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BA English Honours | Semester III | Calicut University

English Language Teaching: Foundations and Practice Level 3

Course Code: ENG3MN203 • Module 3 Notes

Module III: Teaching English for International Language Proficiency Tests - Part 3: Speaking

1. Teaching Speaking as an Evaluative Productive Skill

The Speaking test in standardized international assessments represents a face-to-face (or high-definition video-call) interactive performance assessment. In IELTS, the speaking module lasts between 11 and 14 minutes and is conducted by a certified examiner. The test evaluates oral production across four distinct criteria:

- **Fluency and Coherence:** The ability to speak continuously with normal speech rates, minimal hesitation or self-correction, logical ordering of points, and natural use of connecting words and discourse markers.
- **Lexical Resource:** Varied and precise vocabulary, deployment of idiomatic expressions and colloquial phrasal verbs where appropriate, and effective paraphrasing when a specific lexical item escapes memory.
- **Grammatical Range and Accuracy:** Variety and correctness of grammatical structures, including compound and complex sentences, conditional forms, modal verbs, and accurate tense consistency.
- **Pronunciation:** Intelligibility, accurate individual sounds, correct word and sentence stress, rhythmic chunking, and expressive intonation contours that convey attitude and nuance.

2. Part 1: Introduction and Interview (4–5 Minutes)

Part 1 functions as an ice-breaker designed to settle candidate anxiety and evaluate communicative competence across familiar, everyday personal domains:

- **Core Topics:** Hometown, accommodation, family, current studies or occupation, daily routines, hobbies, sports, favorite foods, weather, public transportation, and leisure preferences.
- **Pedagogical Strategy (Extending Answers):** The most common error in Part 1 is providing curt, monosyllabic responses (e.g., "Do you work or study?" -> "I am a student"). Teachers must instill the **A-R-E-A Framework**:
  - **A - Answer:** Directly answer the examiner's question.
  - **R - Reason:** Explain why, providing underlying rationale.
  - **E - Example:** Offer an illustrative personal anecdote or specific instance.
  - **A - Alternative / Counter-thought:** Mention an alternative perspective or past contrast.
- **Avoiding Memorized Scripts:** Examiners are trained to detect rehearsed, memorized chunks immediately. If memorization is detected, examiners alter questions abruptly or penalize fluency scores. Answers must sound spontaneous, natural, and conversational.

3. Part 2: Long Turn / The Individual Monologue (3–4 Minutes)

Part 2 evaluates the candidate's capacity to deliver an extended, uninterrupted oral monologue of **1 to 2 minutes** on an assigned topic without prompting from the examiner:

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- **Structure of the Cue Card (Candidate Task Card):** The card presents a central prompt (e.g., "Describe an unforgettable journey you have taken") followed by four specific bullet points:
  - Where you went
  - Who you traveled with
  - What you did during the trip
  - And explain why this journey was so memorable to you.
- **The Crucial 1-Minute Preparation Strategy:** Candidates are provided with paper and a pencil. Candidates must never write full sentences during preparation. Instead, teachers train them to write a rapid *spidergram or vertical bullet list*:
  1. One keyword for each bullet point.
  2. High-level sensory adjectives (e.g., breathtaking, chaotic, exhilarating).
  3. Advanced idiomatic phrases (e.g., "off the beaten track", "once-in-a-lifetime").
- **Sustaining the Monologue:** To speak for the full two minutes, candidates must organize their monologue narratively. If a candidate runs out of things to say about the bullet points, they should employ narrative expansion: detailing backstories, sensory memories (sounds, smells, sights), emotional reflections, and future expectations.
- **Rounding-Off Questions:** At the conclusion of the two minutes, the examiner stops the candidate and asks one or two brief follow-up questions to conclude Part 2.

4. Part 3: Two-Way Analytical Discussion (4–5 Minutes)

Part 3 shifts away from personal anecdotes toward abstract, analytical, and speculative discourse. The examiner engages the candidate in a rigorous two-way discussion exploring thematic issues linked conceptually to the Part 2 topic (e.g., if Part 2 was about a personal journey, Part 3 will interrogate global tourism impacts, ecotourism, future transportation technologies, and cultural homogenization):

- **Cognitive Functions Tested:**
  - *Expressing and Justifying Opinions:* "In my view, the principal drawback of mass tourism is..."
  - *Analyzing Causes and Effects:* "This phenomenon is largely attributable to..."
  - *Speculating About the Future:* "It is highly probable that high-speed rail will supersede domestic aviation..."
  - *Hypothesizing:* "If governments were to subsidize green energy, carbon emissions would plummet..."
  - *Evaluating and Comparing:* "While traditional education emphasizes rote memorization, digital platforms foster independent critical inquiry..."
- **Strategic Discourse Markers:** Instructors train candidates to use sophisticated signposting language to buy processing time and organize complex thoughts (e.g., "That's a multifaceted issue; looking at it from an economic vantage point...", "One cannot generalize, but broadly speaking...").

5. Phonology, Intonation & Language Lab Practice

Pronunciation accounts for 25% of the total speaking score. Effective ELT speaking pedagogy incorporates systematic phonological training in the language lab:

- **Connected Speech:** Teaching linking sounds (consonant-to-vowel linking), elision (disappearance of sounds like /t/ or /d/ in rapid speech), and weak vowel reductions (/ə/ schwa).

