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From Face-to-Face to Paired Oral Proficiency Interviews: The Nut is Yet to be Cracked

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Abstract

The pressing need for English oral communication skills in multifarious contexts today is compelling impetus behind the large number of studies done on oral proficiency interviewing. Moreover, given the recently articulated concerns with the fairness and social dimension of such interviews, parallel concerns have been raised as to how most fairly to assess the oral communication skills of examinees, and what factors contribute to more skilled performance. This article sketches theory and practice on two rather competing formats of oral proficiency interviewing: face-to-face and paired. In the first place, it reviews the related literature on the alleged disadvantages of the individual format. Then, the pros and cons of the paired format are enumerated. It is discussed that the paired format has indeed met some of the criticisms leveled at individual oral proficiency interviewing. However, exploitation of the paired format as an undisputable alternative to the face-to-face format begs the question.

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