Assessing Oral Proficiency in Spanish: Measuring How Well Students Perform Authentic Tasks

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Modern Language Studies seeks to develop assessment tools to measure our majors' ability to perform successfully authentic tasks in the target language, in this case, Spanish. To that end, and as part of a comprehensive departmental assessment plan, we aim to create two means by which we can measure students' oral proficiency. One assessment is a modification of an oral proficiency test administered by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, the organization that sets the standards for our profession. The second is a self-assessment instrument that will be administered along with the oral proficiency test. Research on second-language acquisition shows the clear correlation between a collaborative approach to assessment and the attainment of learner outcomes. Furthermore, studies also demonstrate that when students reflect on their own assessment, they are more motivated, which in turn increases the likelihood that they will continue to develop their communicative abilities.

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