very much,
3 = critical intermediate, 4 = critical advanced

	Item #	Score 2
Grammatical competence	LEX	2
	MOR	2
	STX	2
	PG	2
Textual competence	COH	3
	ORG	3
Illocutionary competence	IDE	3
	MAN	0
	HEU	3
	IMG	0
Sociolinguistic competence	DIA	0
	REG	0
Strategic competence	STC	0

The comparison of oral performance at score 1 to that of score 2 shows that there is a difference in quality of speaking from one level to another. According to the description presented in Table 5, the general description at score 2 emphasizes the relevance of the response to the task. However, problems with topic development are expected. Although the speaker is able to produce intelligible speech, delivery and/or overall coherence can present problems. Similarly to the response at score 1, the speaker's response at score 2 should involve the characteristics of at least two categories, whether Delivery, Language Use or Topic Development. Speech at score 2 can be generally understood, though with some effort. This is a consequence of articulation and intonation problems. In addition, choppiness in rhythm and pace may occur as well. The importance of meaning is stressed in the category delivery, which may be unclear sometimes because of the difficulties in delivering the message. Speech at this score, in terms of language use, is assessed through grammatical and vocabulary range and control. The rubric again places an emphasis on content, where expression of ideas is impeded by the limitations of lexicogrammatical

aspects. However, in this description, the rubric is more specific than the rubric for score 1 in what concerns language, making explicit mention to the linguistic aspects, which characterize speech at this score. These include basic sentence structures, simple and short propositions. According to the description of the score of 2, the speaker makes use of simple or unclear connections, such as serial listing, conjunction, and juxtaposition along produced propositions. Finally, with respect to topic development, the speaker's response at score 2 demonstrates some substance and relevance. Basic ideas are provided on the whole, which results in a limited development of the topic.

To reiterate, at this level content again receives more emphasis than form. The general description of the speaker's performance includes information about the limited degree of topic development. Moreover, the rubric highlights the importance of content in all the categories: Delivery, Language Use, and Topic Development. However, the discrepancy between content and form is not as large as in score 1. In this rubric we have clear indication that L2 speech production is also assessed in terms of its formal linguistic aspects.

Now turning to Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist, the analysis shows that L2 speaking at score 2 is assessed in terms of grammatical competence, textual competence, and illocutionary competence, as can be seen in Table 6. All components of grammatical competence are rated equally as 2 out of a possible 5. As can be read in the rubric, the speaker at score 2 demonstrates limited lexicogrammatical competence. Aspects of delivery such as articulation, intonation, rhythm, and pace are assessed at their basic level. At this level, the speaker can be understood, though with listener's effort. In regard to textual competence, its components at score 2 are rated 3 because of the emphasis given to coherence, connection of ideas and relevant substance in all categories of the rubric, that is, the categories Delivery, Language Use, and Topic Development. Similarly to textual competence, two components of illocutionary competence (ideational and heuristic functions) are rated 3. In order to develop the topic, the speaker must communicate some basic ideas, but these lack details and support. Moreover, the speaker may express relevant substance, but this can be vague or repetitious.

In conclusion for the analysis of score 2, the TOEFL candidate will need to provide basic ideas related to the task. In addition to the meaning, s/he will be required to demonstrate language knowledge, which involves some limited control of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. As for spoken fluency, this aspect of oral performance is

noticed in basic sentence structures. In other cases, choppy rhythm and pace are typical.

The next score under analysis is the score of 3, whose formal description is presented in Table 7. The analysis of this description according to Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist is presented in Table 8.

Table 7

TOEFL Independent Speaking Rubrics for Score 3

Score	General Description	Delivery	Language Use	Topic Development
3	The response addresses the task appropriately, but may fall short of being fully developed. It is generally intelligible and coherent, with some fluidity of expression, though it exhibits some noticeable lapses in the expression of ideas. A response at this level is characterized by at least two of the following:	Speech is generally clear, with some fluidity of expression, though minor difficulties with pronunciation, intonation, or pacing are noticeable and may require listener effort at times (though overall intelligibility is not significantly affected)	The response demonstrates fairly automatic and effective use of grammar and vocabulary, and fairly coherent expression of relevant ideas. Response may exhibit some imprecise or inaccurate use of vocabulary or grammatical structures or be somewhat limited in the range of structures used. This may affect overall fluency, but it does not seriously interfere with the communication of the message.	Response is mostly coherent and sustained and conveys relevant ideas/ information. Over all development is somewhat limited, usually lacks elaboration or specificity. Relationships between ideas may at times not be immediately clear.

Table 8

Communicative Language Abilities checklist for Score 3

0 = not involved, 1 = somewhat involved, 2 = critical basic/very much,
3 = critical intermediate, 4 = critical advanced

	Item #	Score 3
Grammatical competence	LEX	3
	MOR	3
	STX	3
	PG	3
Textual competence	COH	3
	ORG	3
Illocutionary competence	IDE	3
	MAN	0
	HEU	3
	IMG	0
Sociolinguistic competence	DIA	0
	REG	0
Strategic competence	STC	0

The speech production of a TOEFL candidate is scored 3 if s/he demonstrates the characteristics of at least two categories, whether Delivery, Language Use, or Topic Development (see Table 7). According to the general description, the speaker's response is relevant to the task, but may be not fully developed. Intelligibility and coherence are typical for the response. The delivery of speech is mostly clear and somewhat fluid. Although the speaker has small problems with intonation, pronunciation, or pacing, his or her speech has overall intelligibility. In the category language use, the use of grammar and vocabulary, as well as coherence, is assessed. Furthermore, with respect to the topic development, L2 speaking at score 3 is recognized for being generally coherent and sustained as well as for demonstrating relevance of ideas. Development of the topic is limited and elaboration or specificity may not be present.

Based on this analysis, I can argue that the rubric for score 3 of TOEFL highlights the importance of content, coherence, and relevance of ideas. Moreover, pronunciation, intonation, pacing and fluidity of expression are also important. With respect to lexicogrammatical

aspects, the rubric provides a description of grammatical and vocabulary use, which is reasonably automatic and effective. However, it may be imprecise or inaccurate. Thus, at score 3, it can be argued that content and form receive equal importance in L2 speaking.

The analysis of the rubric for score 3 from the perspective of Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist demonstrates, as can be seen in Table 8, that L2 speaking at this score is assessed according to grammatical competence, textual competence, and illocutionary competence. These three competences are rated equally. The speech of score 3 candidate is generally clear. The use of vocabulary and grammar may vary from fairly automatic and effective to imprecise or inaccurate. It is important to mention that the rubric emphasizes that overall fluency may be affected by the limitations of lexicogrammatical aspects, but these limitations do not greatly interfere with the response. Moreover, a TOEFL candidate at score 3 demonstrates the ability to provide a coherent response. However, the response usually lacks full development because of the absence of elaboration or specificity. A score 3 candidate is able to express ideas appropriate to the task and the importance of this ability is highlighted in general description as well as in two categories Language Use and Topic Development. He or she tries to elaborate the response by providing some relevant information. Although some language problems occur, the speaker is able to control them and, as a result, to use all language knowledge available in order to communicate the message.

Having analyzed the rubric for score 3, I conclude that TOEFL candidates at score 3 will be required to demonstrate their ability to express ideas or information appropriately to the task where coherence and fluidity of expression will be examined. Moreover, knowledge of linguistic items is also assessed. Thus, lexicogrammatical aspects and pronunciation features are aspects of speech production considered for assessment.

Finally, I focus on the highest score that can be obtained by TOEFL candidates, score 4. The description of this score across the criteria is presented in Table 9 and Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist for score 4 is provided in Table 10.

Table 9
TOEFL Independent Speaking Rubrics for Score 4

Score	General Description	Delivery	Language Use	Topic Development
4	The response fulfills the demands of the task, with at most, minor lapses in completeness. It is highly intelligible and exhibits sustained, coherent discourse. A response at this level is characterized by all of the following:	Generally well-paced flow (fluid expression) Speech is clear. It may include minor lapses, or minor difficulties with pronunciation or intonation patterns, which do not affect overall intelligibility.	The response demonstrates effective use of grammar and vocabulary. It exhibits a fairly high degree of automaticity with good control of basic and complex structures (as appropriate). Some minor (or systematic) errors are noticeable, but do not obscure meaning.	Response is sustained and sufficient to the task. It is generally well developed and coherent; relationships between ideas are clear (or clear progression of ideas).

Table 10
Communicative Language Abilities checklist for Score 4
**0 = not involved, 1 = somewhat involved, 2 = critical basic/very much,
3 = critical intermediate, 4 = critical advanced**

	Item #	Score 4
Grammatical competence	LEX	4
	MOR	4
	STX	4
	PG	4
Textual competence	COH	4
	ORG	4
Illocutionary competence	IDE	4
	MAN	0
	HEU	4
	IMG	0
Sociolinguistic competence	DIA	0
	REG	0
Strategic competence	STC	0

The general description of candidate's speech at score 4 presented in Table 9 places emphasis on the demands of the tasks. Only minor lapses in completeness are acceptable. The speech is also characterized in terms of high intelligibility and sustained coherence. In contrast to the previous scores, the response at this score should have the characteristics of all three categories, that is, delivery, language use, and topic development. The delivery of the speaker at this score is generally well-paced and clear. However, the speaker may demonstrate some difficulties whether with pronunciation or with intonation patterns. Nevertheless, overall intelligibility remains. In the category language use, the aspect of speaking, which is assessed in the rubric for score 4, is the use of grammar and vocabulary. In addition, the speaker should have a good control of basic and complex sentence structures. However, in terms of topic development, the response is characterized as sustained, sufficient to the task, generally well-developed and coherent. Finally, conveyed ideas should have a clear progression.

Therefore, the rubric for score 4 of TOEFL seems to have equal emphasis on content and form. In terms of content, the speaker should produce a response relevant to the task and develop it so that the connections between ideas are clear. In terms of form, grammar and vocabulary should be used effectively. Intelligibility should not be influenced by some lapses in pronunciation or intonation.

From the perspective of Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist, speaking at this score is assessed in terms of grammatical competence, textual competence, and illocutionary competence (see Table 10). All components of these three competences are rated equally as 4. The speaker at this level displays good control of grammar and vocabulary. S/he uses basic and complex sentence structures appropriately. Despite the fact that some slight errors are evident, meaning remains clear. Intelligibility is also not affected by minor difficulties with pronunciation or intonation. The components of textual competence are very important as well, since coherence and connection of ideas are mentioned in the categories general description and topic development. In the same vein, the importance of two components of illocutionary competence is emphasized. The speaker at score 4 is able to express relevant ideas with clear relationships. Although s/he may have some minor lapses or difficulties when delivering the message, for example, with pronunciation, intonation, grammar or vocabulary, s/he succeeds in producing a sustained and highly intelligible response.

In the light of the above, I can conclude that speakers tested by TOEFL receive score 4 if they generate speech that is acceptable both in

content and form. With respect to content, they should produce a well-developed and coherent response, which responds to the demands of the task. As regards form, their response should display knowledge of lexicogrammatical aspects as well as of pronunciation and intonation.

In sum, the TOEFL independent speaking rubrics have been analyzed with the help of Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist and rating instrument. Taken together the results of this analysis, I argue that the TOEFL rubrics include the three components of communicative ability, which are grammatical competence, textual competence, and illocutionary competence. The components of each competence, except for the two components of illocutionary competence called manipulative and imaginative functions that are not involved, are present at an advanced level in the score of 4. In addition, sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence are not involved across any of the TOEFL independent speaking rubrics.

Having analyzed the TOEFL rubrics, I would like to turn the focus to the IELTS speaking band descriptors. The analysis of each band descriptor will be provided in section 4.2.

4.2 The IELTS speaking scale

The description of the two lowest bands, that is, Band 0 and Band 1, is provided in Table 11.

Table 11
IELTS speaking descriptor for Band 0 and Band 1

Band	Fluency and coherence	Lexical resource	Grammatical range and accuracy	Pronunciation
1	• no communication possible • no rateable language			
0	• does no attend			

As can be seen in this description, Band 0 refers to candidates who are not present at a test (see Table 11). Test takers gets Band 1 if their oral performance is impossible to rate or if they are not able to communicate anything. As can be seen later on, IELTS emphasizes form and temporal aspects of speech more than content where these are assessed across all categories: Fluency and Coherence, Lexical Resource, Grammatical Range and Accuracy, and Pronunciation.

Table 12 presents the description of Band 2, and Table 13 presents Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist for this band.

Table 12

IELTS speaking descriptor for Band 2

Band	Fluency and coherence	Lexical resource	Grammatical range and accuracy	Pronunciation
2	• pauses lengthily before most words • little communication possible	• only produces isolated words or memorized utterances	• cannot produce basic sentence forms	• speech is often unintelligible

Table 13

Communicative Language Abilities checklist for Band 2

0 = not involved, 1 = somewhat involved, 2 = critical basic/very much,
3 = critical intermediate, 4 = critical advanced

	Item #	Band 2
Grammatical competence	LEX	1
	MOR	1
	STX	0
	PG	1
Textual competence	COH	0
	ORG	0
Illocutionary competence	IDE	0
	MAN	0
	HEU	2
	IMG	0
Sociolinguistic competence	DIA	0
	REG	0
Strategic competence	STC	0

As can be seen in Table 12, the speech of an IELTS candidate which is rated Band 2 contains a lot of pauses, and, as a result, little communication is observed. Lexical resource enables the speaker to produce single words or memorized phrases. In addition, the speaker lacks the ability to build up basic sentence structures. From the perspective of the interlocutor, Band 2 speech is usually unintelligible. From this description, it can be argued that Band 2 places a great

emphasis on grammar, vocabulary, and intonation, as well as on temporal aspects of speaking such as pauses.

The analysis of Band 2 from the perspective of Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist demonstrates that L2 speaking, at this level, is assessed in terms of grammatical competence and illocutionary competence (see Table 13). However, the components of these competences are not rated equally. As regards grammatical competence, lexis, morphology and phonology are rated 1 because, as can be seen in the descriptor, the speech of Band 2 candidate displays very limited knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Only one component of illocutionary competence, heuristic functions, is involved in L2 speaking. As these language functions pertain to the use of language in order to extend knowledge, and Band 2 candidate's oral performance is based only on memorized words or phrases, this component is rated 2. Another component of illocutionary competence, manipulative functions, is not assessed across any of the IELTS speaking band descriptors. The components ideational and imaginative functions are not involved in L2 speaking at Band 2, but they are involved in L2 speaking from Band 3 and Band 7, respectively. The components of sociolinguistic competence dialect and register are not assessed across any of the IELTS speaking band descriptors. Consequently, they will not be mentioned again in the context of the IELTS speaking band descriptors. Finally, strategic competence is not involved at Band 2, though is involved from Band 4 onwards.

In conclusion, this analysis shows that at Band 2 the speaker is required to display language knowledge. Moreover, the temporal aspect of speaking is assessed in terms of pauses, which are very noticeable before most words. Content is very limited because Band 2 candidates are limited in their ability to convey messages. Thus, at Band 2, formal and temporal aspects of speaking are more paid attention to than content.

Band 3 is the next band to be discussed. Its description across the four criteria is presented in Table 14 and the analysis of Band 3 from the perspective of Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist is presented in Table 15.

Table 14
IELTS speaking descriptor for Band 3

Band	Fluency and coherence	Lexical resource	Grammatical range and accuracy	Pronunciation
3	• speaks with long pauses • has limited ability to link simple sentences • gives only simple responses and is frequently unable to convey basic message	• uses simple vocabulary to convey personal information • has insufficient vocabulary for less familiar topics	• attempts basic sentence forms but with limited success, or relies on apparently memorized utterances • makes numerous errors except in memorized expressions	• shows some of the features of Band 2 and some, but not all, the positive features of Band 4

Table 15
Communicative Language Abilities checklist for Band 3
0 = not involved, 1 = somewhat involved, 2 = critical basic/very much,
3 = critical intermediate, 4 = critical advanced

	Item #	Band 3
Grammatical competence	LEX	1
	MOR	1
	STX	1
	PG	1
Textual competence	COH	1
	ORG	0
Illocutionary competence	IDE	1
	MAN	0
	HEU	2
	IMG	0
Sociolinguistic competence	DIA	0
	REG	0
Strategic competence	STC	0

According to the description in Table 14, Band 3 candidates are able to provide only simple responses with long pauses. Band 3 speakers are frequently unable to express basic meaning. Their vocabulary and grammar are also basic. Consequently, candidates at Band 3 have

difficulty to build simple sentence structures as well as to link them. In addition, their response is heavily based on error-free memorized expressions. In the category pronunciation, Band 3 candidates demonstrate some of the features of Band 2 and 4. All in all, it can be argued that the descriptor for Band 3 places emphasis on fluency, coherence, and pronunciation. In terms of lexicogrammatical aspects, the descriptor mentions the level of grammatical and vocabulary control. It specifies that the range of vocabulary is limited to familiar topics such as personal information. As for grammar, basic sentence forms and memorized expressions are produced. Therefore, at this point of the analysis, I may claim that formal and temporal aspects continue to receive a greater emphasis than content at this level of proficiency.

In regard to Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist presented in Table 15, the analysis of the descriptor for Band 3 demonstrates that this level of proficiency is assessed in terms of grammatical competence, textual competence, and illocutionary competence. However, they are not rated equally. Similarly to the previous band, the components lexis, morphology, and phonology are rated 1. The component syntax is rated 1 because a Band 3 candidate is able to produce memorized expressions and some basic sentences. For the same reason, the component cohesion is rated 1. In addition, a Band 3 candidate tends to connect these sentences but this ability is limited. Two components of illocutionary competence are assessed in Band 3. The component ideational functions is rated 1 because Band 3 candidates can provide personal information based on the vocabulary they know. Moreover, these speakers attempt to communicate basic information but most of the time without success. As for heuristic functions, this component is rated 2 because the language use of Band 3 candidates is heavily relied on memorized words and expressions, i.e. conscious memorizing. When they try to communicate something employing new words and expressions, numerous errors occur.

To conclude the analysis of Band 3, I argue that speakers at this level of proficiency will be required to demonstrate language knowledge more than to express ideas. The response is assessed in terms of lexicogrammatical aspects and pronunciation as well as coherence and fluency. Moreover, content begins to be emphasized from Band 3.

Band 4 is the next band of IELTS speaking band descriptors and its description is presented in Table 16, which is followed by Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist for this band presented in Table 17.

Table 16
IELTS speaking descriptor for Band 4

Band	Fluency and coherence	Lexical resource	Grammatical range and accuracy	Pronunciation
4	• cannot respond without noticeable pauses and may speak slowly, with frequent repetition and self-correction • links basic sentences but with repetitious use of simple connectives and some breakdowns in coherence	• is able to talk about familiar topics but can only convey basic meaning on unfamiliar topics and makes frequent errors in word choice • rarely attempts to paraphrase	• produces basic sentence forms and some correct simple sentences but subordinate structures are rare • errors are frequent and may lead to misunderstanding	• uses a limited range of pronunciation features • attempts to control features but lapses are frequent • mispronun-ciations are frequent and cause some difficulty for the listener

Table 17
Communicative Language Abilities checklist for Band 4
0 = not involved, 1 = somewhat involved, 2 = critical basic/very much, 3 = critical intermediate, 4 = critical advanced

	Item #	Band 4
Grammatical competence	LEX	2
	MOR	2
	STX	2
	PG	2
Textual competence	COH	2
	ORG	1
Illocutionary competence	IDE	1
	MAN	0
	HEU	2
	IMG	0
Sociolinguistic competence	DIA	0
	REG	0
Strategic competence	STC	1

As can be seen in Table 16, this description provides more information about the features of IELTS candidates than the bands discussed previously. According to the description of responses at this level of proficiency do not have noticeable pauses, though slow flow of speech with numerous repetitions and self-corrections is present. As for coherence, a Band 4 candidate can connect basic sentences using simple connectors. In the category language use, s/he has sufficient range of vocabulary to discuss familiar topics. However, this category highlights that this speaker can express ideas on unfamiliar topic but only basic meaning is provided, and errors in word choice occur frequently. Paraphrasing is a part of a Band 4 candidate's discourse. Knowledge of syntax is mentioned in two categories - fluency and coherence and grammatical range and accuracy. Grammatical errors are frequent in sentence structures. From the perspective of the listener, common mispronunciations lead to difficulties with intelligibility. Thus, I argue that at this level formal and temporal aspects of speaking ability are again more emphasized than content. Although this band descriptor provides information on content and coherence, linguistic aspects are also more specified at this level.