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- **Sentence Stress & Tonic Prominence:** Emphasizing content words (nouns, main verbs, adjectives) while unstressed structural words remain light. Shifting tonic stress to highlight contrasts or nuances (e.g., "I wanted to study *literature*, not *linguistics*").
- **Intonation Patterns:** Rising intonation for unfinished lists or polite inquiries; falling intonation for definitive declarative statements; fall-rise contours for reservations and polite disagreements.
- **Mock Speaking Audits:** Conducting recorded 1-on-1 mock interviews in the lab, analyzing audio playback with students against Cambridge assessment rubrics to build confidence and eliminate habitual fossilized errors.

Advanced Applied Linguistics, ELT Pedagogy & Testing Hermeneutics (Extension Phase 1)

In contemporary applied linguistics, second language acquisition (SLA) theory, and language assessment research, analyzing Module 3 demands a comprehensive synthesis of communicative language teaching (CLT), psychometric testing standards, and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) pedagogy. Preparing learners for high-stakes standardized assessments (IELTS, TOEFL) alongside workplace career benchmarks requires addressing the complex interplay between receptive decoding mechanisms, productive discourse generation, interactional pragmatics, and professional communicative registers.

1. Theoretical Paradigms in Language Assessment & Career Pedagogy

Scholars and practitioners in English language teaching address critical foundational debates within Module 3:

- **Construct Validity vs. Test-Wiseness (Washback Effect):** A central controversy in language testing is whether high scores reflect genuine communicative competence or merely strategic "cramming" and test-taking heuristics. The *washback effect* dictates that high-stakes tests directly shape classroom methodology; effective ELT pedagogy must harness positive washback, integrating rigorous communicative tasks rather than mechanical question drills.
- **Cognitive Load & Dual-Task Processing:** In both academic listening/reading and timed essay/monologue production, candidates manage intense cognitive load. Receptive processing requires simultaneously decoding phonological or orthographic input, activating topical schemata, evaluating distractors, and writing answers. Productive tasks demand concurrent ideational planning, syntactic formulation, lexical retrieval, and motor execution.
- **English for Specific Purposes (ESP) & Genre Analysis:** As John Swales formulated, professional communicative genres (resumes, cover letters, research abstracts, corporate presentations) possess distinctive rhetorical "moves." Teaching career English requires making these genre conventions transparent to learners, enabling them to command business registers and workplace etiquette.

2. Comparative Analytical Matrix: Standardized Testing vs. Workplace Communication

A structured comparative assessment delineates performance metrics and linguistic requirements across communicative contexts in Module 3:

Linguistic Dimension	IELTS / Standardized Testing	Academic Presentation English	Workplace Career English (Resumes, GD, Interviews)
Communicative Target	Demonstrating grammatical range, lexical precision, and test task	Rhetorical persuasion, clarity of concept,	Pragmatic efficacy, corporate value

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	completion.	engaging audience visually & vocally.	proposition, collaborative leadership.
Interactional Dynamic	Formal examiner-candidate dialogue; strict time-bound turn-taking.	Unidirectional structured presentation followed by audience Q&A.	Fluid group dynamics, polite consensus building, strategic turn-yielding.
Evaluation Criteria	Band descriptors (Task Response, Cohesion, Lexis, Grammar/Pronunciation).	Slide clarity, vocal modulation, logical signposting, concept retention.	STAR storytelling, ATS keyword match, diplomatic register, executive presence.
Error Consequence	Direct reduction in standardized band score (e.g. Band 7 to Band 6).	Loss of audience attention or academic credibility during defense.	Automated ATS resume rejection or unfavorable hiring decision.

3. Glossary of ELT Pedagogy, Psychometrics & Career Communication

Pedagogical Term	Disciplinary Domain	Standard Definition & Classroom Application
Washback (Backwash)	Language Assessment	The direct impact (positive or negative) that a high-stakes examination exerts on teaching methodologies, curriculum design, and learner motivation.
Receptive vs. Productive	SLA Theory	Receptive skills (listening, reading) involve passive decoding of input; productive skills (speaking, writing) demand active generation of linguistic output.
Distractor	Item Writing / Testing	An incorrect option in a multiple-choice question designed to appear plausible, testing a candidate's precision in distinguishing nuances.
A-R-E-A Framework	Oral Fluency Training	A structured speaking heuristic: Answer the question, provide Reason, offer concrete Example, and suggest an Alternative perspective.
STAR Technique	Interview Pedagogy	Behavioral interview answering model: Situation (context), Task (objective), Action (specific steps taken), Result (quantified achievement).
ATS Optimization	Career Document Design	Applicant Tracking System formatting: structuring resumes with standard headers, chronological layout, and industry keywords to pass algorithmic filters.

4. Structured Pedagogical Protocol for Language Laboratory Practice

Professional instruction across Module 3 follows an organized four-phase laboratory cycle:

- **Phase 1: Diagnostic Assessment & Error Logging:** Administering calibrated benchmark diagnostics in the lab; recording audio monologues or written tasks to identify specific linguistic and strategic bottlenecks.
- **Phase 2: Targeted Strategy Workshops:** Explicit teaching of sub-skills (e.g., speed-reading scanning drills, phonetic linking reduction exercises, ATS resume parsing, STAR interview simulations).
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