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LING 2142 Fall 2019
Second Language Teaching
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Language Assessment Description

Learner Needs

At the beginning of our tutoring sessions, all three of my tutees expressed a desire to improve

their speaking skills, especially regarding interpersonal communication. They noted that interacting with

native English speakers who are not sympathetic interlocutors is difficult for them (i.e. unlike their

teachers at the ELI, who are accustomed to conversing with English language learners). One tutee,

Bogota, explicitly mentioned a desire to improve her grammatical accuracy in speech, while A-chan and

Lala both noted that they would prefer to focus on pronunciation and fluency.

Learner Proficiencies

Learners were first given a listening activity as a lead-in to a speaking activity, using the attached

worksheet and text that was read aloud to them three separate times; both activities inform the

following assessment of their listening and speaking proficiencies. It should be noted that each activity

focused on presentational listening and speaking rather than interpersonal, but a group roleplay seemed

unsuitable for giving each learner sufficient time to display their own skill with the language.

The listening activity tasked students with listening to the text, taking notes on words or phrases

they wanted to know more about, and then answering five short-answer questions based on the

content and working as a group to check their answers. After this, I asked each tutee to write a short (8-

10 sentences) narrative describing their favorite vacation experience. This prompt was selected to elicit

past-tense narration, which, according to ACTFL proficiency guidelines, is a type of linguistic task that

people at the higher end of the intermediate level and the entirety of the advanced level should be able

to handle (if with some difficulty). All tutees are in at least level 4 (Intermediate) of the ELI's program, so

it seemed a fitting task given both this information and my impressions of their linguistic abilities from prior interaction.

All three learners struggled with consistently employing past-tense narration. While Bogota was the most successful in speaking without relying on a fully-developed text for support (instead reading from her outline) and connecting her speech using transitional phrases, she sometimes lapsed into using present tense verbs while narrating the past. A-chan and Lala, by contrast, relied heavily on their written notes for support, and were more prone to using temporal lexemes along with verbs that were inflected for the present tense to express past meaning. Out of all three learners, A-chan's speech also contained the most errors overall, not just errors of expressing tense and aspect; she particularly struggled with differentiating between definite, indefinite, and null articles. Although all three learners are capable of using some high-frequency, templatic, past-tense verbs (ex. were, went, saw), they have yet to progress to reliably using morphosyntax to encode meaning in their language usage. I would place Bogota and Lala on a higher proficiency level than A-chan, though it is worth noting that A-chan seems to face difficulties with not only communicative *competence*, but also communicative *confidence*: she seems less confident in her own linguistic abilities than either Lala or Bogota. While this observation lacks a basis in any type of personal interview or survey to each learner about their own comfort with English, this is perhaps not dissimilar to the practice of an instructor becoming familiar with their students in a classroom setting and drawing on their own experiences as evidence. If formally assessed using a full OPI, I believe each tutee would be classified as either intermediate high or advanced low.