With respect to Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist, Table 17 shows that speaking at this band is assessed in terms of grammatical competence, textual competence, illocutionary competence, and strategic competence. However, they are not rated equally. The components of grammatical competence are rated 2 because a Band 4 candidate has some basic knowledge of vocabulary and grammar. In addition, his or her pronunciation may cause some difficulty in understanding because s/he lacks some pronunciation features. The component cohesion is rated 2 and the component rhetorical organization is rated 1. The speaker demonstrates his or her ability to link basic sentences into connected discourse. However, the use of simple connectors is repetitive. Moreover, when providing some information, lapses in the consistency of ideas occur frequently. Ideational functions and heuristic functions are rated 1 and 2, respectively. This rating is similar to Band 3 because the discrepancy between the two bands in these aspects is not significant. Finally, strategic competence is rated 1 because Band 4 speakers rarely resort to such strategies as paraphrasing.

The analysis of Band 4 shows that this proficiency level is rated in terms of content, form, and temporal aspects. However, formal and temporal aspects are more heavily stressed than content in this band descriptor. In the process of assessment, it seems that IELTS raters pay

a great attention to the linguistics aspects mentioned in the description such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. There is little information about discourse coherence and content.

The description for Band 5 can be read in Table 18 and its analysis in terms of Bachman's (1990) CLA checklist is presented in Table 19.

Table 18

IELTS speaking descriptor for Band 5

Band	Fluency and coherence	Lexical resource	Grammatical range and accuracy	Pronunciation
5	• usually maintains flow of speech but uses repetitions, self-corrections and/or slow speech to keep going • may overuse certain connectives and discourse markers • produces simple speech fluently, but communication causes fluency problems	• manages to talk about familiar and unfamiliar topics but uses vocabulary with limited flexibility • attempts to use paraphrase but with mixed success	• produces basic sentence forms with reasonable accuracy • uses a limited range of more complex structures, but these usually contain errors and may cause some comprehension problems	• shows all the positive features of Band 4 and some, but not all, the positive features of Band 6

Table 19

Communicative Language Abilities checklist for Band 5

0 = not involved, 1 = somewhat involved, 2 = critical basic/very much,
3 = critical intermediate, 4 = critical advanced

	Item #	Band 5
Grammatical competence	LEX	2
	MOR	2
	STX	2
	PG	2
Textual competence	COH	2
	ORG	2
Illocutionary competence	IDE	2
	MAN	0
	HEU	2
	IMG	0
Sociolinguistic competence	DIA	0
	REG	0
Strategic competence	STC	1

As can be seen in Table 18, the speech of an IELTS candidate for Band 5 is characterized in terms of fluency and coherence as sustained flow with repetitions and self-corrections. Simple discourse sounds fluent, that is, it does not present long pauses or unnecessary hesitation. However, when the speaker attempts to produce a more complex one, fluency problems occur. Connectors and discourse markers may be overused. The speaker has sufficient lexical resource to discuss familiar and unfamiliar topics, but this use is not flexible. Grammatical range is discussed in terms of the sentence structure use. A Band 5 candidate is able to produce basic sentences, which are reasonably accurate. As for complex sentences, this use is rather limited because of the amount of errors that may lead to miscomprehension. Similarly to Band 3, the category pronunciation does not provide specific information. Pronunciation at Band 5 is characterized by all positive features of Band 4 and just some of Band 6. Thus, the descriptor for Band 5 places more emphasis on content in comparison to the previous band descriptors. Here, IELTS candidates should attempt to provide more complex communication, which involves expression of ideas on familiar as well

as on unfamiliar topics. Nevertheless, the importance of form and temporal aspects continues to predominate over content.

From Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist, as presented in Table 19, the analysis of Band 5 descriptor shows that speaking at this proficiency level is assessed with respect to grammatical competence, textual competence, illocutionary competence, and strategic competence. The first three competences are rated equally, except for two components of illocutionary competence - manipulative and imaginative functions - that are rated 0. As mentioned above, Band 5 candidates have sufficient grammatical and vocabulary control to express ideas on familiar and unfamiliar topics. Their pronunciation is in between Band 4 and 6. With regard to textual competence, a Band 5 candidate uses connectives and discourse markers in speaking. However, the overuse of these cohesive devices may also happen. The components ideational and heuristic functions, which relate to expression of ideas and extension of knowledge, are also rated 2. Finally, strategic competence is rated 1, which means it is somewhat involved in speaking at this band. A Band 5 candidate attempts to paraphrase some ideas, but this does not always happen successfully.

Based on the above analysis, I conclude that in order to be scored at Band 5, IELTS candidates are required to demonstrate their ability to express ideas on familiar and unfamiliar topics. In addition, their simple discourse should be fluent and reasonably accurate.

Band 6 is the next band under analysis. Table 20 contains its description, and Table 21 presents Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist for this band.

Table 20
IELTS speaking descriptor for Band 6

Band	Fluency and coherence	Lexical resource	Grammatical range and accuracy	Pronunciation
6	• is willing to speak at length, though may lose coherence at times due to occasional repetition, self-correction or hesitation • uses a range of connectives and discourse markers but not always appropriately	• has a wide enough vocabulary to discuss topics at length and make meaning clear in spite of inappropriacies • generally paraphrases successfully	• uses a mix of and complex structures, but with limited flexibility • may make frequent mistakes with complex structures, though these rarely cause comprehension problems	• uses a range of pronunciation features with mixed control • shows some effective use of features but this is not sustained • can generally be understood throughout, though mis-pronunciation of individual words or sounds reduces clarity at times

Table 21
Communicative Language Abilities checklist for Band 6
0 = not involved, 1 = somewhat involved, 2 = critical basic/very much,
3 = critical intermediate, 4 = critical advanced

	Item #	Band 6
Grammatical competence	LEX	3
	MOR	3
	STX	3
	PG	3
Textual competence	COH	3
	ORG	2
Illocutionary competence	IDE	3
	MAN	0
	HEU	3
	IMG	0
Sociolinguistic competence	DIA	0
	REG	0
Strategic competence	STC	1

As can be seen in Table 20, the oral performance of an IELTS candidate for Band 6 is characterized as limited in terms of coherence and fluency. A Band 6 candidate possesses a wide vocabulary. His or her discourse contains simple as well as complex sentence structures, but flexible use of these structures is limited. When employing complex structures in discourse, frequent mistakes take place. However, these rarely lead to miscomprehension. In addition, a Band 6 candidate demonstrates a mixed control of pronunciation features. Although discourse is generally understood, some mispronounced words or sounds affect comprehension. It is important to notice that the Band 6 descriptor refers to the word *appropriacy* when discussing the use of connectives and discourse markers as well as of vocabulary. This places emphasis on formal aspects of speech rather than of content. Moreover, a Band 6 candidate reaches clarity in meaning with the help of lexical resources. And what may reduce this clarity is mispronunciation of single words or sounds.

In reference to the analysis from the perspective of Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist presented in Table 21, speaking at this proficiency level is assessed in terms of grammatical competence, textual competence, illocutionary competence, and strategic competence. Grammatical competence is more important at this level. All components of grammatical competence are rated 3. A better control of vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation is noticed at this band. In reference to the components of textual competence, cohesion is rated 3 and rhetorical organization is rated 2. Candidates at Band 6 show their ability to speak at length where a range of connectives and discourse markers are utilized. However, this use may not always be appropriate. In addition, when they provide lengthy discourse their message may not always be sensible. This is a result of some rare repetitions, self-corrections or hesitations. The component of illocutionary competence, ideational functions, is rated 3 because IELTS candidates for Band 6 can discuss topics at length expressing clear meaning. As regards the other component, heuristic functions, it is rated 3 because speakers expand their knowledge of language by trying to produce lengthy discourse exercising complex sentence structures. Facing comprehension problems, they solve them and, as a result, obtain some language knowledge. Finally, strategic competence is somewhat involved at Band 6. These candidates resort to paraphrasing and this use is generally successful. Concluding this analysis, I reiterate my assumption that formal and temporal aspects continue to have more emphasis than content in Band 6 descriptor.

Table 22 and Table 23 present the description of Band 7 and Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist for this band, respectively.

Table 22

IELTS speaking descriptor for Band 7

Band	Fluency and coherence	Lexical resource	Grammatical range and accuracy	Pronunciation
7	• speaks at length without noticeable effort or loss of coherence • may demonstrate language-related hesitation at times, or some repetition and/or self-correction • uses a range of connectives and discourse markers with some flexibility	• uses vocabulary resource flexibly to discuss a variety of topics • uses some less common and idiomatic vocabulary and shows some awareness of style and collocation, with some inappropriate choices • uses paraphrase effectively	• uses a range of complex structures with some flexibility • frequently produces error-free sentences, though some grammatical mistakes persist	• shows all the positive features of Band 6 and some, but not all, the positive features of Band 8

Table 23

Communicative Language Abilities checklist for Band 7

0 = not involved, 1 = somewhat involved, 2 = critical basic/very much,
3 =`critical intermediate, 4 = critical advanced

	Item #	Band 7
Grammatical competence	LEX	3
	MOR	3
	STX	3
	PG	3
Textual competence	COH	3
	ORG	3
Illocutionary competence	IDE	3
	MAN	0
	HEU	3
	IMG	2
Sociolinguistic competence	DIA	0
	REG	0
Strategic competence	STC	2

According to the description presented in Table 22, the speech of Band 7 candidates presents a flexible control of vocabulary and grammar, which enables them to discuss a variety of topics as well as to produce error-free sentences. Some less common vocabulary and idiomatic expressions become a part of his or her discourse. In regard to fluency and coherence, Band 7 candidates are able to produce a lengthy discourse effortlessly and without losing coherence. These candidates also show the ability to use various connectives and discourse markers somewhat flexibly. However, repetition and/or self-correction may occur in speech. In reference to pronunciation, it is characterized in terms of all the positive features of Band 6 and just some of Band 8. Thus, this band descriptor also indicates formal and temporal aspects as of greater importance than content. Control of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation features as well fluency and coherence is essential for IELTS test takers to obtain a high band like Band 7.

The analysis of the descriptor for Band 7 from the perspective of Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist suggests that speaking at this proficiency level is assessed in terms of grammatical competence,

textual competence, illocutionary competence, and strategic competence (see Table 23). All components of grammatical competence and textual competence are rated equally as 3. A Band 7 candidate has good lexical and grammatical resource. Nevertheless, some inappropriacy in word choice or grammatical mistakes happens. Knowledge of phonology is somewhere in between Bands 6 and 8. Moreover, candidates at Band 7 show the ability to use various connectives and discourse markers somewhat flexibly. They can also produce lengthy discourse effortlessly. Ideational and heuristic functions are rated similarly to the previous band, that is, 3. In addition, candidates at Band 7 have good vocabulary resources to express ideas on a range of topics. However, they still make some mistakes, for example, in word collocation. Noticing these mistakes, they are able to correct them and, as a result, extend their language knowledge. Such extension happens in other problem-solving situations. In addition, imaginative functions get involved at this proficiency level. This component of illocutionary competence is rated 2. Band 7 candidates enrich their language with the use of some idiomatic expressions. Finally, strategic competence is rated 2. Speakers use a similar to the previous bands strategy, that is, paraphrasing, but the use of this strategy is effective. Therefore, this analysis shows that at Band 7 candidates will need to demonstrate knowledge of lexicogrammatical aspects as well as control of temporal aspects more than ability to elaborate on ideas. As a result, I argue that it is formal and temporal aspects, more than content, that receive the greatest emphasis in speaking.

The description of Band 8 is presented in Table 24. Table 25 presents its analysis from the perspective of Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist.

Table 24
IELTS speaking descriptor for Band 8

Band	Fluency and coherence	Lexical resource	Grammatical range and accuracy	Pronunciation
8	• speaks fluently with only occasional repetition or self-correction; hesitation is usually content-related and only to search for language • develops topics coherently and appropriately	• uses a wide vocabulary resource readily and flexibly to convey precise meaning • uses less common and idiomatic vocabulary skillfully, with occasional inaccuracies • uses paraphrase effectively as required	• uses a wide range of structures flexibly • produces a majority of error-free sentences with only very occasional inappropriacies or basic/nonsystematic errors	• uses a wide range of pronunciation features • sustains flexible use of features, with only occasional lapses • is easy to understand throughout; L1 accent has minimal effect on intelligibility

Table 25
Communicative Language Abilities checklist for Band 8
**0 = not involved, 1 = somewhat involved, 2 = critical basic/very much,
3 = critical intermediate, 4 = critical advanced**

	Item #	Band 8
Grammatical competence	LEX	4
	MOR	4
	STX	4
	PG	4
Textual competence	COH	4
	ORG	4
Illocutionary competence	IDE	4
	MAN	0
	HEU	4
	IMG	4
Sociolinguistic competence	DIA	0
	REG	0
Strategic competence	STC	2

According to the description in Table 24, Band 8 candidates demonstrate fluency where rare repetitions or self-corrections occur. The response is characterized as coherent and appropriate. As for lexical resource, it is sufficient to express precise meaning. Moreover, candidates at Band 8 make use of less common and idiomatic expressions in their responses with some inaccuracy. Paraphrasing is done effectively. Their speech contains mainly error-free sentences. However, basic or nonsystematic errors can be present. From the perspective of the listener, they are understood effortlessly because of a variety of pronunciation features that they use. Finally, in terms of L1 accent, it minimally affects intelligibility. As a result, I can argue that the description of Band 8 emphasizes fluency, coherence and relevance, which are described in the category fluency and coherence. It is important to highlight that the category lexical resource describes the ability of IELTS candidates to convey precise meaning. Control of vocabulary and grammar is discussed in the categories lexical resource and grammatical range and accuracy, respectively. In addition, the importance of form is present in the category pronunciation, where pronunciation features and effect of L1 accent are described. Therefore, at this point of the analysis it can be argued that content as well as form and temporal aspects receive equal emphasis in speaking.

The analysis of the descriptor for Band 8 from the perspective of Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist shows that speaking at this band is assessed in terms of grammatical competence, textual competence, illocutionary competence, and strategic competence (see Table 25). Grammatical competence and textual competence are rated 4. Candidates at Band 8 display good knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. As for the components of textual competence, they are rated 4 because Band 8 candidates are able to develop responses with coherence. In regard to illocutionary competence, ideational, heuristic and imaginative functions are rated equally as 4. They demonstrate the ability to discuss a variety of topics flexibly. When some occasional inaccuracies or inappropriacies occur, Band 8 candidates are able to correct them. As a result, they achieve better intelligibility. With respect to imaginative functions, candidates at Band 8 use figurative language in their discourse in the form of idioms skillfully. However, occasional inaccuracies may take place. Finally, strategic competence is rated 2, that is, this competence is very much involved in speaking because they are able to paraphrase effectively.

In the light of the above analysis, I argue that the descriptor for Band 8 of IELTS places equal emphasis on formal and temporal aspects,

fluency, coherence, but also relevance and content. In terms of lexicogrammatical aspects, the band descriptor mentions a wide vocabulary as well as grammar resources, which enable the speaker to develop topics coherently and appropriately when expressing precise meaning.

The last band under analysis in the context of the IELTS speaking band descriptors is Band 9. The description of IELTS candidates' performance is presented in Table 26 and the rating according to Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist for this band is presented in Table 27.

Table 26

IELTS speaking descriptor for Band 9

Band	Fluency and coherence	Lexical resource	Grammatical range and accuracy	Pronunciation
9	• speaks fluently with only rare repetition or self-correction; any hesitation is content-related rather than to find words or grammar • speaks coherently with fully appropriate cohesive features • develops topics fully and appropriately	• uses vocabulary with full flexibility and precision in all topics • uses idiomatic language naturally and accurately	• uses a full range of structures naturally and appropriately • produces consistently accurate structures apart from 'slips' characteristic of native speaker speech	• uses a full of range of pronunciation features with precision and subtlety • sustains flexible use of features throughout • is effortless to understand

Table 27
Communicative Language Abilities checklist for Band 9
0 = not involved, 1 = somewhat involved, 2 = critical basic/very much,
3 = critical intermediate, 4 = critical advanced

	Item #	Band 9
Grammatical competence	LEX	4
	MOR	4
	STX	4
	PG	4
Textual competence	COH	4
	ORG	4
Illocutionary competence	IDE	4
	MAN	0
	HEU	4
	IMG	4
Sociolinguistic competence	DIA	0
	REG	0
Strategic competence	STC	2

As can be read in Table 26, a Band 9 candidate produces fluent speech. In Band 9 speech, only rare repetitions or self-corrections can be noticed. Hesitations are related to content and not to vocabulary or grammar issues. As for coherence, Band 9 candidates have a good control of cohesive devices and provide a fully developed and appropriate response. The range of vocabulary enables the candidate to demonstrate full flexibility and precision across all topics. Moreover, idiomatic expressions sound natural and accurate. In the category grammatical range and accuracy, the aspects of speaking that are assessed are range, appropriacy and accuracy of grammar structures. Finally, in terms of pronunciation, speech production at Band 9 in IELTS is characterized as precise, subtle, and effortless to understand. Thus, the descriptor of Band 9 seems to place equal emphasis on content, form and temporal aspects. Candidates at Band 9 are expected to produce coherent and fully developed discourse where hesitations are only content-related. The range of vocabulary and grammar is wide and is used naturally and accurately across all topics. In addition, because of speakers' pronunciation, the response is highly intelligible.

According to the analysis of the descriptor of Band 9 on IELTS from the perspective of Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist, speaking at this band is assessed with respect to grammatical competence, textual competence, illocutionary competence, and strategic competence (see Table 27). All components of these competences are very important at this proficiency level. The components of grammatical competence are described in their respective categories, that is, lexical resource, grammatical range and accuracy, and pronunciation. In regard to textual competence, it is examined in the category fluency and coherence, which describes candidate's control of cohesive devices as well as the degree of topic development. In reference to language functions, ideational, heuristic and imaginative functions are discussed in at least 2 categories (fluency and coherence and lexical resource). There is no information about candidates' ability to use strategies. By suggesting that Band 9 candidates have all the positive features of candidates at Band 8, I assume that the former also resort to paraphrasing and use this achievement strategy effectively. Thus, strategic competence is rated 2, that is, it is very much involved at this band. Finally, this analysis leads to the conclusion that candidates at Band 9 will be required to convey ideas on the topic, to demonstrate good control of linguistic items, and to speak fluently.

In sum, the IELTS speaking band descriptors have been analyzed in terms of the components of CLA framework proposed by Bachman (1990). Each band has been rated according to the CLA rating instrument from 0 to 5 (Bachman *et al.*, 1995). Taken together, I argue that the IELTS speaking band descriptors involve the following components of communicative language ability: grammatical competence, textual competence, illocutionary competence, and strategic competence. The components of the first three competences are involved at their advanced level in Band 9. Sociolinguistic competence and one component of illocutionary competence, manipulative functions, are not involved across any of the IELTS band descriptors.

Having analyzed the IELTS band descriptors, I now turn to the analysis of the ACTFL proficiency guidelines for speaking. Each proficiency level will be analyzed in the next section 4.3

4.3 The ACTFL speaking scale

The analysis of the ACTFL proficiency guidelines will start with its lowest proficiency level, Novice Low. The description of the Novice-Low level is provided next and the results of its analysis according to Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist are presented in

Table 28.

NOVICE LOW
Speakers at the Novice-Low level have no real functional ability and, because of their pronunciation, they may be unintelligible. Given adequate time and familiar cues, they may be able to exchange greetings, give their identity, and name a number of familiar objects from their immediate environment. They are unable to perform functions or handle topics pertaining to the Intermediate level, and cannot therefore participate in a true conversational exchange.

Table 28

Communicative Language Abilities checklist for Novice Low
0 = not involved, 1 = somewhat involved, 2 = critical basic/very much,
3 = critical intermediate, 4 = critical advanced

	Item #	Novice Low
Grammatical competence	LEX	1
	MOR	1
	STX	0
	PG	1
Textual competence	COH	0
	ORG	0
Illocutionary competence	IDE	0
	MAN	1
	HEU	0
	IMG	0
Sociolinguistic competence	DIA	0
	REG	0
Strategic competence	STC	0

According to the description of the Novice-Low level, speakers at this level of the ACTFL speaking scale have a very limited ability to communicate. The aspects of speech production that are mentioned in the rubric include pronunciation and intelligibility, but the emphasis in the description of oral performance is given to functions of language which, at this level, are exchange greetings, give information about their identity and name objects they are familiar with. However, Novice-Low speakers cannot take part in conversations. Finally, this

level advances information about the Intermediate level. Novice-Low speakers cannot discuss topics that are related to the Intermediate level, such as self and family, some daily activities and personal preferences, purchasing or ordering food. Thus, I can argue that the description of this level seems to emphasize the importance of functional speaking ability. Looking at the situation, in which Novice-Low speakers are able to participate, it is possible to claim that from the very low level of proficiency of the ACTFL, it is content, more than form, that receives the greatest emphasis in speaking. Later on we will see that communicating meaning has strong influence of this speaking scale.

Analyzing the rubric from Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist perspective, we can see that speaking at this level is assessed only in terms of grammatical and illocutionary competences (see Table 28). The components lexis, morphology and phonology are somewhat involved. Novice-Low speakers have limited lexical, morphological and phonological language and that is why their attempts to communicate may not always be successful. The component syntax is not involved since the rubric does not mention any aspect of grammar because speakers are not able to participate in a real conversation. The components coherence and rhetorical organization are not involved due to the speakers' inability to provide spoken discourse. In regard to language functions, just manipulative functions are somewhat involved at this level because Novice-low speakers are able greet their interlocutors and introduce themselves. The ACTFL speaking scale does not discuss dialect as a variation of spoken language in use across all its proficiency levels. Thus, the component dialect is graded zero and it will not be mentioned further. As for the component register, it is not involved at this level, but is involved from the Advanced level on. In the same vein, strategic competence is not involved at this level, but we can see that Novice-Mid speakers demonstrate some ability to use strategies.

Taken together, the analysis of the Novice-Low level shows that speakers will be required to demonstrate their ability to transmit meaning, which may be obscured because of their limited knowledge of phonology. However, they are able to produce some information if adequate time and familiar cues are at their disposal. It is important to notice that the description of oral performance at the Novice-Low level of the ACTFL speaking scale does not make any explicit reference to grammatical aspects. Therefore, at this point of the analysis it is possible to argue that for the ACTFL lowest proficiency level, it is content more than form that receives the greatest emphasis in speaking.

The description of the next level, that is, Novice Mid, is presented below. The results of the analysis of its rubric according to Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist are presented in Table 29.

NOVICE MID

Speakers at the Novice-Mid level communicate minimally and with difficulty by using a number of isolated words and memorized phrases limited by the particular context in which the language has been learned. When responding to direct questions, they may utter only two or three words at a time or an occasional stock answer. They pause frequently as they search for simple vocabulary or attempt to recycle their own and their interlocutor's words. Because of hesitations, lack of vocabulary, inaccuracy, or failure to respond appropriately, Novice-Mid speakers may be understood with great difficulty even by sympathetic interlocutors accustomed to dealing with non-natives. When called on to handle topics by performing functions associated with the Intermediate level, they frequently resort to repetition, words from their native language, or silence.

Table 29
Communicative Language Abilities checklist for Novice Mid
0 = not involved, 1 = somewhat involved, 2 = critical basic/very much, 3 = critical intermediate, 4 = critical advanced

	Item #	Novice Mid
Grammatical competence	LEX	1
	MOR	1
	STX	0
	PG	1
Textual competence	COH	0
	ORG	0
Illocutionary competence	IDE	0
	MAN	1
	HEU	2
	IMG	0
Sociolinguistic competence	DIA	0
	REG	0
Strategic competence	STC	1

As can be seen from this description, the rubric places emphasis to communication mentioning that Novice-Mid speakers have minimal

communicative ability. Their speech is characterized by having various pauses and hesitations, lack of vocabulary, inaccuracy, or irrelevance to the question. When Novice-Mid speakers participate in conversations they rely greatly on isolated words and memorized phrases. Their oral performance may be understood with big difficulty by sympathetic interlocutors who are accustomed to converse with non-natives. Here, we again have information about the Intermediate level. When Novice-Low speakers are asked to put across a message on the topics related to the Intermediate level, they may resort to repetitions, L1 words or simply refuse to talk. Thus, the rubric for the Novice-Mid level of the ACTFL describes temporal aspects of speech production (pauses and hesitations) and places emphasis on vocabulary, though no significant mention of grammar is made. As a result, I can argue that in this proficiency level content again receives more emphasis than form.

Now turning to Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist, we can see that L2 speaking at the Novice-Mid level is assessed in terms of grammatical competence, illocutionary competence, and strategic competence (see Table 29). Grammatical competence is assessed in terms of lexis, morphology, and phonology, which are rated equally as 1. The component syntax is not involved yet because Novice-Mid speakers fail to build up complete sentences. In regard to illocutionary competence, two components (manipulative functions and heuristic functions) are involved. However, these components are not rated equally. The component manipulative functions is rated 1 because Novice-Mid speakers participate in conversation minimally, but are able to manipulate it somehow. The component heuristic functions is rated 2 because these speakers make use of learned words or phrases, though this use is rather limited. Finally, Novice-Mid speakers apply some strategies trying to compensate for the deficiency in language abilities. The first strategy I focus on is code switching. Novice-Mid speakers may resort to their native language when their interlocutors speak the same language. Dealing with the topics of a higher demand, that is, related to the Intermediate level, Novice-Mid speakers may simply stay silent. This is avoidance strategy. As the strategies applied are not very efficient, i.e. Novice-Mid speakers may be understood with great difficulty, strategic competence is rated 1.

Having analyzed the Novice-Mid level with the help of Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist, I can conclude that at this level the rubric does not emphasize form in terms of grammatical control. After reading this description, we can perceive that knowledge of vocabulary is discussed only in terms of meaning transmission in conversation. There

is also a mention of the temporal aspects of speaking, which are pauses and hesitations. Therefore, at this point of the analysis, I continue to argue that in the ACTFL lowest levels it is content and temporal aspects of speaking and not form that receive the greatest emphasis.

Finally, the last sublevel at the ACTFL Novice level is Novice High. The description of this level is cited next and the results of the analysis of its rubric according to Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist can be read in Table 30.

NOVICE HIGH

Speakers at the Novice-High level are able to handle a variety of tasks pertaining to the Intermediate level, but are unable to sustain performance at that level. They are able to manage successfully a number of uncomplicated communicative tasks in straightforward social situations. Conversation is restricted to a few of the predictable topics necessary for survival in the target language culture, such as basic personal information, basic objects and a limited number of activities, preferences and immediate needs. Novice-High speakers respond to simple, direct questions or requests for information; they are able to ask only a very few formulaic questions when asked to do so.

Novice-High speakers are able to express personal meaning by relying heavily on learned phrases or recombinations of these and what they hear from their interlocutor. Their utterances, which consist mostly of short and sometimes incomplete sentences in the present, may be hesitant or inaccurate. On the other hand, since these utterances are frequently only expansions of learned material and stock phrases, they may sometimes appear surprisingly fluent and accurate. These speakers' first language may strongly influence their pronunciation, as well as their vocabulary and syntax when they attempt to personalize their utterances. Frequent misunderstandings may arise but, with repetition or rephrasing, Novice-High speakers can generally be understood by sympathetic interlocutors used to non-natives. When called on to handle simply a variety of topics and perform functions pertaining to the Intermediate level, a Novice-High speaker can sometimes respond in intelligible sentences, but will not be able to sustain sentence level discourse.

Table 30

Communicative Language Abilities checklist for Novice High

0 = not involved, 1 = somewhat involved, 2 = critical basic/very much,
3 = critical intermediate, 4 = critical advanced

	Item #	Novice High
Grammatical competence	LEX	2
	MOR	2
	STX	1
	PG	2
Textual competence	COH	0
	ORG	0
Illocutionary competence	IDE	1
	MAN	2
	HEU	2
	IMG	0
Sociolinguistic competence	DIA	0
	REG	0
Strategic competence	STC	1

The description of the Novice-High level presented above discusses the characteristics of its speakers. According to this description, the speech of Novice-High speakers resembles the speech of Intermediate speaker because Novice-High speakers demonstrate the ability to talk about issues that are associated with the Intermediate level. However, their performance at this level is not sustainable. Novice-High speakers are able to participate in conversations actively, but in a limited way, for example, they can respond to simple questions and ask few standard questions. In terms of their language, they attempt to build short sentences in the present tense. Moreover, the description stresses speakers' accuracy and fluency. The speech of Novice-High speakers may be fluent and accurate when they use learned material in their oral performance. The influence of L1 cannot be underestimated. Pronunciation, vocabulary and syntax may present this influence when speakers attempt to express opinion with their own words. Thus, we can notice that the rubric for the Novice-High level starts to involve information about grammar aspects. However, it continues to emphasize more content than form. In addition, the role

of intelligibility is undeniable.

From the perspective of Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist, the analysis of the Novice-High level displays that speaking at this proficiency level, as can be seen in Table 30, is assessed with respect to grammatical competence, illocutionary competence, and strategic competence. The components of grammatical competence, lexis morphology, and phonology, are rated 2, and the component syntax is rated 1. According to the description of this level, learned phrases or their recombinations are mainly employed by Novice-High speakers. Generally short and sometimes incomplete sentences characterize their speech. Moreover, the influence of L1 pronunciation may hinder the interlocutor's comprehension. Unlike Novice-Mid speakers, Novice-High speakers attempt to express their personal ideas or thoughts, though having limited language knowledge. Thus, the component of illocutionary competence, ideational functions, is rated 1. As for manipulative functions, this component is rated 2 because Novice-High speakers are able to express some personal preferences and immediate needs as well as to make some formulaic questions. As their language use is greatly based on memorized words and phrases, the component heuristic functions is rated 2. Furthermore, to overcome misunderstandings in conversations, Novice-High speakers utilize the strategy of rephrasing or repetition. These strategies can generally help to reach some mutual understanding. As a result, this competence is rated 1. Concluding the analysis of the Novice-High level, I can argue that content and temporal aspects continue to have more emphasis than form. Speakers should express ideas with some hesitancy more than display knowledge of linguistic items per se.

Having analyzed the Novice level, I turn my focus to the Intermediate level. As commented before, the Novice level description advances information about the Intermediate level, explaining what Novice speakers can or cannot do in comparison to the Intermediate speakers. The Intermediate level is divided, similarly to the Novice level, into Low, Mid, and High. The analyses of these three sublevels are presented next.

The description of the Intermediate-Low level is presented below and the results of the analysis of its rubric according to Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist are presented in Table 31.

INTERMEDIATE LOW

Speakers at the Intermediate-Low level are able to handle successfully a limited number of uncomplicated communicative tasks by creating with the language in straightforward social situations. Conversation is restricted to

some of the concrete exchanges and predictable topics necessary for survival in the target language culture. These topics relate to basic personal information covering, for example, self and family, some daily activities and personal preferences, as well as to some immediate needs, such as ordering food and making simple purchases. At the Intermediate-Low level, speakers are primarily reactive and struggle to answer direct questions or requests for information, but they are also able to ask a few appropriate questions.

Intermediate-Low speakers express personal meaning by combining and recombining into short statements what they know and what they hear from their interlocutors. Their utterances are often filled with hesitancy and inaccuracies as they search for appropriate linguistic forms and vocabulary while attempting to give form to the message. Their speech is characterized by frequent pauses, ineffective reformulations and self-corrections. Their pronunciation, vocabulary and syntax are strongly influenced by their first language but, in spite of frequent misunderstandings that require repetition or rephrasing, Intermediate-Low speakers can generally be understood by sympathetic interlocutors, particularly by those accustomed to dealing with non-natives.

Table 31

Communicative Language Abilities checklist for Intermediate Low
**0 = not involved, 1 = somewhat involved, 2 = critical basic/very much,
3 = critical intermediate, 4 = critical advanced**

	Item #	Intermediate Low
Grammatical competence	LEX	2
	MOR	2
	STX	2
	PG	2
Textual competence	COH	1
	ORG	1
Illocutionary competence	IDE	2
	MAN	2
	HEU	3
	IMG	0
Sociolinguistic competence	DIA	0
	REG	0
Strategic competence	STC	1

According to the above description, the speech of Intermediate-Low speakers is characterized by hesitancy, pauses, inaccuracies and ineffective self-corrections when they try to give form to the message. Their L1 continues to affect pronunciation, vocabulary and syntax. Moreover, they demonstrate their ability to discuss on a wide range of topics that are important for survival in a different culture. These topics include some basic personal information and expression of some immediate needs. From the perspective of the interlocutor who has experience to deal with non-native, Intermediate-Low speakers generally provide comprehensive discourse. Without any doubt, the description of these speakers leads to a conclusion that communication is greatly emphasized. This can be perceived in the specification of the examples of conversational topics. Although form starts to be included in the description of this level, at this point of the analysis, it is possible to claim that content receives more emphasis than form.

The analysis of the Intermediate-Low level from the perspective of Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist shows that speaking at this level is assessed in terms of grammatical competence, textual competence, illocutionary competence, and strategic competence (see Table 31). All components of grammatical competence are rated 2. Textual competence becomes to be assessed at this level. Intermediate-Low speakers are able to perform on some uncomplicated communicative tasks. Moreover, they can combine and recombine the information they know with the one they are exposed to in real social situations. Thus, the components cohesion and rhetorical organization are rated 1. In regard to illocutionary competence, the components ideational functions and manipulative functions are rated 2. Intermediate-Low speakers perform on a greater number of topics associated with expressing personal meaning. Furthermore, they can ask questions and request information related to their immediate needs. The component heuristic functions is rated 3 because speakers' extension of language knowledge is very high and continuous at the Intermediate-Low level. Finally, in order to overcome misunderstandings in communication, which are caused by lack of language knowledge, Intermediate-Low speakers resort to the following strategies: reformulation and rephrasing. This component of CLA is rated 1 because the oral performance is characterized by ineffective use of these strategies that leads to frequent misunderstandings. To conclude, the emphasis of content in the description of the Intermediate-Low level is sustained. Although the rubric mentions control of grammar, it specifies the components of this language dimension in a very brief outline.

Temporal aspects of speaking in terms of hesitations and pauses are mentioned as well. Nevertheless, we can see that the description of this level pays particular attention to the delivering of meaning.

The next level under analysis is Intermediate Mid. Its description can be read next and Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist for this level is presented in Table 32.

INTERMEDIATE MID

Speakers at the Intermediate-Mid level are able to handle successfully a variety of uncomplicated communicative tasks in straightforward social situations. Conversation is generally limited to those predictable and concrete exchanges necessary for survival in the target culture; these include personal information covering self, family, home, daily activities, interests and personal preferences, as well as physical and social needs, such as food, shopping, travel and lodging.

Intermediate-Mid speakers tend to function reactively, for example, by responding to direct questions or requests for information. However, they are capable of asking a variety of questions when necessary to obtain simple information to satisfy basic needs, such as directions, prices and services. When called on to perform functions or handle topics at the Advanced level, they provide some information but have difficulty linking ideas, manipulating time and aspect, and using communicative strategies, such as circumlocution.

Intermediate-Mid speakers are able to express personal meaning by creating with the language, in part by combining and recombining known elements and conversational input to make utterances of sentence length and some strings of sentences. Their speech may contain pauses, reformulations and self-corrections as they search for adequate vocabulary and appropriate language forms to express themselves. Because of inaccuracies in their vocabulary and/or pronunciation and/or grammar and/or syntax, misunderstandings can occur, but Intermediate-Mid speakers are generally understood by sympathetic interlocutors accustomed to dealing with non-natives.

Table 32

Communicative Language Abilities checklist for Intermediate Mid
**0 = not involved, 1 = somewhat involved, 2 = critical basic/very much,
3 = critical intermediate, 4 = critical advanced**

	Item #	Intermediate Mid
Grammatical competence	LEX	2
	MOR	2
	STX	2
	PG	2
Textual competence	COH	2
	ORG	2
Illocutionary competence	IDE	2
	MAN	2
	HEU	4
	IMG	0
Sociolinguistic competence	DIA	0
	REG	0
Strategic competence	STC	1

According to the description of the Intermediate-Mid level, we can see that the speech of Intermediate-Mid speakers is characterized in terms of temporal aspects (pauses), vocabulary, pronunciation, syntax, and grammar. At this level the speaker is expected to handle successfully various uncomplicated communicative tasks. These tasks are based on personal information, for example, family, hobbies, and home, and physical and social needs, for example, shopping, traveling, and lodging. Intermediate-Mid speakers are noticed to participate actively in conversations. The description of this level advances information about the Advanced level. Dealing with the topics related to the Advanced level, Intermediate-Mid speakers face difficulties with linking ideas, verbal categories such as time and aspect as well as using communicative strategies, for example, circumlocution. Therefore, the rubric of the Intermediate-Mid level seems to have a sustained importance of content, pronunciation, and temporal aspects. In terms of lexicogrammatical aspects, the rubric mentions some control of vocabulary, which is restricted to the topics, and limited control of grammar. It is important to highlight that although some inaccuracies

with vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, or syntax occur, the Intermediate-Mid speakers' discourse is generally comprehensible for interlocutors that usually deal with non-natives. Thus, at this point of analysis, I can argue that content receives the greatest emphasis in speaking at this level.

Analyzing this level from the perspective of Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist, we can see that speaking, as can be seen in Table 32, is assessed in terms of grammatical competence, textual competence, illocutionary competence, and strategic competence. Grammatical competence and textual competence are rated 2, that is, all components of these competences are involved critically at a basic level. Intermediate-Mid speakers have critical basic lexical, morphological, syntactical and phonological knowledge. As a result, their conversation topics are generally basic, for example, to give personal information or to express some physical or social need. Besides limited grammatical competence, Intermediate-Mid speakers have some problems with connecting ideas or facts. As for language functions, Intermediate-Mid speakers tend to participate more in conversations by responding to direct questions and requesting some information when needed. Here, the component manipulative functions is rated 2. Similarly, the component ideational functions is rated 2 because Intermediate-Mid speakers are able to discuss a variety of uncomplicated topics. The degree of involvement of heuristic functions is critically advanced, that is, it is rated 4, because these speakers expand their language knowledge by participating actively in conversations. They are able to use interlocutors' input in their discourse. Consequently, they develop not only grammar knowledge but also textual one. Finally, there are some strategies that these speakers tend to use in order to overcome certain challenges in communication. One of the strategies with which they have difficulty is circumlocution[22]. Reformulations may be employed at this level as well. Strategic competence is rated 1 because similarly to the previous proficiency level its speakers may resort to reformulations, but they are not successful. Misunderstandings are still present in the communication. Taken together, this analysis continues to support my assumption that content is more emphasized than form. A detailed description of speakers' communicative ability in different topics and concise information about their linguistic knowledge lead to such conclusion.

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[22] Fulcher (2003) talks about this strategy in the category of the paraphrasing strategy as its alternative.

Intermediate-High, which description is presented below, is the last sublevel to be discussed within the Intermediate level. The results of the analysis of this rubric according to Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist are presented in Table 33.

INTERMEDIATE HIGH

Intermediate-High speakers are able to converse with ease and confidence when dealing with most routine tasks and social situations of the Intermediate level. They are able to handle successfully many uncomplicated tasks and social situations requiring an exchange of basic information related to work, school, recreation, particular interests and areas of competence, though hesitation and errors may be evident.

Intermediate-High speakers handle the tasks pertaining to the Advanced level, but they are unable to sustain performance at that level over a variety of topics. With some consistency, speakers at the Intermediate High level narrate and describe in major time frames using connected discourse of paragraph length. However, their performance of these Advanced-level tasks will exhibit one or more features of breakdown, such as the failure to maintain the narration or description semantically or syntactically in the appropriate major time frame, the disintegration of connected discourse, the misuse of cohesive devises, a reduction in breadth and appropriateness of vocabulary, the failure to successfully circumlocute, or a significant amount of hesitation.

Intermediate-High speakers can generally be understood by native speakers unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives, although the dominant language is still evident (e.g. use of code-switching, false cognates, literal translations, etc.), and gaps in communication may occur.

Table 33
Communicative Language Abilities checklist for Intermediate High
**0 = not involved, 1 = somewhat involved, 2 = critical basic/very much,
3 = critical intermediate, 4 = critical advanced**

	Item #	Intermediate High
Grammatical competence	LEX	2
	MOR	2
	STX	2
	PG	2
Textual competence	COH	2
	ORG	2
Illocutionary competence	IDE	3
	MAN	2
	HEU	4
	IMG	0
Sociolinguistic competence	DIA	0
	REG	0
Strategic competence	STC	1

According to the description provided above, speakers at the Intermediate-High level of the ACTFL speaking scale can demonstrate confidence when they discuss topics related to basic information, for example, work, school, and interests. They can also handle tasks, which are associated with the Advanced level, though their performance is not sustained. It is important to mention that they can produce connected discourse while narrating and describing. Intermediate-High speakers are able to perform on the task, which is related to the Advanced level. However, their discourse presents one or more problems, for example, syntactic or semantic failures, the misuse of cohesive devices, inappropriate vocabulary, and frequent hesitations. Intelligibility is generally reached by native speakers who are not used to deal with non-natives. Thus, the rubric for the Intermediate-High level seems to emphasize content and coherence, but also temporal aspects of speaking (hesitations). However, in this description the rubric is more specific than the previous rubrics in what concerns language, making explicit indication of lexicogrammatical errors that characterize speech at this level (inappropriateness of vocabulary and major time frame).

Therefore, content again receives more emphasis than linguistic aspects, but the discrepancy is not as large as in the previous levels.

Now turning to Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist, we can see that the speech in the Intermediate-High level is assessed in terms of grammatical competence, textual competence, illocutionary competence, and strategic competence (see Table 33). The components of grammatical competence and textual competence are rated 2. Intermediate-High speakers are able to speak on a variety of uncomplicated topics at ease. However, they face difficulties with appropriateness of vocabulary, syntax and pronunciation when dealing with the Advanced level tasks. In regard to textual competence, Intermediate-High speakers provide connected discourse with some consistency when narrating or describing. The language use of Intermediate-High speakers involves ideational, manipulative, and heuristic functions. As highlighted above, they are able to discuss a variety of uncomplicated topics with ease and confidence. As a result, the component ideational functions is rated 3. The component manipulative functions is rated similar to the Intermediate-Mid level, that is, 2. The component heuristic functions is rated 4 because Intermediate-High speakers extend their language knowledge greatly. Finally, they employ some strategies. As the native language still has an influence on the target language, it also affects the use of strategies selected by these speakers. They are circumlocution, code switching, false cognates, and literal translations. These strategies pave the way towards a better understanding by native speakers who are not used to foreign speech, though some communication gaps are inevitable. Here, strategic competence is rated 1 because speaker at this level do not use the strategies appropriately and as a result some breakdowns occur in their discourse. Taken together, this analysis shows the predominance of content in speaking. Speakers at the Intermediate-High level will be required to express ideas more than to display linguistic knowledge, but this discrepancy is not so large.

Having discussed two of the ACTFL proficiency levels, that is, Novice and Intermediate, I now turn to the Advanced level that has already been mentioned before in the context of the Intermediate level. To start with, the description of its first sublevel, Advanced Low, is provided below, and the results of the analysis of its rubric according to Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist are presented in Table 34.

ADVANCED LOW
Speakers at the Advanced-Low level are able to handle a variety of communicative tasks, although somewhat haltingly at times. They

participate actively in most informal and a limited number of formal conversations on activities related to school, home, and leisure activities and, to a lesser degree, those related to events of work, current, public, and personal interest or individual relevance.

Advanced-Low speakers demonstrate the ability to narrate and describe in all major time frames (past, present and future) in paragraph length discourse, but control of aspect may be lacking at times. They can handle appropriately the linguistic challenges presented by a complication or unexpected turn of events that occurs within the context of a routine situation or communicative task with which they are otherwise familiar, though at times their discourse may be minimal for the level and strained. Communicative strategies such as rephrasing and circumlocution may be employed in such instances. In their narrations and descriptions, they combine and link sentences into connected discourse of paragraph length. When pressed for a fuller account, they tend to grope and rely on minimal discourse. Their utterances are typically not longer than a single paragraph. Structure of the dominant language is still evident in the use of false cognates, literal translations, or the oral paragraph structure of the speaker's own language rather than that of the target language.

While the language of Advanced-Low speakers may be marked by substantial, albeit irregular flow, it is typically somewhat strained and tentative, with noticeable self-correction and a certain grammatical roughness. The vocabulary of Advanced-Low speakers is primarily generic in nature.

Advanced-Low speakers contribute to the conversation with sufficient accuracy, clarity, and precision to convey their intended message without misrepresentation or confusion, and it can be understood by native speakers unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives, even though this may be achieved through repetition and restatement. When attempting to perform functions or handle topics associated with the Superior level, the linguistic quality and quantity of their speech will deteriorate significantly.

Table 34

Communicative Language Abilities checklist for Advanced Low

0 = not involved, 1 = somewhat involved, 2 = critical basic/very much,
3 = critical intermediate, 4 = critical advanced

	Item #	Advanced Low
Grammatical competence	LEX	3
	MOR	3
	STX	3
	PG	3
Textual competence	COH	2
	ORG	2
Illocutionary competence	IDE	3
	MAN	2
	HEU	4
	IMG	0
Sociolinguistic competence	DIA	0
	REG	1
Strategic competence	STC	1

As it can be noticed, the description of the Advanced-Low level is longer and more detailed than the previous ones. According to this description, speakers are able to converse on a greater number of topics. They perform better on informal situations. However, they can converse using formal language, though this use is restricted. They have a good command of English grammar. In order for their message to be comprehensible, they use different verb tenses. Yet, the use of verbal aspect is unsustainable. Words such as accuracy, clarity, and precision are used to characterize their speech. However, these traits are sufficient for the definite situations mentioned in the description, for example, related to routine or hobby. They cannot perform this way on the tasks of the Superior level. Their L1 still has some influence on L2 speaking. This influence can be noticed in the use of false cognates, literal translations, or in the way they organize oral paragraphs. Thus, I can argue the rubric for the Advanced-Low level highlights the importance of content, coherence, and relevance of ideas, but also of form. The control of grammar and vocabulary is discussed in this description, where the components of these two language dimensions are specified.

Therefore, at this point of the analysis, it is possible to claim that content and form receive similar emphasis in this level of proficiency.

The analysis of the rubric for the Advanced-Low level from the perspective of Bachman *et al.*'s (1995) CLA checklist is presented in Table 34. It shows that speech production at this level is assessed in terms of grammatical competence, textual competence, illocutionary competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. However, these competences are not rated equally. The components of grammatical competence are rated 3 because Advanced-Low speakers demonstrate a good knowledge of grammar. The components of textual competence are rated 2 because they are able to provide connected discourse not longer than a paragraph. Similarly to Intermediate-High speakers, they can combine information and use cohesive devises in order to connect ideas between sentences. With respect to language functions, Advanced-Low speakers have the same features of the Intermediate-High speech. The component ideational functions is rated 3 because of their ability to express their point of view on uncomplicated topics, mainly informally. Similarly to the Intermediate level, the component manipulative functions is rated 2. The component heuristic functions is rated 4. Advanced-Low speakers still have gaps in language knowledge and their active participation in conversations and interactions with native speakers enrich their knowledge. Moreover, Advanced-Low speakers have sensitivity to differences in register. They can differentiate the use of language according to the situation, whether formal or informal one. Thus, the component register is rated 1. When Advanced-Low speakers face some linguistic difficulties they use the following strategies: rephrasing and circumlocution in order to compensate these gaps. Here, strategic competence is rated 1 because although the speaker is able to communicate more effectively than the speakers of the previous proficiency level, he or she cannot use strategies effectively.

Having analyzed the rubric for the Advanced-Low, I can come to a conclusion that speakers at this level will be required to demonstrate their ability to express ideas in a coherent and lengthy discourse. Sufficient clarity, precision, and accuracy are typical features of the Advanced-Low level speech. The description of this level highlights that Advanced-Low speakers are able to narrate and describe in all major time frames. Therefore, I can assume that knowledge of linguistic items begin to have equal importance with content.

The next level under analysis is Advanced-Mid. Its description is cited next, and the results of its analysis according to Bachman *et al.*`s

(1995) CLA checklist are provided in Table 35.

ADVANCED MID

Speakers at the Advanced-Mid level are able to handle with ease and confidence a large number of communicative tasks. They participate actively in most informal and some formal exchanges on a variety of concrete topics relating to work, school, home, and leisure activities, as well as to events of current, public, and personal interest or individual relevance.

Advanced-Mid speakers demonstrate the ability to narrate and describe in all major time frames (past, present, and future) by providing a full account, with good control of aspect, as they adapt flexibly to the demands of the conversation. Narration and description tend to be combined and interwoven to relate relevant and supporting facts in connected, paragraph-length discourse.

Advanced-Mid speakers can handle successfully and with relative ease the linguistic challenges presented by a complication or unexpected turn of events that occurs within the context of a routine situation or communicative task with which they are otherwise familiar. Communicative strategies such as circumlocution or rephrasing are often employed for this purpose. The speech of Advanced-Mid speakers performing Advanced-level tasks is marked by substantial flow. Their vocabulary is fairly extensive although primarily generic in nature, except in the case of a particular area of specialization or interest. Dominant language discourse structures tend to recede, although discourse may still reflect the oral paragraph structure of their own language rather than that of the target language.

Advanced-Mid speakers contribute to conversations on a variety of familiar topics, dealt with concretely, with much accuracy, clarity and precision, and they convey their intended message without misrepresentation or confusion. They are readily understood by native speakers unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives. When called on to perform functions or handle topics associated with the Superior level, the quality and/or quantity of their speech will generally decline. Advanced-Mid speakers are often able to state an opinion or cite conditions; however, they lack the ability to consistently provide a structured argument in extended discourse. Advanced-Mid speakers may use a number of delaying strategies, resort to narration, description, explanation or anecdote, or simply attempt to avoid the linguistic demands of Superior-level tasks.

Table 35

Communicative Language Abilities checklist for Advanced Mid

**0 = not involved, 1 = somewhat involved, 2 = critical basic/very much,
3 = critical intermediate, 4 = critical advanced**

	Item #	Advanced Mid
Grammatical competence	LEX	3
	MOR	3
	STX	3
	PG	3
Textual competence	COH	3
	ORG	3
Illocutionary competence	IDE	3
	MAN	3
	HEU	4
	IMG	2
Sociolinguistic competence	DIA	0
	REG	2
Strategic competence	STC	2

As we can notice, this description is also long and detailed. According to it, speakers at the Advanced-Mid level are able to converse confidently and effortlessly on a wide range of topics related to their routine such as studies, work, public, and personal life. Although these speakers have quite a vast vocabulary, they tend to use general words. But this tendency is not observed when they talk about their interests. Their narrations and descriptions are expressed in connected, paragraph-length discourse, which contains all major verb tenses with good control of verbal aspect. They are able to resolve linguistic challenges, which occur in some unexpected situations, rather easily. The language of Advanced-Mid speakers is much accurate, clear, and precise. As a consequence, no misrepresentation or confusion occurs when they converse with native speakers. Here, content and form continue to have equal emphasis. We have clear indication that speech production at the Advanced-Mid level will be assessed in terms of its content as well as it formal linguistic aspects.

According to Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist, the results of the analysis show that speaking at the Advanced-Mid level is assessed in terms of grammatical competence, textual competence,

illocutionary competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence (see Table 35). All components of grammatical competence are rated 3 because Advanced-Mid speakers have a good control of vocabulary and grammar. Both components of textual competence are rated 3 as well because these speakers are able to combine narration with description. Although they are able to provide structured arguments, they cannot do it in a lengthy discourse. All four language functions are involved in the language of Advanced-Mid speakers. They take an active part in conversations. This participation implies the expression of information such as feelings or ideas. Thus, the components ideational and manipulative functions are rated 3. In regard to the component heuristic functions, it is rated 4 because when solving linguistic challenges they extend their knowledge of language. Moreover, they enrich their knowledge through the interaction with other people. As for the component imaginative functions, these speakers may include anecdotes in their discourse. Thus, this component is rated 2. Advanced-Mid speakers can handle some tasks that require formal and informal language. Here, the component register is rated 2. The influence of L1 becomes less strong at this level and this can be noticed through the choice of strategies. The strategies that they often resort to are circumlocution and rephrasing. Moreover, they can employ some delaying strategies when they need to perform a task related to the Superior level. When the linguistic demands of these tasks are too high and they do not have control over such language they apply avoidance strategies, that is, they try to avoid having to use this language. These strategies contribute to a successful completion of communicative tasks. Thus, strategic competence is rated 2.[23]

In the light of the above, I can conclude that speakers in the Advanced-Mid level produce speech, where content, form and temporal aspect are assessed. With respect to content, they should demonstrate the ability to narrate and describe. As regards form, their discourse

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[23] Interestingly, this level introduces the term *concreteness* that defines the topics that Advanced-Mid speakers are able to talk about. According to Gambrill (2006), "The term concreteness refers to the clarity of questions, statements, and information" (p.311). Here, it contrasts with the term *abstractness* that will be introduced in the Superior level. This demonstrates that although these speakers are able to discuss a variety of topics, their speech patterns are based on concrete topics, i.e. facts and information. They are not able to talk about things that are not related to real situations.

should display knowledge of lexicogrammatical aspects. And, finally, their speech is noticeable for substantial flow.

The last sublevel of the Advanced level is Advanced-High. Its description is presented below, and the results of the analysis according to Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist are presented in Table 36.

ADVANCED HIGH

Speakers at the Advanced-High level perform all Advanced-level tasks with linguistic ease, confidence and competence. They are able to consistently explain in detail and narrate fully and accurately in all time frames. In addition, Advanced-High speakers handle the tasks pertaining to the Superior level but cannot sustain performance at that level across a variety of topics. They can provide a structured argument to support their opinions, and they may construct hypotheses, but patterns of error appear. They can discuss some topics abstractly, especially those relating to their particular interests and special fields of expertise, but in general, they are more comfortable discussing a variety of topics concretely.

Advanced-High speakers may demonstrate a well-developed ability to compensate for an imperfect grasp of some forms or for limitations in vocabulary by the confident use of communicative strategies, such as paraphrasing, circumlocution, and illustration. They use precise vocabulary and intonation to express meaning and often show great fluency and ease of speech. However, when called on to perform the complex tasks associated with the Superior level over a variety of topics, their language will at times break down or prove inadequate, or they may avoid the task altogether, for example, by resorting to simplification through the use of description or narration in place of argument or hypothesis.

Table 36

Communicative Language Abilities checklist for Advanced High

0 = not involved, 1 = somewhat involved, 2 = critical basic/very much,
3 = critical intermediate, 4 = critical advanced

	Item #	Advanced High
Grammatical competence	LEX	4
	MOR	4
	STX	4
	PG	4
Textual competence	COH	4
	ORG	4
Illocutionary competence	IDE	4
	MAN	3
	HEU	4
	IMG	2
Sociolinguistic competence	DIA	0
	REG	3
Strategic competence	STC	2

According to the description of the Advanced-High level, speakers are expected to show linguistic ease, confidence and competence on all Advanced-level tasks. Advanced-High speakers also attempt to perform on tasks, which demand features of the Superior level. However, they fail to maintain performance at the Superior level across different topics. Moreover, they demonstrate a very good control of all verbal tenses and precise intonation. Expressing their opinions, they provide structured arguments. They are also able to discuss topics abstractly and concretely. Although their use of vocabulary is precise and accurate, some limitations in vocabulary may occur. Great fluency also characterizes the speech of the Advanced-High speakers. Therefore, I may claim that content, form and temporal aspect of speaking receive equal importance in the description of the Advanced-High level.

The analysis of the rubric for the Advanced-High level from the perspective of Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist demonstrates that L2 speaking at this level is assessed in terms of grammatical competence, textual competence, illocutionary competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence (see Table 36). All components of grammatical competence and textual competence are

rated 4. The speech of Advanced-High speakers displays very good grammatical competence. In regard to textual competence, they may produce structured arguments and hypotheses when dealing with the Superior level tasks, but they cannot sustain such high performance on wide range of topics. Having good grammatical and textual knowledge, Advanced-Mid speakers are able to reach their communicative goals. They talk about their personal interests and skills. Thus, the component of illocutionary competence, ideational functions, is rated 4. As for the component manipulative functions, it is rated 3 for the same reason as in the Advanced-Mid level. When Advanced-High speakers face complex tasks, for example, the ones related to the Superior level, they use language for problem-solving. As a result, the component heuristic functions is rated 4. With respect to the component imaginative functions, it is graded equally to the Advanced-Mid level, that is, 2. There is no mention about their participation in formal and informal exchanges. Thus, I suggest that their sensitivity to differences in register is in between Advanced-Mid and Superior levels, that is, critical at an intermediate level. It is important to highlight that L1 does not influence the speech of Advanced-High speakers anymore. Having some difficulties that refer to vocabulary limitations, they have a good ability to apply the following communicative strategies: paraphrasing, circumlocution, and illustrations. However, when asked to deal with the Superior-level task, they may resort to formal avoidance strategies. I cannot but grade strategic competence 2 because Advanced-High speakers use strategies efficiently in order to complete tasks.

Having analyzed the rubric for the Advanced-High level, I can come to a conclusion that speakers at this ACTFL proficiency level will be required to demonstrate their ability to express ideas demonstrating easiness, competence, and confidence. Providing fully developed and detailed discourse is also a requirement for speakers. Moreover, speech should demonstrate coherence and fluidity of expression as well as knowledge of linguistic items. Thus, content, form and temporal aspects receive equal emphasis on speaking.

I now turn to the last proficiency level, that is, Superior, which embraces all the positive features discussed across other levels at their *superior* form. The description of this proficiency level is cited next, and the results of its analysis according to Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist are presented in Table 37.

SUPERIOR

Speakers at the Superior level are able to communicate in the language with accuracy and fluency in order to participate fully and effectively in conversations on a variety of topics in formal and informal settings from both concrete and abstract perspectives. They discuss their interests and special fields of competence, explain complex matters in detail, and provide lengthy and coherent narrations, all with ease, fluency, and accuracy. They explain their opinions on a number of topics of importance to them, such as social and political issues, and provide structured argument to support their opinions. They are able to construct and develop hypotheses to explore alternative possibilities. When appropriate, they use extended discourse without unnaturally lengthy hesitation to make their point, even when engaged in abstract elaborations. Such discourse, while coherent, may still be influenced by the Superior speakers own language patterns, rather than those of the target language.

Superior speakers command a variety of interactive and discourse strategies, such as turn-taking and separating main ideas from supporting information through the use of syntactic and lexical devices, as well as intonational features such as pitch, stress and tone. They demonstrate virtually no pattern of error in the use of basic structures. However, they may make sporadic errors, particularly in low-frequency structures and in some complex high-frequency structures more common to formal speech and writing. Such errors, if they do occur, do not distract the native interlocutor or interfere with communication.

Table 37

Communicative Language Abilities checklist for Superior

0 = not involved, 1 = somewhat involved, 2 = critical basic/very much,
3 = critical intermediate, 4 = critical advanced

	Item #	Superior
Grammatical competence	LEX	4
	MOR	4
	STX	4
	PG	4
Textual competence	COH	4
	ORG	4
Illocutionary competence	IDE	4
	MAN	4
	HEU	4
	IMG	2
Sociolinguistic competence	DIA	0
	REG	4
Strategic competence	STC	2

The description of this level includes the adverbs "fully and effectively" in reference to the speakers' performance on a task. Superior speakers have a good command of grammatical knowledge. As a result, they can provide extensive, well structured and cohesive discourse on a variety of topics. Easiness, fluency and accuracy pertain to their oral performance. They also make use of intonational features such as pitch, stress, and tone. Some sporadic errors occur in their discourse, but they do not interfere with communication or influence comprehension by native-speakers. Therefore, the description of this level emphasizes the importance of content, form, and temporal aspect. Speakers should display very good competence of grammar, vocabulary in their discourse, which does not affect natural flow of language.

Now turning to Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist, we can see that L2 speaking at the Superior level, as can be seen in Table 37, is assessed in terms of grammatical competence, textual competence, illocutionary competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. The components of grammatical competence and textual competence are rated 4. Superior speakers have a good command of

lexical, morphological, syntactical and phonological knowledge. Moreover, they are able to produce structured arguments and well-developed hypotheses in a lengthy and coherent discourse. As for illocutionary competence, its components ideational, manipulative and heuristic functions are rated 4 as well. According to this rubric, superior level speakers are able to express their opinions on different topics as well as to support their point of view. They converse on subjects of their interest and importance, for example, politics. Their active and full participation in conversations implies that their language use affects interlocutors' way of thinking as well as the flow of conversations. Although they have a well-developed grammatical and textual knowledge, they may have some difficulties with low-frequency or some complex high-frequency structures. However, errors in these structures do not lead to any misunderstanding. Similarly to Advanced-High sublevel, the component imaginative functions is rated 2. The component register is rated 4 because language is appropriate to the context and Superior speakers know how to adopt it according to formal and informal context. In reference to strategic competence, speakers at the Superior level have a good command of various interactive and discourse strategies, for example, turn-taking or distinguishing the main idea. Thus, strategic competence is rated 2, that is, it is very much involved.

Taken together, this analysis shows that speakers at Superior level are requested to express ideas and opinion on a variety of topics. Moreover, they need to display linguistic knowledge and demonstrate fluency. Therefore, I can argue that at this level content, form and temporal aspects of speaking are greatly emphasized.

In sum, the ACTFL speaking scale has been analyzed regarding the components of communicative language ability (CLA) proposed by Bachman (1990). All components of CLA are involved across all the ACTFL levels, though to different extent. The components of grammatical competence, textual competence, illocutionary competence, with exception of its imaginative functions, sociolinguistic competence, with exception of its component Register, and strategic competence are involved at an advanced level in the ACTFL Superior level.

Having analyzed the ACTFL speaking scale, I now turn to the analysis of the CEFR analytic descriptors of spoken language. Each proficiency level will be analyzed in the next section.

4.5 The CEFR speaking scale

The lowest proficiency level indicated in the CEFR analytic descriptors of spoken language is A1. The description of this level is presented in Table 38 and Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) communicative language ability (CLA) is presented in Table 39.

Table 38

CEFR analytic descriptor of spoken language for A1

	Range	Accuracy	Fluency	Interaction	Coherence
A1	Has a very basic repertoire of words and simple phrases related to personal details and particular concrete situations.	Shows only limited control of a few simple grammatical structures and sentence patterns in a memorized repertoire.	Can manage very short, isolated, mainly pre-packaged utterances, with much pausing to search for expressions, to articulate less familiar words, and to repair communication.	Can ask and answer questions about personal details. Can interact in a simple way but communication is totally dependent on repetition, rephrasing and repair.	Can link words or group of words with very basic linear connectors like "and" or "then".

Table 39
Communicative Language Abilities checklist for A1
**0 = not involved, 1 = somewhat involved, 2 = critical basic/very much,
3 = critical intermediate, 4 = critical advanced**

	Item #	A1
Grammatical competence	LEX	1
	MOR	1
	STX	1
	PG	1
Textual competence	COH	1
	ORG	0
Illocutionary competence	IDE	1
	MAN	1
	HEU	2
	IMG	0
Sociolinguistic competence	DIA	0
	REG	0
Strategic competence	STC	1

According to the CEFR scale division presented in Table 38, A1 speakers are Basic Users. As can be seen from the description of this proficiency level, spoken language of A1 speakers is characterized as being very basic. The vocabulary they possess is very limited to particular topics. They are able to construct simple utterances that refer to some personal information as well as some concrete facts. Moreover, A1 speakers demonstrate that they know some basic grammatical sentence structures. Although this knowledge is very limited, they are able to interact. There is no information about their ability to pronounce words, but I can suggest that they do not have difficulties with the pronunciation of memorized words. In addition, A1 speakers can make use of some basic cohesive devices such as "and" or "then" that enable them to connect words into short utterances.

Thus, the analytic descriptor of level A1 seems to emphasize content, coherence, formal and temporal aspects as well as the ability to interact. In terms of the lexicogrammatical aspect, the descriptor mentions the speaker's control of simple grammatical structures and of simple lexical resources. In addition, it specifies the component of

lexical resource, that is, the vocabulary related to personality and some concrete situations, but it does not specify the components of grammatical aspect. Therefore, at this point of the analysis it is possible to assume that for the CEFR lowest proficiency level, it is grammatical form and accuracy as well as temporal aspects that receive the greatest emphasis. The descriptor does not include those aspects of speaking related to pronunciation, intonation, and stress. However, it mentions that A1 speakers make a lot of pauses when articulating unfamiliar words.

The analysis of the descriptor for level A1 from the perspective of Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist shows that speaking at this proficiency level is assessed in terms of grammatical competence, textual competence, illocutionary competence, and strategic competence (see Table 39). All components of grammatical competence, the component coherence of textual competence, and strategic competence are graded equally. All should be somewhat involved in language use of A1 speakers. These are described in the criteria range, accuracy, and coherence. These speakers demonstrate some basic control of lexicogrammatical aspects, cohesive devises, and some strategies, such as rephrasing and repairing. The components of illocutionary competence, ideational and manipulative functions, are somewhat involved. Its component, heuristic functions, is involved critically at a basic level in language use of A1 speakers. The components rhetorical organization and imaginative functions are not discussed in the context of level A, but they are involved in the higher proficiency levels. As for the component dialect, it is not involved across any of the CEFR proficiency levels.

Taken together, this analysis shows that at level A1 speakers assessed by the CEFR guidelines will be requested to display knowledge of linguistic items per se than to express ideas.

Table 40 presents the description of the speaker's oral performance at next proficiency level A2. The analysis of this description according to Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist is presented in Table 41.

Table 40
CEFR analytic descriptor of spoken language for A2

	Range	Accuracy	Fluency	Interaction	Coherence
A2	Uses basic sentence patterns with memorised phrases, groups of a few words and formulae in order to communicate limited information in simple everyday situations.	Uses some simple structures correctly, but still systematically makes basic mistakes.	Can make him/herself understood in very short utterances, even though pauses, false starts and reformulation are very evident.	Can answer questions and respond to simple statements. Can indicate when he/she is following but is rarely able to understand enough to keep conversation going of his/her own accord.	Can link groups of words with simple connectors like "and", "but" and "because".

Table 41
Communicative Language Abilities checklist for A2
**0 = not involved, 1 = somewhat involved, 2 = critical basic/very much,
3 = critical intermediate, 4 = critical advanced**

	Item #	A2
Grammatical competence	LEX	1
	MOR	1
	STX	2
	PG	1
Textual competence	COH	1
	ORG	0
Illocutionary competence	IDE	2
	MAN	1
	HEU	2
	IMG	0
Sociolinguistic competence	DIA	0
	REG	0
Strategic competence	STC	1

The speech production is associated with level A2 if the speaker demonstrates the use of memorized basic words and phrases, correct use of simple sentences, and use of basic conjunctions such as "and", "but" and "because" in the discourse (see Table 40). Again, nothing is said about the speaker's pronunciation and this is the reason why this component is graded zero. However, I can suggest that s/h has basic knowledge of this aspect because the speaker at this level is able to communicate some limited information. Furthermore, with respect to the topic development, A2 speakers can communicate some basic information from real-life situations as well as interact in conversations expressing some relevant ideas in simple sentences. And they do this with some very evident pauses, false starts, and reformulation.

Based on this analysis, I argue that the descriptor for level A2 highlights the importance of formal and temporal aspects. The descriptions of A2 speakers' performance in the criteria range, accuracy, fluency, and coherence support this idea. Moreover, they are required to participate in interactions. Although they do not have good lexical resource, they are able to ask simple question and answer in simple sentence structures.

The analysis of the descriptor for level A2 from the perspective of Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist presented in Table 41 demonstrates that L2 speaking at this proficiency level is assessed according to grammatical competence, textual competence, illocutionary competence, and strategic competence. The components lexis, morphology, phonology, coherence and strategic competence are rated equally. All are somewhat involved in language use of A2 speakers. A2 speakers communicate some basic messages through their limited lexical resource. A2 speakers apply some strategies trying to compensate for the deficiency in language knowledge. In order to make themselves clear they may resort to reformulation. With respect to the components syntax, phonology, ideational and heuristic functions, these are involved critically at a basic level. The simple sentence structures of A2 speakers are accurate, though basic mistakes are present in their language. The ideas they express are generally limited to simple everyday situations. There are also components that are not discussed in the descriptor of level A1. These are rhetorical organization, imaginative functions, and register. Thus, the descriptor for level A2 seems to emphasize lexicogrammatical and temporal aspects, coherence, and the ability to interact. Content is not so much highlighted at this proficiency level.

The next proficiency level under analysis is B1, whose formal description is presented in Table 42.The analysis of this description with regard to Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist is presented in Table 43.

Table 42

CEFR analytic descriptor of spoken language for B1

	Range	Accuracy	Fluency	Interaction	Coherence
B1	Has enough language to get by,with sufficient vocabulary to express him/ herself with some hesitation and circumlocutions on topics such as family, hobbies and interests, work, travel, and current events.	Uses reasonably accurately a repertoire of frequently use "routines" and patterns associated with more predictable situations.	Can keep going comprehensibly even though pausing for grammatical and lexical planning and repair is very evident, especially in longer stretches of free productions.	Can initiate, maintain and close simple face-to-face conversation on topics that are familiar or of personal interest.	Can link a series of shorter, discrete simple elements into a connected, linear sequence of points.

Table 43

Communicative Language Abilities checklist for B1

0 = not involved, 1 = somewhat involved, 2 = critical basic/very much, 3 = critical intermediate, 4 = critical advanced

	Item #	B1
Grammatical competence	LEX	2
	MOR	2
	STX	2
	PG	1
Textual competence	COH	2
	ORG	1
Illocutionary competence	IDE	3
	MAN	2
	HEU	2
	IMG	0
Sociolinguistic competence	DIA	0
	REG	0
Strategic competence	STC	1

As can be seen in this description, level B1 refers to speakers who have richer vocabulary recourse than A2 speakers do (see Table 42). They are bale to talk about their family, hobbies, interests, and other general topics. Moreover, B1 speakers produce the structures that they use frequently without a lot of mistakes, that is, they speak with accuracy. As there is no mention of their pronunciation in this descriptor, it is graded similarly to the previous proficiency levels as 1. Being able to converse on topics cited above, B1 speakers should have some knowledge of phonology. In addition, they can utter some simple elements in order to produce a short but connected discourse. They are able to make their point clear when discussing basic personal information such as family or hobby. Although their speech can contain a lot of hesitations and pauses, they do not fail to interact comprehensibly. From this description, it can be argued that level B1 places a great emphasis on grammar, vocabulary, fluency, coherence, and interaction.

The analysis of level B1 from the perspective of Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist presented in Table 43 displays that L2 speaking at B1 is assessed in terms of grammatical competence, textual competence, illocutionary competence, and strategic competence. However, not all components are rated equally. As regards grammatical competence, lexis, morphology, syntax, and phonology are involved critically at a basic level because B1 speakers have lexicogrammatical resource that is sufficient to discuss topics related to personality. The component coherence is also involved at a basic level because B1 speakers make use of some cohesive devices that help them produce connected discourse. The component rhetorical organization is somewhat involved in language use of B1 speakers because they are able to express a clear point. The component ideational functions is critical intermediate because B1 speakers are able to discuss a variety of topics concerning their personal life, for example, hobby, family, and others. As regards manipulative and heuristic functions, these components are involved at a basic level. B1 speakers are more independent in conversations, that is, they are able to start, maintain and finish simple conversation. It is worth noting that they participate this way just when topics of conversations are familiar or of their personal interest. In order to demonstrate comprehension, they attempt to repeat what the interlocutor has just communicated to them. In addition, B1 speakers try to transmit meaning resorting to circumlocutions and repairing. Although their speech can contain a lot of hesitations and pauses, they do not fail to

interact comprehensibly. Here, strategic competence is somewhat involved.

In conclusion, this analysis shows that at level B1 speakers are required to display language knowledge. Moreover, the temporal aspects of speaking such as pauses are very noticeable. Content is limited to topics related to personal interests, such as hobby and travelling. Thus, I argue that formal and temporal aspects of speaking are more paid attention to than content.

The next proficiency level under analysis in the CEFR descriptors is B2. The description of this level across five criteria is presented next in Table 44 and its analysis from the perspective of Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist in presented in Table 45.

Table 44

CEFR analytic descriptor of spoken language for B2

	Range	Accuracy	Fluency	Interaction	Coherence
B2	Has a sufficient range of language to be able to give clear descriptions, express view-points on most general topics, without much conspicuous searching for words, using some complex sentence forms to do so.	Shows a relatively high degree of gramma-tical control. Does not make errors which cause misunder-standing, and can correct most of his/her mistakes.	Can produce stretches of language with a fairly even tempo; although he/she can be hesistant as he or she searches for patterns and expressions, there are few noticeably long pauses.	Can initiate discourse, take his/her turn when appropriate and end conversation when he/she needs to, though he/she may not always do this elegantly. Can help the discussion along on familiar ground confirming comprehension, inviting others in, etc.	Can use a limited number of cohesive devices to link his/her utterances into clear, coherent discourse, though there may be some "jumpiness" in a long contribution.

Table 45
Communicative Language Abilities checklist for B2
**0 = not involved, 1 = somewhat involved, 2 = critical basic/very much,
3 = critical intermediate, 4 = critical advanced**

	Item #	B2
Grammatical competence	LEX	3
	MOR	3
	STX	3
	PG	1
Textual competence	COH	3
	ORG	2
Illocutionary competence	IDE	3
	MAN	3
	HEU	2
	IMG	0
Sociolinguistic competence	DIA	0
	REG	2
Strategic competence	STC	1

According to the description in Table 44, B2 speakers are able to describe clearly as well as express opinions on most general topics. This is possible due to their vocabulary resource. In general, B2 speakers have a relatively high control of grammatical knowledge. Their oral performance is distinctive in the following way. They are able to describe and give their opinions in some complex sentences, though with some hesitancy and pauses. Their utterances are connected by cohesive devices, but the number of these devices is quite limited. Nevertheless, their discourse can be clear and coherent. However, some *jumpiness* occurs in their discourse. This can suggest that their discourse may lack organizational development. They may start to talk about one thing and *jump* to another one. Moreover, B2 speakers are able to express their ideas or feelings on most general topics. Finally, B2 speakers can take an active part in conversations, for example, by initiating a conversation, maintaining it by taking turns and finishing it when they need to. In addition, they contribute to conversation when it covers familiar topics. Therefore, at this point of the analysis, I continue to argue that formal and temporal aspects of speaking as well as coherence and fluency are greater emphasized than content.

In regard to Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist, the analysis of the descriptor for level B2 demonstrates that B2 speakers are assessed in terms of all competences of CLA, though not in terms all their components (see Table 45). Similarly to the previous proficiency level, the components of grammatical competence, except for phonology, at level B2 are rated equally. These are involved critically at an intermediate level because of B2 speakers' level of lexicogrammatical knowledge, which is good enough to discuss most general topics. The component phonology is somewhat involved as the descriptor does not provide any explicit information about B2 speaker's pronunciation. The component coherence is also critical intermediate because of their ability to use a limited number of cohesive devices. The component rhetorical organization is involved critically at a basic level as B2 speakers tend to loose the linear sequence of their ideas. As for illocutionary competence, its components ideational and manipulative functions are involved critically at an intermediate level. B2 speakers are able to communicate ideas on most general topics. Moreover, they can participate actively in conversations. Heuristic functions are critical basic as while participating in discussions, B2 speakers are also learning. They try to use more complex sentence structures. Moreover, they can already perceive their error and correct most of them. The component register is critical basic at this proficiency level. B2 speakers do not have very good sensitivity to the difference between formal and informal language, for example, they may not always finish conversation elegantly. Finally, strategic competence is somewhat involved. B2 speakers make use of cooperative strategies. When they have difficulties in communicating something they rely on their interlocutors. Moreover, B2 speakers are able to correct most of their mistakes. In addition, after they have produced a phrase or a sentence and they perceive that they have not been understood they try to say it again with different words. Here, they resort to the restructuring strategy. Avoidance strategies may be a part of their oral performance. I can suggest that *jumpiness* in their discourse that has been discussed above refers to formal avoidance.

To conclude the analysis of level B2, I argue that speakers at this proficiency level will be required to demonstrate knowledge of lexicogrammatical aspects as well as control of temporal aspects than content. Moreover, such aspects of speaking as coherence and fluency are also emphasized. In addition, the ability to hold a conversation, that is, initiate discourse and take turns, is also of great importance.

      Finally, I turn to Proficient User, which consists of two levels: C1 and C2. The first level to be discussed is C1. Table 46 presents the description of this proficiency level. Table 47 presents its analysis from the perspective of Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist.

Table 46

CEFR analytic descriptor of spoken language for C1

	Range	Accuracy	Fluency	Interaction	Coherence
C1	Has a good command of broad range of language allowing him/her to select a formulation to express him/herself clearly in an appropriate style on a wide range of general, academic, professional or leisure topics without having to restrict what he/she wants to say.	Consistently maintains a high degree of grammatical accuracy; errors are rare, difficult to spot and generally corrected when they do occur.	Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously, almost effort-lessly. Only a conceptually difficult subject can hinder a natural, smooth flow of language.	Can select a suitable phrase from a readily available range of discourse functions to preface his remarks in order to get or to keep the floor and to relate his/her own contributions skilfully to those of other speakers.	Can produce clear,smoothly flowing, well-structured speech, showing con-trolled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.

Table 47
Communicative Language Abilities checklist for C1
**0 = not involved, 1 = somewhat involved, 2 = critical basic/very much,
3 = critical intermediate, 4 = critical advanced**

	Item #	C1
Grammatical competence	LEX	4
	MOR	4
	STX	4
	PG	2
Textual competence	COH	4
	ORG	3
Illocutionary competence	IDE	4
	MAN	3
	HEU	3
	IMG	0
Sociolinguistic competence	DIA	0
	REG	3
Strategic competence	STC	1

According to the description in Table 46, the speech of speakers is associated with level C1 if they possess good language knowledge to discuss a variety of topics. Their lexical and morphological knowledge enables them to express what they want without any restriction. Moreover, C1 speakers make errors rarely because of their high degree of grammatical accuracy.

And if there are some they are difficult to notice and generally corrected by speakers. In addition, they can produce clear, smoothly flowing, and well-structured speech. Discussing various topics, C1 speakers demonstrate a good control of organizational patterns and cohesive devices. Finally, C1 speakers are able to talk fluently and spontaneously, generally without effort. They rarely resort to strategic competence as a language *compensator* because they have a good command of grammar and vocabulary. Therefore, at this point of the analysis, it can be argued that formal and temporal aspects of speaking as well as coherence and fluency receive a greater emphasis than content.

The analysis of the descriptor of level C1 from the perspective of Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist presented in Table 47 shows that speaking at this proficiency level is assessed in terms of grammatical, textual, illocutionary, sociolinguistic, and strategic competences. However, not all components of these competences are rated equally. For instance, the components of grammatical competence, except for phonology, are rated 4, that it, they are involved critically at an advanced level in language use of C1 speakers because the speech of these speakers is highly accurate with a good command of lexical resource. C1 speakers also demonstrate fluency and spontaneity. The component phonology is critical basic because as can be seen from the descriptor of level C1 speakers are able to express themselves clearly. I suggest that speakers should have at least basic knowledge of phonology to express themselves clearly. On the other hand, one component of textual knowledge, coherence, is rated 4 and another one, rhetorical organizations, is rated 3. C1 speakers can produce a highly coherent discourse with clear development. The component ideational functions is involved critically at an advanced level. C1 speakers feel more confident to discuss a wide range of topics. As for manipulative and heuristic functions, this component is critical intermediate at this proficiency level. Having a good command of language, C1 speakers participate in a conversation actively. I can suggest that they are able to *manipulate* conversation, for instance they initiate a conversation, maintain it by taking turns and finish appropriately. Moreover, when they face some grammar problems they are able to use language so skillfully that errors are almost not noticed. Imaginative functions are not involved yet at this level. In regard to register, C1 speakers are able to use language appropriately. This may suggest that they are aware of the importance of language variations, such as formal and informal spoken discourse. As a result, this component is critical intermediate. Finally, strategic competence is somewhat engaged at this level because C1 speakers make rare use of strategies due tot their good command of grammar and vocabulary.

Thus, the descriptor of level C1 of the CEFR continues to emphasize formal and temporal aspects as well as coherence and the ability to interact. The descriptor mentions that C1 speakers have a broad range of language in order for them to discuss topics clearly and in an appropriate style. It is important to highlight that this lexical resource enables C1 speakers to express any idea. Consequently, I argue that content and form receive equal importance in L2 speaking at this proficiency level.

Finally, the last proficiency level to be discussed within the scope of the CEFR descriptors of spoken language is C2. Table 48 presents the description of this level and Table 49 presents its analysis from the perspective of Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist.

Table 48

CEFR analytic descriptor of spoken language for C2

	Range	Accuracy	Fluency	Interaction	Coherence
C2	Shows great flexibility reformulating ideas in differing linguistic forms to convey finer shades of meaning precisely, to give emphasis, to differentiate and to eliminate ambiguity. Also has a good command of idiomatic expressions and colloqualisms.	Maintains constistent grammatical control of complex language, even while attention is otherwise engaged (e.g. in forward planning, in monitoring others' reactions).	Can express him/herself spontaneously at length with a natural colloquial flow, avoiding or backtracking around any difficulty so smoothly that the interlocutor is hardly aware of it.	Can interact with ease and skill, picking up and using non-verbal and intonational cues apparently effortlessly. Can interweave his/her contribution into the joint discourse with fully natural turntaking, referencing, allusion making, etc.	Can create coherent and cohesive discourse making full and appropriate use of a variety of organisational patterns and a wide range of connectors and other cohesive devices.

Table 49
Communicative Language Abilities checklist for C2
0 = not involved, 1 = somewhat involved, 2 = critical basic/very much,
3 = critical intermediate, 4 = critical advanced

	Item #	C2
Grammatical competence	LEX	4
	MOR	4
	STX	4
	PG	2
Textual competence	COH	4
	ORG	4
Illocutionary competence	IDE	4
	MAN	4
	HEU	4
	IMG	3
Sociolinguistic competence	DIA	0
	REG	4
Strategic competence	STC	1

According to the description in Table 48, C2 speakers demonstrate an ability to use different linguistic forms. They can express their ideas or feelings in various forms. This is also possible due to their high degree of grammatical knowledge. Moreover, they are able to produce lengthy discourse naturally. The discourse that C2 speakers produce is coherent and cohesive. It consists of various organizational patterns and connectors as well as other cohesive devices. In addition, when they participate in conversation they are aware of turn taking rules and they take turns naturally. All in all, it can be argued that the descriptor for level C2 places emphasis on fluency, coherence, and ability to interact. In terms of lexicogrammatical aspects, the descriptor elicits their consistent control of grammar and lexis. It does not specify the range of this knowledge, but as C2 speakers are able to express precise meaning and have great flexibility to reformulate ideas I can assume that they are confident to discuss any topics with complex language. Therefore, at this point of the analysis, I may claim that formal and temporal aspects of speaking continue to receive a great emphasis, though content is also important at this level of proficiency.

In regard to Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist, the analysis of the descriptor for level C2 demonstrates that this proficiency level is assessed in terms of all competences of CLA (see Table 49). The components of grammatical competence, except for phonology, and textual competences are rated equally, that is, they are involved critically at an advanced level because of the speakers' consistent lexicogrammatical control. The component phonology is critical basic because the descriptor for level C2 does not provide explicit information of the speaker's phonological knowledge. Thus, it is graded similarly to the previous proficiency level. Moreover, C2 speakers can produce coherent and cohesive discourse with appropriate use of cohesive devices. The components ideational, manipulative, and heuristic functions are rated equally. All of them are involved critically at an advanced level. C2 speakers are able not only to express their ideas easily, but also to reformulate them providing a more precise meaning. Moreover, they interact easily and skillfully where they can monitor interlocutors' reactions in conversation. In addition, they are able to use language so proficiently that when they make errors interlocutors are not aware of them in most cases. The component imaginative functions is critical intermediate at level C2 because these speakers demonstrate their knowledge of idiomatic expressions and colloquialism. The component register is critical advanced because C2 speakers demonstrate good control of formal and informal language. Finally, strategic competence is somewhat involved in the oral performance of C2 speakers because they resort to restructuring strategy in order to avoid ambiguity.

To conclude the analysis of level C2, I argue that speakers at this level of proficiency will be required to demonstrate language knowledge as well as express ideas. Their response is assessed in terms of formal and temporal aspects as well as coherence and the ability to interact.

In sum, the CEFR analytic descriptors of spoken language have been analyzed in terms of the components of CLA framework proposed by Bachman (1990). Each proficiency level has been rated according to the CLA rating instrument from 0 to 5 (Bachman *et al.,* 1995). Taken together, I argue that the CEFR analytic descriptors of spoken language involve grammatical, textual, illocutionary, sociolinguistic, and strategic competences. The components of the first two competences, except for the component phonology, are involved at their advanced level in level C2. All components of illocutionary competence, besides the component imaginative functions, which is critical intermediate, are involved critically at an advanced level. The component of sociolinguistic

competence, register, is critical advanced in level C2. In regard to strategic competence, it is somewhat involved from level A1 on.

Having analyzed the speaking rubrics of two proficiency tests of English (TOEFL and IELTS) and two guidelines for orientations (ACTFL and CEFR) according to Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist, I now turn to the aspects of speaking ability that will be compared across these two tests and guidelines. This comparison will be based on Fulcher's (2003) framework for describing the speaking construct, which was reviewed in Chapter 3. Firstly, the aspects of speaking of the TOEFL and IELTS rubrics will be compared (4.5). Secondly, the aspects of speaking the ACTFL and CEFR speaking rubrics will be compared (4.6). Finally, the aspects of speaking ability will be compared across the proficiency test and guidelines for orientations (4.7).

4.5 Comparability of the aspects of speaking ability across TOEFL and IELTS

Following Fulcher's (2003) framework, the first aspect of speaking ability to be compared across two proficiency tests is language competence, which is composed of three components. These are phonology, accuracy, and fluency. The first component involves pronunciation, stress, and intonation. Looking at the TOEFL speaking scale, it can be seen that these phonological qualities are discussed in the criterion Delivery from the lowest score, Score 1. This supports the idea that pronunciation is an essential aspect of speaking according to the TOEFL speaking scale. In regard to the IELTS speaking scale, there is a separate criterion for pronunciation, and this emphasizes the importance of the phonological aspect in speaking construct as well. In IELTS, pronunciation is assessed from the lowest band, Band 2, where speakers demonstrate little communication.

The next component of language competence is accuracy. In TOEFL, accuracy is examined in criterion Language Use from Score 1. Here, raters pay attention to how accurate grammatical structures and vocabulary of test takers are. With respect to the IELTS speaking scale, accuracy is discussed in two criteria: Lexical Resource and Grammatical Range and Accuracy. The assessment of accuracy begins from Band 2 in this test.

Fluency is the last component of language competence. The TOEFL speaking scale includes fluency together with phonology in the criterion Delivery. Here, the quality and rate of speech are scrutinized and their description is present in Score 1. The IELTS speaking scale

examines this component in a specially assigned criterion called Fluency and Coherence. Raters assess speech taking into account the amount of hesitations (pauses), repetitions, and self-corrections, and describe them from the lowest band, Band 2.

According to the framework for describing the speaking construct proposed by Fuclher (2003), the second aspect of speaking ability is strategic capacity. The TOEFL speaking scale does not mention the test takers' ability to use strategies. On the contrary, the IELTS speaking scale includes strategic capacity. Test takers of Band 4 re required to demonstrate some use of paraphrasing strategy, which is commented in the criterion Language Resource.

Textual knowledge is the next aspect of speaking ability. According to Fulcher (2003), "most speaking is a highly structured activity" (p.34). Fulcher (2003) follows Anderson and Lynch (1988) who refer to speech as a part of 'interactional competence' (p.34). Thus, he discusses the structure of talk in terms of turn taking, adjacency pairs, and openings and closings. As the TOEFL speaking sub-test does not involve any interaction because test takers record their responses to the tasks with the help of computers, their ability to take turns, to use adjacency pairs or to open and close conversation are not assessed. However, cohesion and rhetorical organization of the test taker's response are included in criterion Topical Development. The description of the response in relevance to these components starts from Score 1 in the TOEFL test. On the contrary to the TOEFL speaking sub-test, there is a real-life interaction between the test taker and the examiner in the IELTS speaking section. However, the structure of talk considered in Fulcher's (2003) framework is not described in the IELTS speaking scale. The IELTS speaking scale assesses the degree of coherence and topic development in the criterion Fluency and Coherence from Band 3 on.

Pragmatic knowledge is the next component from the framework for describing the speaking construct, within with context Fulcher (2003) discusses appropriacy, implicature and expressing being.[24] Appropriacy of the response to the task as well as appropriacy of grammar and vocabulary use is discussed in the criterion Topic Development and Lexical Use of the TOEFL speaking scale. Being a very important aspect, appropriacy is involved from Score 1 in TOEFL.

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[24] For Bachman (1990), pragmatic competence is composed of two competences: illocutionary and sociolinguistic. However, Fulcher (2003) decides to single out sociolinguistic competence in his framework.

The IELTS speaking scale also pays special attention to appropriacy of topic development, grammatical structures, and vocabulary resource. These are examined in three criteria: Fluency and Coherence, Grammatical Range and Accuracy, and Lexical Resource, respectively. Signs of appropriacy are examined from Band 3 on. Implicature and expressing being are not present in either speaking scales.

The last aspect of speaking ability, which, according to Fulcher (2003), should be included into the construct, is sociolinguistic knowledge. Here, topical knowledge is considered in both speaking scales. The TOEFL speaking scale emphasizes the importance of conveying relevant ideas with appropriate use of vocabulary and grammar structures as well as developing the topic fully. Topical knowledge is discussed in the criteria Language Use and Topic Development from Score 1 on. In regard to the IELTS speaking scale, topical and cultural knowledge are assessed. The degree of topic development depends on the topic. If the topic is familiar, test takers can produce a lengthier and error-free discourse than when it is unfamiliar. Topical knowledge is involved from Band 3 on. Cultural knowledge is represented in the form of idiomatic language. Test takers are expected to include idioms in their speech from Band 7 on.

The following conclusions can be drawn from the discussion of the aspects of speaking ability assessed by TOEFL and IELTS. First, the TOEFL and IELTS speaking scales are highly comparable in terms of language competence. This aspect is so important that both speaking scales describe it from the lowest levels. The TOEFL speaking scale cannot be compared to the IELTS speaking scale with respect to strategic capacity because this aspect is not included in the TOEFL speaking scale. In regard to textual knowledge, the speaking scales cannot be compared in terms of the structure of task because they do not examine it. Pragmatic knowledge is assessed in both speaking scales. The TOEFL speaking scale is comparable to the IELTS speaking scale with respect to appropriacy. Finally, sociolinguistic knowledge is included in the speaking constructs of both tests. They are comparable in terms of topical knowledge. In addition, the IELTS speaking scale assesses cultural knowledge of test takers.

The next subchapter presents the comparability the aspects of speaking ability across ACTFL and CEFR, which will be similar to the comparability of TOEFL and IELTS. The aspects of speaking ability will be compared according to Fulcher's (2003) framework for describing speaking construct.

4.6 Comparability of the aspects of speaking ability across ACTFL and CEFR

The comparability of the aspects of speaking ability across ACTFL and CEFR starts with language competence. Phonology, the first component of language competence, is assessed in the ACTFL speaking scale. This component is important because intelligibility of speakers' discourse depends on it. Pronunciation is discussed from the ACTFL lowest level, Novice-Low, on. The difference between Novice-Low and Superior speakers is great. Whereas speakers at the Novice-Low level may produce unintelligible discourse because of poor phonological knowledge, speakers at the Superior level are expected to have a good command of pitch, stress and tone. Phonology is not discussed explicitly in the CEFR speaking scale, but after reading the descriptors of level A1, it becomes clear that A1 speakers would not be able to perform satisfactorily at this level without possessing some knowledge of phonology.

Accuracy and fluency are discussed together in the descriptions of the ACTFL proficiency levels. A minimally intelligible spoken discourse, which is described in relation to accuracy and fluency, is produced by Novice-Mid speakers. The CEFR speaking scale has two separate criteria for these components. These are Accuracy and Fluency. They are assessed from the CEFR lowest level, level A1, on.

The next aspect of speaking ability, which is discussed in Fulcher's (2003) framework, is strategic capacity. It is involved in both ACTFL and CEFR speaking scales. Strategic competence is included in the ACTFL speaking construct from the Novice-Mid level. According to the description of this level, Novice-Mid speakers may resort to code-switching as one of the types of achievement strategies or silence may be frequent, that is, avoidance strategy, when the task requires a high level of language knowledge, for example, the Intermediate level tasks. As for the CEFR speaking scale, some strategies can be noticed in the spoken discourse of A1 speakers, which is the CEFR lowest proficiency level. Rephrasing strategy, which is discussed in the criterion Interaction, leads to a better communication.

Textual knowledge involves the sensitivity to the structure of conversations. In the ACTFL speaking scale Novice-Mid speakers are expected to demonstrate some limited knowledge of adjacency pairs responding to direct questions in a limited number of words. As for Intermediate-Low speakers, they can participate in conversation on predictable topics. They may also start a conversation with a request for information. As regards the CEFR speaking scale, A1 speakers are able

to take part in spoken interaction, which is based on some basic lexical resource. For instance, they can solicit information as well as provide responses to the questions about their personality. In case of B1 speakers, they are already able to open, maintain and close conversations about familiar topics. Thus, knowledge of adjacency pairs is discussed in the criterion Interaction.

The next aspect of speaking ability is pragmatic knowledge. The ACTFL speaking scale looks at appropriacy of the spoken discourse produced by speakers from the Novice-Mid level. A1 speakers also demonstrate appropriacy of their discourse to conversation. Although they have limited knowledge of vocabulary and grammar, they can interact in a simple way. Both speaking scales do not observe implicature of spoken discourse. As for expressing being, the ACTFL speaking scale describes speakers' ability to express on a variety of communicative tasks. This ability is noticed in Novice-High speakers. In the CEFR speaking scale B1 speakers show their ability to participate in face-to-face conversations on a range of familiar topics. Criterion Interaction describes pragmatic knowledge of speakers.

Finally, sociolinguistic knowledge is assessed in both speaking scales. In the ACTFL speaking scale Novice-Mid speakers have situational knowledge. They can respond to direct questions. As for topical knowledge, Novice-High speakers take part in straightforward social situations discussing basic topics. They are also aware of topics that are important in order to survive in the target language cultures. This way they demonstrate cultural knowledge. In regard to the CEFR speaking scale, A1 speakers show that they have some vocabulary knowledge for certain concrete situations. This is described in criterion Range. They can discuss topics related to the personality and this is discussed in criterion Interaction. With respect to cultural knowledge, C2 speakers command a variety of idioms and colloquialisms. This component of sociolinguistic knowledge is included to criterion Range.

In comparing the aspects of the ACTFL and CEFR speaking constructs, I can conclude that these guidelines for orientations are highly comparable in terms of language competence. Both emphasize speakers' pronunciation, accuracy, and fluency. As for strategic capacity, ACTFL and CEFR are highly comparable as well because they discuss the types of strategies used by speakers. Moreover, the ACTFL speaking scale is highly comparable to the IELTS speaking scale with respect to textual knowledge. According to these guidelines for orientations, speakers should be aware of the rules for speaking, such as turn taking and adjacency pairs. In addition, pragmatic knowledge is

described in both speaking scales. The ACTFL and CEFR speaking scales are highly comparable with each other in terms of appropriacy and expressing being. The last aspect of speaking ability that is included in the construct of these guidelines for orientation is sociolinguistic knowledge. Both speaking scales are highly comparable with respect to situational, topical, and cultural knowledge.

Finally, subchapter 4.7 presents the comparability the aspects of speaking ability across TOEFL, IELTS, ACTFL and CEFR. The process of the comparison will be the same as in the comparability of TOEFL and IELTS, and ACTFL and CEFR.

4.7 Comparability of the aspects of speaking ability across TOEFL, IELTS, ACTFL and CEFR

Having compared the TOEFL speaking scale to the IELTS one and the ACTFL speaking scale to the CEFR one, I now focus on the comparison of the speaking constructs across these proficiency tests and guidelines for orientation in this section.

Following Fulcher's (2003) framework for describing the speaking construct, the first aspect to be compared across the speaking scales is language competence. All speaking scales are highly comparable with each other in terms of its three components: phonology, accuracy, and fluency. Speakers' pronunciation features are assessed. In addition, the speaking scales of the tests and guidelines describe speakers' ability to produce accurate and fluent discourse.

Strategic capacity is the next aspect of speaking ability. The TOEFL speaking scale does not assess the test takers' use of strategies. The IELTS speaking scale, by contrast, includes achievement strategies such as paraphrasing. As for the ACTFL speaking scale, it describes both achievement and avoidance strategies that speaker resort to in challenging situations. In regard to the CEFR speaking scale, only achievement strategies are included. Thus, I can conclude that the TOEFL speaking scale is not comparable to any other speaking scales. The IELTS speaking scale and the CEFR speaking scale are highly comparable with each other in terms of strategic capacity. Both include achievement strategies in their level descriptors. In addition, they show some comparability with the ACTFL speaking scale.

Textual knowledge is the next aspect of speaking ability. The TOEFL and IELTS speaking scales do not include test takers` knowledge of the conversation structure. Thus, they cannot be compared to the ACTFL and CEFR speaking scales. In contrast, the ACTFL and

CEFR speaking scales are highly comparable with each other in terms of textual knowledge because both assess the rules for speaking.

The next aspect of speaking ability to be compared is pragmatic knowledge. The TOEFL, IELTS, ACTFL, and CEFR speaking scales look at the degree of grammatical and vocabulary appropriacy in the spoken discourse of speakers. Only the ACTFL and CEFR speaking scales describe speakers' expressing being in conversation. Thus, I can conclude that these speaking scales are somewhat comparable with each other in terms of pragmatic knowledge.

The last aspect of speaking ability is sociolinguistic knowledge. The TOEFL and IELTS speaking scales pay attention to topical knowledge in order to see whether test takers develop the topic fully and appropriately to the task. Only the IELTS speaking scale includes cultural topic. The ACTFL and CEFR speaking scales assess situational, topical, and cultural knowledge. Thus, I can come to a conclusion that the TOEFL and IELTS speaking scales are somewhat comparable to that of ACTFL and CEFR in terms of sociolinguistic knowledge.

CHAPTER V

Conclusions, Pedagogical implications, Limitations and Suggestions

In this chapter, I present the main conclusions that I draw from the findings of the present study (section 5.1). Pedagogical implications are discussed in section 5.2. Finally, the study's limitations and suggestions for further research are addressed in section 5.3.

5.1 Conclusions

The objective of the present study was to analyze the speaking constructs of two proficiency tests (TOEFL and IELTS) and two guidelines (ACTFL and CEFR). In the pursuit of investigating their speaking constructs, two research questions were posed:

1. How do the TOEFL, IELTS, ACTFL and CEFR speaking scales assess speech performance?

2. Is there comparability of the speaking construct across these proficiency tests and guidelines?

The analysis carried out was based on the framework of communicative language ability (CLA) proposed by Bachman (1990) and Fulcher's (2003) framework for describing the speaking construct, which is an adaptation of the Bachman and Palmer (1996) model of CLA.

Based on Bachman *et al.*`s (1995) CLA checklist and rating instrument, it was possible to reveal the components of CLA across the TOEFL, IELTS, ACTFL, and CEFR speaking scales. Moreover, the degree of involvement of each component was revealed. Thus, the following general conclusions for each speaking scale were obtained.

5.1.1 The TOEFL speaking scale: general conclusions

The components of all competences were rated with the help of a five-scale instrument, from zero to four. As can be seen in Table 50, all components of grammatical competence proposed by Bachman (1990) are included in the speaking construct of the TOEFL rating scale for speaking. All are somewhat involved at Score 1. Then, they are involved critically at a basic level at Score 2. Next, they are involved critically at an intermediate level at Score 4. Finally, they are involved critically at an advanced level at Score 4.

Table 50
General conclusions for the TOEFL speaking scale

	Item #	1=smwht involved	2=critical bas./ very much	3=critical int.	4=critical adv.
Grammatical competence	LEX	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4
	MOR	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4
	STX	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4
	PG	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4
Textual competence	COH	-	Score 1	Score 2	Score 4
	ORG	-	Score 1	Score 2	Score 4
Illocutionary competence	IDE	-	Score 1	Score 2	Score 4
	MAN	-	-	-	-
	HEU	-	Score 1	Score 2	Score 4
	IMG	-	-	-	-
Sociolinguistic competence	DIA	-	-	-	-
	REG	-	-	-	-
Strategic competence	STC	-	-		

Cohesion and Rhetorical organization are involved critically at a basic level at score 1. Their degree of involvement at Scores 2 and 3 is critical intermediate and it is critical advanced at Score 4 in this proficiency test.

Two components of illocutionary competence are involved in language of the TOEFL candidates. These are ideational and heuristic functions. The first is critical at a basic level at Score 1. It is critical intermediate at Scores 2 and 3. Finally, it is critical advanced at Score 4. As for Heuristic functions, they are critical basic at Score 1. This component is critical intermediate at Scores 2 and 3. Finally, it is critical advanced at score 4. The TOEFL rating scale for speaking does not include the components of Sociolinguistic competence nor Strategic competence.

Based on these findings, I argue that to this proficiency test, speaking is seen as the oral ability to demonstrate grammatical, textual, and illocutionary competences. Grammatical and textual competences should be presented at their advanced level. As regards illocutionary competence, just its two components, ideational functions and heuristic functions are involved in the TOEFL speaking construct. The other two

language functions, manipulative and imaginative, are not involved across any of the TOEFL scores. In reference to strategic competence, the TOEFL speaking scale does not include this component of CLA into its speaking construct.

5.1.2 The IELTS speaking scale: general conclusions

The analysis of the IELTS rating scale for speaking showed that all components of grammatical competence are included in the speaking construct (see Table 51). Components Lexis, Morphology, and Phonology are somewhat involved from Band 2, where the component Syntax is somewhat involved from Band 3 on. All components of grammatical competence are critical basic at Band 4. Then, they are critical intermediate at Band 6. Finally, they are critical advanced at Band 8.

Table 51

General conclusions for the IELTS speaking scale

	Item #	1=smwht involved	2=critical bas./ very much	3=critical int.	4=critical adv.
Grammatical competence	LEX	Band 2	Band 4	Band 6	Band 8
	MOR	Band 2	Band 4	Band 6	Band 8
	STX	Band 3	Band 4	Band 6	Band 8
	PG	Band 2	Band 4	Band 6	Band 8
Textual competence	COH	Band 3	Band 4	Band 6	Band 8
	ORG	Band 4	Band 5	Band 7	Band 8
Illocutionary competence	IDE	Band 3	Band 5	Band 6	Band 8
	MAN	-	-	-	-
	HEU	-	Band 2	Band 6	Band 8
	IMG	-	Band 7	Band 8	Band 9
Sociolinguistic competence	DIA	-	-	-	-
	REG	-	-	-	-
Strategic competence	STC	Band 4	Band 8		

Cohesion and rhetorical organization are somewhat involved from Band 3 and Band 4, respectively. Then, cohesion is involved critically at a basic level from Band 4, and rhetorical organization from Band 5. Next, cohesion is critical intermediate at Band 6 and Band 7, and

rhetorical organization is critical intermediate at Band 7. Finally, both become critical advanced at Band 8.

The components of illocutionary competence are involved in language use, except for manipulative functions. Ideational functions are somewhat involved at Band 3 and become critical basic at Band 5. Heuristic functions are critical basic at Band 2. Imaginative functions are critical basic at Band 7. Ideational functions are involved critically at an intermediate level at Band 6, where heuristic and imaginative functions are critical intermediate at Band 6 and Band 8, respectively. Heuristic functions come to be critical advanced from Band 8. Then, ideational and heuristic functions are critical advanced at Band 8. Lastly, imaginative functions are involved critically at an advanced level at Band 9.

In regard to sociolinguistic competence, its components dialect and register are not involved at all. As a result, they are graded as zero across all bands. Furthermore, strategic competence becomes somewhat involved at Band 4 and it is very much involved from Band 8 on.

Based on the findings above, I argue that the speaking construct of the IELTS speaking band descriptors include the following aspects. These are grammatical, textual, illocutionary and strategic competences. Almost all components of these competences, besides the component manipulative functions, are involved critically at their advanced levels in the IELTS speaking band descriptors. The only competence that is not involved across any of the bands is sociolinguistic competence. Thus, I conclude that speaking in the IELTS speaking test is the ability that should include grammatical, textual, illocutionary, and strategic competences.

5.1.3 The ACTFL speaking scale: general conclusions

Table 52 presents the results of the analysis of the ACTFL rating scale for speaking. It can be seen that the components of grammatical competence are somewhat involved from the Novice-Low level except for the component syntax that is somewhat involved at the Novice-High level. Lexis, morphology, and phonology become critical basic at the Novice-High level where syntax is critical basic at the Intermediate-Low level. All components of grammatical competence are involved critically intermediate at the Advanced-Low level. Finally, these are critical advanced at the Advanced-High level.

Table 52
General conclusions for ACTFL speaking scale

	Item #	1=smwht involved	2=critical bas./ very much	3=critical int.	4=critical adv.
Grammatical competence	LEX	Novice Low	Novice High	Adv. Low	Adv. High
	MOR	Novice Low	Novice High	Adv. Low	Adv. High
	STX	Novice High	Inter. Low	Adv. Low	Adv. High
	PG	Novice Low	Novice High	Adv. Low	Adv. High
Textual competence	COH	Inter. Low	Inter. Mid	Adv. Mid	Adv. High
	ORG	Inter. Low	Inter. Mid	Adv. Mid	Adv. High
Illocutionary competence	IDE	Novice High	Inter. Low	Inter. High	Adv. High
	MAN	Novice Low	Novice High	Adv. Mid	Superior
	HEU	-	Novice Mid	Inter. Low	Inter. Mid
	IMG	-	Adv. Mid	-	-
Sociolinguistic competence	DIA	-	-	-	-
	REG	Adv. Low	Adv. Mid	Adv. High	Superior
Strategic competence	STC	Novice Mid	Adv. Mid		

In reference to cohesion and rhetorical organization, both are somewhat involved from the Intermediate-Low level. They become critical basic at the Intermediate-Mid level. The degree of their involvement is critical intermediate at the Advanced-Mid level. Finally, they are critical advanced at the Advanced-High level and continue at this degree of involvement in the Superior level.

Ideational functions are somewhat involved at the Novice-High level. Manipulative functions are somewhat involved from the lowest level, that is, Novice Low. Heuristic and imaginative functions are involved critically basic at the Novice-Mid level and Advanced-Mid level, respectively. Ideational functions are critical basic at the Intermediate-Low level and manipulative functions are critical basic at the Novice-High level. Ideational and manipulative functions are critical intermediate at the Intermediate-High level and Advanced-Mid level, respectively. Then, heuristic functions are critical intermediate at the Intermediate-Low level and are critical advanced at the Intermediate-Mid level. As for ideational and manipulative functions, they are critical advanced at the Advanced-High level and the Superior level, respectively.

The component dialect is not involved at all. With respect to the component register, it is somewhat involved at the Advanced-Low level. Next, it is critical basic at the Advanced-Mid level and it is critical intermediate at the Advanced-High level. Finally, it is critical advanced at the Superior level.

Strategic competence is somewhat involved at the Novice-Mid level and it is very much involved at the Advanced-Mid level and remains at this degree of involvement across the other proficiency levels.

Based on these findings, I can make the following conclusions regarding the CEFR speaking construct. The ACTFL speaking scale sees speaking as the ability to demonstrate all components of CLA. These are grammatical, textual, illocutionary, sociolinguistic, and strategic competences. However, not all components of these competences are involved equally. These components are imaginative functions, which are only involved critically at a basic level, and dialect, which is not involved across any proficiency levels of the ACTFL. All other components are critical at an advanced level for the ACTFL speaking construct.

5.1.4 The CEFR speaking scale: general conclusions

All components of grammatical competence are involved in the language use of speakers (see Table 53). Lexis, Morphology, Syntax and Phonology are somewhat involved at level A1. The degree of the involvement of Lexis and Morphology remains the same at level A2 and the component Phonology is critical basic from level C1 on. However, the component Syntax is critical basic at level A2. Components Lexis and Morphology become critical basic at level B1. Moreover, the involvement of all components of grammatical competence, except for Phonology, becomes critical intermediate at level B2. Finally, these are critical advanced at level C1.

In regard to the components of textual competence, both are involved. Cohesion is somewhat involved at level A1, where component Rhetorical organization becomes somewhat involved at level B1. The degree of the involvement of Cohesion is sustainable at level A2. Component Cohesion gets involved critically basic at level B1. Rhetorical organization is critical basic at level B2. The degree of the involvement of Cohesion comes to be critical intermediate at level B2, where of Rhetorical organization at level C1. Ultimately, the components Cohesion and Rhetorical organization are critical advanced at level C1 and C2, respectively.

Table 53
General conclusions for the CEFR speaking scale

	Item #	1=smwht involved	2=critical bas./ very much	3=critical int.	4=critical adv.
Grammatical competence	LEX	A1	B1	B2	C1
	MOR	A1	B1	B2	C1
	STX	A1	A2	B2	C1
	PG	A1	C1	-	-
Textual competence	COH	A1	B1	B2	C1
	ORG	B1	B2	C1	C2
Illocutionary competence	IDE	A1	A2	B1	C1
	MAN	A1	B1	B2	C2
	HEU	-	A1	C1	C2
	IMG	-	-	C2	-
Sociolinguistic competence	DIA	-	-	-	-
	REG	-	B2	C1	C2
Strategic competence	STC	A1	-		

Examining language functions, that is, ideational, manipulative, heuristic, and imaginative, I came to the conclusion that all of them are involved, though some of them are involved from the lowest level and some not. Therefore, ideational and manipulative functions are somewhat involved at level A1. Heuristic functions are critical basic at level A1. Ideational functions are critical basic at level A2, where manipulative functions become critical basic at level B1. Ideational functions are critical intermediate at level B1 and remain the same at level B2. With respect to manipulative functions, they are critical intermediate at levels B2 and C1. As for imaginative functions, they are not required in the discourse Basic and Independent Users, that is, levels A1, A2, B1, and B2. They become critical intermediate at level C2. At last, Ideational functions are critical advanced at levels C1 and C2, where manipulative and heuristic functions are critical advanced only at level C2.

The component dialect is not involved at any level. The component register is involved critically at a basic level at B2 and becomes critical intermediate at level C1. Its degree of involvements is critical advanced at level C2.

In reference to Strategic competence, it is somewhat involved from level A1 and sustains this degree of involvement across other levels of proficiency.

Thus, these finding lead to the following conclusion about the speaking construct of the CEFR speaking scale. According to this scale, the speaking construct includes grammatical, textual, illocutionary, sociolinguistic, and strategic competences. However, not all their components are involved equally. The component dialect is not included to the speaking construct, and strategic competence is only somewhat involved.

5.1.5 The comparability of speaking constructs

Having compared the aspects of speaking ability in Chapter 3, I came to the following conclusions about the degree to which the TOEFL, IELTS, ACTFL, and CEFR speaking constructs converge.

It is worth noting that the speaking constructs of the TOEFL and IELTS speaking scales are similar to each other. High comparability is not possible because although both speaking sub-tests have the same test purpose, that is speaking proficiency, they have different test methods. However, they are highly comparable with respect to language competence and pragmatic knowledge. They are not comparable in terms of strategic capacity because the TOEFL speaking scale does not include it in its description. Textual knowledge that implies knowledge of the talk structure is not involved in both speaking scales. However, the components cohesion and rhetorical organization, which are discussed within the framework of CLA, are involved in language use, and the speaking scales are highly comparable in this aspect. Moreover, these speaking scales are only somewhat comparable with respect to sociolinguistic competence because the TOEFL speaking scale does not describe test takers' cultural knowledge.

The ACTFL and CEFR speaking scales are also highly comparable in terms of the speaking construct. Both speaking scales define the speaking construct in terms of language competence, strategic capacity, textual knowledge, pragmatic knowledge, and sociolinguistic knowledge. These proficiency guidelines serve as orientations for language teachers and test developers, where the former use these guidelines to assess students' spoken discourse and the latter to develop test tasks.

Considering the above conclusions about the comparability of the speaking construct, it is possible to claim that the IELTS speaking scale is more comparable to the ACTFL and CEFR speaking scales than to

the TOEFL one. The IELTS speaking sub-test involves interaction between the examiner and the test taker. Moreover, it assesses the test taker's ability to use cultural references, such as idiomatic expressions or colloquialisms. All these aspects are described in the ACTFL and CEFR speaking scales. In contrast, the TOEFL speaking scale definitely leaves out strategic capacity and cultural knowledge.

5.2 Pedagogical implications

I believe that this study will contribute to teachers' better understanding of the components of speaking. Based on this knowledge, they will be able to develop tasks according to the aspects of speaking ability they want to assess.

Moreover, the present study may give teachers, mainly, but also students, an idea of how speaking is constructed in these two important international proficiency tests, which aspects are assessed and therefore believed to be important in speaking. Similarly, the study may also clarify how speaking is constructed in the materials that are meant to be the speaking scales of the guidelines for orientations for teachers and test developers in assessing speech production.

Being a teacher, I know that many language teachers adopt language tasks in order to assess some aspect of speaking ability during their classes, for example, accuracy or pronunciation. However, these tasks may not always intend to assess these aspects specifically. Thus, I think that this study will motivate teachers to design their own speaking tasks or be more considerate towards the choice of ready-made speaking tasks in their lessons. For instance, when teacher need to practice the pronunciation of the particular words they should develop or look for the tasks where these words appear.

With the help of the present study, I believe that teachers will have further evidence of what tasks to select and focus on when teaching speaking, especially for examination purposes.

Besides using the knowledge on speaking proficiency to achieve their objectives, teachers as well as test developers might also share this knowledge with students and future test takers. For instance, after assessing the student' oral performance the teacher may provide explanations regarding this assessment. Based on the criteria that the teacher employs in the speaking assessment, s/he should clarify the aspects of speaking being assessed - for instance, pronunciation, accuracy, or fluency - to the student. Thus, students and test takers' performance on speaking tasks in lessons and testing situations would be more conscious and would, as a consequence, lead to better oral

performance because students and test candidates would be aware of what they are expected to do and what aspects of their speaking ability are being assessed.

5.3 Limitations of the study and suggestions for further research

The findings of the present study suggest that the proficiency guidelines are highly comparable to each other, and the proficiency tests are reasonably comparable to each other. In addition, the guidelines for orientation are more comparable to IELTS than to TOEFL. Despite that fact that I have achieved the objectives of the study, some limitations are also important to be mentioned. These limitations lead to some suggestions that could be taken into account in further research about speech production assessment.

I recognize that the method I have applied is far from being objective because the analysis of the speaking scales was based on my personal understanding and perception of the components of CLA and the degree of their involvement. Being a novice rater, I also acknowledge that expert raters could have a different opinion about the aspects analyzed. Therefore, in future studies, more that one expert rater should be involved in such analysis.

Moreover, to my best knowledge, Bachman et al.`s (1995) CLA checklist and rating instruments have been used to rate test items and not speaking scales. In future studies an additional instrument should be used to provide more reliable results. As for Fulcher's (2003) framework for describing the speaking construct, this has not been applied as an instrument to inspect the speaking construct in speaking scales. More studies in this respect should be carried out.

In addition, the analysis and the comparability made in the present study are related to the tests and guidelines' speaking scales. Maybe a more reliable analysis would be possible if I had compared the speaking scales with their respective test items. By doing so, I would be able to determine whether my findings regarding the aspects of speaking ability are relevant and whether these aspects are elicited by the test items.

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APPENDIX A
A framework for describing the speaking construct
(Fulcher, 2003, p.48)

Language competence
Phonology
  - Pronunciation
  - Stress
  - Intonation
Accuracy
  - Syntax
  - Vocabulary
  - Cohesion
Fluency
  - Hesitation
  - Repetition
  - Re-selecting inappropriate words
  - Re-structuring sentences
  - Cohesion
Strategic capacity
Achievement strategies
  - Overgeneralization
  - Paraphrase
  - Word coinage
  - Restructuring
  - Cooperative strategies
  - Code switching
  - Non-linguistic strategies
Avoidance strategies
  - Formal avoidance
  - Functional avoidance
Textual knowledge
The structure of talk
  - Turn taking
  - Adjacency pairs
  - Openings and closings
Pragmatic knowledge
  - Appropriacy
  - Implicature
  - Expressing being
Sociolinguistic knowledge
  - Situational
  - Topical
  - Cultural

APPENDIX B
TOEFL Independent Speaking Rubrics

Score	General description	Delivery	Language use	Topic development
4	The response fulfills the demands of the task, with at most, minor lapses in completeness. It is highly intelligible and exhibits sustained, coherent discourse. A response at this level is characterized by all of the following:	Generally well-paced flow (fluid expression). Speech is clear. It may include minor lapses, or minor difficulties with pronunciation or intonation patterns, which do not affect overall intelligibility	The response demonstrates effective use of grammar and vocabulary. It exhibits a fairly high degree of automaticity with good control of basic and complex structures (as appropriate). Some minor (or systematic) errors are noticeable, but do not obscure meaning.	Response is sustained and sufficient to the task. It is generally well developed and coherent; relationships between ideas are clear (or clear progression of ideas).
3	The response addresses the task appropriately, but may fall short of being fully developed. It is generally intelligible and coherent, with some fluidity of expression, though it exhibits some noticeable	Speech is generally clear, with some fluidity of expression, though minor difficulties with pronunciation, intonation, or pacing are noticeable and	The response demonstrates fairly automatic and effective use of grammar and vocabulary, and fairly coherent expression of relevant ideas. Response may exhibit some imprecise or inaccurate use of vocabulary or	Response is mostly coherent and sustained and conveys relevant ideas/information. Overall development is somewhat limited, usually lacks elaboration or specificity.

	lapses in the expression of ideas. A response at this level is characterized by at least two of the following:	may require listener effort at times (though overall intelligibility is not significantly affected).	grammatical structures or be some what limited in the range of structures used. This may affect overall fluency, but it does not seriously interfere with the communication of the message.	Relation ships between ideas may at times not be immediately clear.
2	The response addres ses the task, but development of the topic is limited. It contains intelligible speech, although problems with delivery and/or overall coherence occur; meaning may be obscured in places. A response at this level is characterized by at least two of the following:	Speech is basically intelligible, though listener effort is needed because of unclear articulation, awkward intonation, or choppy rhythm/pace; meaning may be obscured in places	The response demonstrates limited range and control of grammar and vocabulary. These limitations often prevent full expression of ideas. For the most part, only basic sentence structures are used successfully and spoken with fluidity. Structures and vocabulary may express mainly simple (short) and/or general propositions, with simple or unclear connections	The response is connected to the task, though the number of ideas presented or the development of ideas is limited. Mostly basic ideas are expressed with limited elaboration (details and support). At times relevant substance may be vaguely expres sed or repetitious. Connections of ideas may be unclear.

			made among them (serial listing, conjunction, juxtaposition).	
1	The response is very limited in content and/or coherence or is only minimally connected to the task, or speech is largely unintelligible. A response at this level is characterized by at least two of the following:	Consistent pronunciation, stress, and intonation difficulties cause considerable listener effort; delivery is choppy, fragmented, or telegraphic; frequent pauses and hesitations.	Range and control of grammar and vocabulary severely limit or prevent expression of ideas and connections among ideas. Some low-level responses may rely heavily on practiced or formulaic expressions.	Limited relevant content is expressed. The response generally lacks substance beyond expression of very basic ideas. Speaker may be unable to sustain speech to complete the task and may rely heavily on repetition of the prompt.
0	Speaker makes no attempt to respond OR response is unrelated to the topic.			

APPENDIX C
IELTS Speaking band descriptors (public version)

Band	Fluency and coherence	Lexical resource	Grammatical range and accuracy	Pronunciation
9	• speaks fluently with only rare repetition or selfcorrection; any hesitation is content-related rather than to find words or grammar • speaks coherently with fully appropriate cohesive features • develops topics fully and appropriately	• uses vocabulary with full flexibility and precision in all topics • uses idiomatic language naturally and accurately	• uses a full range of structures naturally and appropriately • produces consistently accurate structures apart from 'slips' characteristic of native speaker speech	• uses a full range of pronunciation features with precision and subtlety • sustains flexible use of features throughout • is effortless to understand
8	• speaks fluently with only occasional repetition or self-correction; hesitation is usually content-related and only rarely to search for language • develops topics coherently and appropriately	• uses a wide vocabulary resource readily and flexibly to convey precise meaning • uses less common and idiomatic vocabulary skilfully, with occasional inaccuracies • uses paraphrase effectively as required	• uses a wide range of structures flexibly • produces a majority of error-free sentences with only very occasional inappropriacies or basic/nonsystematic errors	• uses a wide range of pronunciation features • sustains flexible use of features, with only occasional lapses • is easy to understand throughout; L1 accent has minimal effect on intelligibility

7	• speaks at length without noticeable effort or loss of coherence • may demonstrate language-related hesitation at times, or some repetition and/or self-correction • uses a range of connectives and discourse markers with some flexibility	• uses vocabulary resource flexibly to discuss a variety of topics • uses some less common and idiomatic vocabulary and shows some awareness of style and collocation, with some inappropriate choices • uses paraphrase effectively	• uses a range of complex structures with some flexibility • frequently produces error-free sentences, though some grammatical mistakes persist	• shows all the positive features of Band 6 and some, but not all, the positive features of Band 8
6	• is willing to speak at length, though may lose coherence at times due to occasional repetition, self-correction or hesitation • uses a range of connectives and discourse markers but not always appropriately	• has a wide enough vocabulary to discuss topics at length and make meaning clear in spite of inappropriacies • generally paraphrases successfully	• uses a mix of simple and complex structures, but with limited flexibility • may make frequent mistakes with complex structures, though these rarely cause comprehension problems	• uses a range of pronunciation features with mixed control • shows some effective use of features but this is not sustained • can generally be understood throughout, though mispronunciation of individual words or sounds reduces clarity at times

5	• usually maintains flow of speech but uses repetition, self-correction and/or slow speech to keep going • may over-use certain connectives and discourse markers • produces simple speech fluently, but more complex communication causes fluency problems	• manages to talk about familiar and unfamiliar topics but uses vocabulary with limited flexibility • attempts to use paraphrase but with mixed success	• produces basic sentence forms with reasonable accuracy • uses a limited range of more complex structures, but these usually contain errors and may cause some comprehension problems	• shows all the positive features of Band 4 and some, but not all, the positive features of Band 6
4	• cannot respond without noticeable pauses and may speak slowly, with frequent repetition and self-correction • links basic sentences but with repetitious use of simple connectives and some breakdowns in coherence	• is able to talk about familiar topics but can only convey basic meaning on unfamiliar topics and makes frequent errors in word choice • rarely attempts paraphrase	• produces basic sentence forms and some correct simple sentences but subordinate structures are rare • errors are frequent and may lead to misunderstanding	• uses a limited range of pronunciation features • attempts to control features but lapses are frequent • mispronunciations are frequent and cause some difficulty for the listener
3	• speaks with long pauses • has limited ability to link simple sentences • gives only simple responses and is frequently unable to convey	• uses simple vocabulary to convey personal information • has insufficient vocabulary for less familiar	• attempts basic sentence forms but with limited success, or relies on apparently memorised	• shows some of the features of Band 2 and some, but not all, the positive features of Band 4

	basic message	topics	utterances • makes numerous errors except in memorised expressions	
2	• pauses lengthily before most words • little communication possible	• only produces isolated words or memorised utterances	• cannot produce basic sentence forms	• speech is often unintelligible
1	• no communication possible • no rateable language			
0	• does not attend			

APPENDIX D
The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines-Speaking (Revised 1999)

SUPERIOR

Speakers at the Superior level are able to communicate in the language with accuracy and fluency in order to participate fully and effectively in conversations on a variety of topics in formal and informal settings from both concrete and abstract perspectives. They discuss their interests and special fields of competence, explain complex matters in detail, and provide lengthy and coherent narrations, all with ease, fluency, and accuracy. They explain their opinions on a number of topics of importance to them, such as social and political issues, and provide structured argument to support their opinions. They are able to construct and develop hypotheses to explore alternative possibilities. When appropriate, they use extended discourse without unnaturally lengthy hesitation to make their point, even when engaged in abstract elaborations. Such discourse, while coherent, may still be influenced by the Superior speakers own language patterns, rather than those of the target language. Superior speakers command a variety of interactive and discourse strategies, such as turn-taking and separating main ideas from supporting information through the use of syntactic and lexical devices, as well as intonational features such as pitch, stress and tone. They demonstrate virtually no pattern of error in the use of basic structures. However, they may make sporadic errors, particularly in low-frequency structures and in some complex high-frequency structures more common to formal speech and writing. Such errors, if they do occur, do not distract the native interlocutor or interfere with communication.

ADVANCED HIGH

Speakers at the Advanced-High level perform all Advanced-level tasks with linguistic ease, confidence and competence. They are able to consistently explain in detail and narrate fully and accurately in all time frames. In addition, Advanced-High speakers handle the tasks pertaining to the Superior level but cannot sustain performance at that level across a variety of topics. They can provide a structured argument to support their opinions, and they may construct hypotheses, but patterns of error appear. They can discuss some topics abstractly, especially those relating to their particular interests and special fields of expertise, but in general, they are more comfortable discussing a variety of topics concretely. Advanced-High speakers may demonstrate a well-developed ability to compensate for an imperfect grasp of some forms or for limitations in vocabulary by the confident use of communicative strategies, such as paraphrasing, circumlocution, and illustration. They use precise vocabulary and intonation to express meaning and often show great fluency and ease of speech. However, when called on to perform the complex tasks associated with the Superior level over a variety of topics, their language will at times break down or prove inadequate, or they may avoid the task altogether, for example, by resorting to simplification through the use of description or narration in place of argument or hypothesis.

ADVANCED MID

Speakers at the Advanced-Mid level are able to handle with ease and confidence a large number of communicative tasks. They participate actively in most informal and some formal exchanges on a variety of concrete topics relating to work, school, home, and leisure activities, as well as to events of current, public, and personal interest or individual relevance. Advanced-Mid speakers demonstrate the ability to narrate and describe in all major time frames (past, present, and future) by providing a full account, with good control of aspect, as they adapt flexibly to the demands of the conversation. Narration and description tend to be combined and interwoven to relate relevant and supporting facts in connected, paragraph-length discourse. Advanced-Mid speakers can handle successfully and with relative ease the linguistic challenges presented by a complication or unexpected turn of events that occurs within the context of a routine situation or communicative task with which they are otherwise familiar. Communicative strategies such as circumlocution or rephrasing are often employed for this purpose. The speech of Advanced-Mid speakers performing Advanced-level tasks is marked by substantial flow. Their vocabulary is fairly extensive although primarily generic in nature, except in the case of a particular area of specialization or interest. Dominant language discourse structures tend to recede, although discourse may still reflect the oral paragraph structure of their own language rather than that of the target language. Advanced-Mid speakers contribute to conversations on a variety of familiar topics, dealt with concretely, with much accuracy, clarity and precision, and they convey their intended message without misrepresentation or confusion. They are readily understood by native speakers unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives. When called on to perform functions or handle topics associated with the Superior level, the quality and/or quantity of their speech will generally decline. Advanced-Mid speakers are often able to state an opinion or cite conditions; however, they lack the ability to consistently provide a structured argument in extended discourse. Advanced-Mid speakers may use a number of delaying strategies, resort to narration, description, explanation or anecdote, or simply attempt to avoid the linguistic demands of Superior-level tasks.

ADVANCED LOW

Speakers at the Advanced-Low level are able to handle a variety of communicative tasks, although somewhat haltingly at times. They participate actively in most informal and a limited number of formal conversations on activities related to school, home, and leisure activities and, to a lesser degree, those related to events of work, current, public, and personal interest or individual relevance. Advanced-Low speakers demonstrate the ability to narrate and describe in all major time frames (past, present and future) in paragraph length discourse, but control of aspect may be lacking at times. They can handle appropriately the linguistic challenges presented by a complication or unexpected turn of events that occurs within the context of a routine situation or communicative task with which they are otherwise familiar, though at times

their discourse may be minimal for the level and strained. Communicative strategies such as rephrasing and circumlocution may be employed in such instances. In their narrations and descriptions, they combine and link sentences into connected discourse of paragraph length. When pressed for a fuller account, they tend to grope and rely on minimal discourse. Their utterances are typically not longer than a single paragraph. Structure of the dominant language is still evident in the use of false cognates, literal translations, or the oral paragraph structure of the speaker's own language rather than that of the target language. While the language of Advanced-Low speakers may be marked by substantial, albeit irregular flow, it is typically somewhat strained and tentative, with noticeable self-correction and a certain grammatical roughness. The vocabulary of Advanced-Low speakers is primarily generic in nature. Advanced-Low speakers contribute to the conversation with sufficient accuracy, clarity, and precision to convey their intended message without misrepresentation or confusion, and it can be understood by native speakers unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives, even though this may be achieved through repetition and restatement. When attempting to perform functions or handle topics associated with the Superior level, the linguistic quality and quantity of their speech will deteriorate significantly.

INTERMEDIATE HIGH

Intermediate-High speakers are able to converse with ease and confidence when dealing with most routine tasks and social situations of the Intermediate level. They are able to handle successfully many uncomplicated tasks and social situations requiring an exchange of basic information related to work, school, recreation, particular interests and areas of competence, though hesitation and errors may be evident. Intermediate-High speakers handle the tasks pertaining to the Advanced level, but they are unable to sustain performance at that level over a variety of topics. With some consistency, speakers at the Intermediate High level narrate and describe in major time frames using connected discourse of paragraph length. However, their performance of these Advanced-level tasks will exhibit one or more features of breakdown, such as the failure to maintain the narration or description semantically or syntactically in the appropriate major time frame, the disintegration of connected discourse, the misuse of cohesive devises, a reduction in breadth and appropriateness of vocabulary, the failure to successfully circumlocute, or a significant amount of hesitation. Intermediate-High speakers can generally be understood by native speakers unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives, although the dominant language is still evident (e.g. use of code-switching, false cognates, literal translations, etc.), and gaps in communication may occur.

INTERMEDIATE MID

Speakers at the Intermediate-Mid level are able to handle successfully a variety of uncomplicated communicative tasks in straightforward social situations. Conversation is generally limited to those predictable and concrete exchanges

necessary for survival in the target culture; these include personal information covering self, family, home, daily activities, interests and personal preferences, as well as physical and social needs, such as food, shopping, travel and lodging. Intermediate-Mid speakers tend to function reactively, for example, by responding to direct questions or requests for information. However, they are capable of asking a variety of questions when necessary to obtain simple information to satisfy basic needs, such as directions, prices and services. When called on to perform functions or handle topics at the Advanced level, they provide some information but have difficulty linking ideas, manipulating time and aspect, and using communicative strategies, such as circumlocution.

Intermediate-Mid speakers are able to express personal meaning by creating with the language, in part by combining and recombining known elements and conversational input to make utterances of sentence length and some strings of sentences. Their speech may contain pauses, reformulations and self-corrections as they search for adequate vocabulary and appropriate language forms to express themselves. Because of inaccuracies in their vocabulary and/or pronunciation and/or grammar and/or syntax, misunderstandings can occur, but Intermediate-Mid speakers are generally understood by sympathetic interlocutors accustomed to dealing with non-natives.

INTERMEDIATE LOW

Speakers at the Intermediate-Low level are able to handle successfully a limited number of uncomplicated communicative tasks by creating with the language in straightforward social situations. Conversation is restricted to some of the concrete exchanges and predictable topics necessary for survival in the target language culture. These topics relate to basic personal information covering, for example, self and family, some daily activities and personal preferences, as well as to some immediate needs, such as ordering food and making simple purchases. At the Intermediate-Low level, speakers are primarily reactive and struggle to answer direct questions or requests for information, but they are also able to ask a few appropriate questions. Intermediate-Low speakers express personal meaning by combining and recombining into short statements what they know and what they hear from their interlocutors. Their utterances are often filled with hesitancy and inaccuracies as they search for appropriate linguistic forms and vocabulary while attempting to give form to the message. Their speech is characterized by frequent pauses, ineffective reformulations and self-corrections. Their pronunciation, vocabulary and syntax are strongly influenced by their first language but, in spite of frequent misunderstandings that require repetition or rephrasing, Intermediate-Low speakers can generally be understood by sympathetic interlocutors, particularly by those accustomed to dealing with non-natives.

NOVICE HIGH

Speakers at the Novice-High level are able to handle a variety of tasks pertaining to the Intermediate level, but are unable to sustain performance at

that level. They are able to manage successfully a number of uncomplicated communicative tasks in straightforward social situations. Conversation is restricted to a few of the predictable topics necessary for survival in the target language culture, such as basic personal information, basic objects and a limited number of activities, preferences and immediate needs. Novice-High speakers respond to simple, direct questions or requests for information; they are able to ask only a very few formulaic questions when asked to do so. Novice-High speakers are able to express personal meaning by relying heavily on learned phrases or recombinations of these and what they hear from their interlocutor. Their utterances, which consist mostly of short and sometimes incomplete sentences in the present, may be hesitant or inaccurate. On the other hand, since these utterances are frequently only expansions of learned material and stock phrases, they may sometimes appear surprisingly fluent and accurate. These speakers' first language may strongly influence their pronunciation, as well as their vocabulary and syntax when they attempt to personalize their utterances. Frequent misunderstandings may arise but, with repetition or rephrasing, Novice-High speakers can generally be understood by sympathetic interlocutors used to non-natives. When called on to handle simply a variety of topics and perform functions pertaining to the Intermediate level, a Novice-High speaker can sometimes respond in intelligible sentences, but will not be able to sustain sentence level discourse.

NOVICE MID
Speakers at the Novice-Mid level communicate minimally and with difficulty by using a number of isolated words and memorized phrases limited by the particular context in which the language has been learned. When responding to direct questions, they may utter only two or three words at a time or an occasional stock answer. They pause frequently as they search for simple vocabulary or attempt to recycle their own and their interlocutor's words. Because of hesitations, lack of vocabulary, inaccuracy, or failure to respond appropriately, Novice-Mid speakers may be understood with great difficulty even by sympathetic interlocutors accustomed to dealing with non-natives. When called on to handle topics by performing functions associated with the Intermediate level, they frequently resort to repetition, words from their native language, or silence.

NOVICE LOW
Speakers at the Novice-Low level have no real functional ability and, because of their pronunciation, they may be unintelligible. Given adequate time and familiar cues, they may be able to exchange greetings, give their identity, and name a number of familiar objects from their immediate environment. They are unable to perform functions or handle topics pertaining to the Intermediate level, and cannot therefore participate in a true conversational exchange.

APPENDIX E
Analytic descriptors of spoken language
(Council of Europe, 2001, pp.28-29)

	Range	**Accuracy**	**Fluency**	**Interaction**	**Coherence**
C2	Shows great flexibility reformulating ideas in differing linguistic forms to convey finer shades of meaning precisely, to give emphasis, to differentiate and to eliminate ambiguity. Also has a good command of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms.	Maintains consistent grammatical control of complex language, even while attention is otherwise engaged (e.g. in forward planning, in monitoring others' reactions).	Can express him/herself spontaneously at length with a natural colloquial flow, avoiding or backtracking around any difficulty so smoothly that the interlocutor is hardly aware of it.	Can interact with ease and skill, picking up and using non-verbal and intonational cues apparently effortlessly. Can interweave his/her contribution into the joint discourse with fully natural turntaking, referencing, allusion making etc.	Can create coherent and cohesive discourse making full and appropriate use of a variety of organisational patterns and a wide range of connectors and other cohesive devices.
C1	Has a good command of a broad range of language allowing him/her to select a formulation to express him/herself clearly in an appropriate style on a wide range of general, academic, professional or leisure topics without having to restrict what he/she wants to say.	Consistently maintains a high degree of grammatical accuracy; errors are rare, difficult to spot and generally corrected when they do occur.	Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously, almost effortlessly. Only a conceptually difficult subject can hinder a natural, smooth flow of language.	Can select a suitable phrase from a readily available range of discourse functions to preface his remarks in order to get or to keep the floor and to relate his/her own contributions skilfully to those of other speakers.	Can produce clear, smoothly flowing, well-structured speech, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.

B2	Has a sufficient range of language to be able to give clear descriptions, express viewpoints on most general topics, without much conspicuous searching for words, using some complex sentence forms to do so.	Shows a relatively high degree of grammatical control. Does not make errors which cause misunderstanding, and can correct most of his/her mistakes.	Can produce stretches of language with a fairly even tempo; although he/she can be hesitant as he or she searches for patterns and expressions, there are few noticeably long pauses.	Can initiate discourse, take his/her turn when appropriate and end conversation when he / she needs to, though he /she may not always do this elegantly. Can help the discussion along on familiar ground confirming comprehension, inviting others in, etc.	Can use a limited number of cohesive devices to link his/her utterances into clear, coherent discourse, though there may be some "jumpiness" in a long con-tribution.
B1	Has enough language to get by, with sufficient vocabulary to express him/herself with some hesitation and circum-locutions on topics such as family, hobbies and interests, work, travel, and current events.	Uses reasonably accurately a repertoire of frequently used "routines" and patterns associated with more predictable situations.	Can keep going comprehensibly, even though pausing for grammatical and lexical planning and repair is very evident, especially in longer stretches of free production.	Can initiate, maintain and close simple face-to-face conversation on topics that are familiar or of personal interest. Can repeat back part of what someone has said to confirm mutual understanding.	Can link a series of shorter, discrete simple elements into a connected, linear sequence of points.
A2	Uses basic sentence patterns with memorised phrases, groups of a few words and formulae in order to commu-nicate limited	Uses some simple structures correctly, but still systematically makes basic	Can make him/herself understood in very short utterances, even though pauses, false starts and	Can answer questions and respond to simple statements. Can indicate when he/she is following but	Can link groups of words with simple connectors like "and,

	information in simple everyday situations.	mistakes.	reformulation are very evident.	is rarely able to understand enough to keep conversation going of his/her own accord.	"but" and "because".
A1	Has a very basic repertoire of words and simple phrases related to personal details and particular concrete situations.	Shows only limited control of a few simple grammatical structures and sentence patterns in a memorised repertoire.	Can manage very short, isolated, mainly pre-packaged utterances, with much pausing to search for expressions, to articulate less familiar words, and to repair communication.	Can ask and answer questions about personal details. Can interact in a simple way but communication is totally dependent on repetition, rephrasing and repair.	Can link words or groups of words with very basic linear connectors like "and" or "then".