

*Performance of interactional competence with
and without extended pre-task planning time:*

The case of classroom-based speaking assessment in Hong Kong

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Effect of pre-task planning time on speaking performance in testing contexts

- Mixed findings in terms of proficiency measures – fluency, accuracy, complexity – and impact on test scores (Wigglesworth & Elder, 2010)
- Little research on the effect of planning time on interactional patterns in dialogic tasks (Nitta & Nakatsuhara, 2014)
- Nitta and Nakatsuhara (2014)
 - Quantitative analysis: slight benefits for test scores
 - Qualitative analysis: planning time inhibits the task from assessing candidates' ability to interact collaboratively

Issues of planning time in the context of English Language SBA in Hong Kong

- Hamp-Lyons (2015)
 - Remains a continuing challenge
 - SBA Guidelines for Teachers: 10 minutes of planning time
 - The diversity of performance observed reflects a diverse range of task implementation conditions
 - Amount of planning time
 - Planning individually vs. planning as a group
 - Over-preparation perhaps the result of the summative role of SBA in the high-stakes examination

Issues of planning time in the context of English Language SBA in Hong Kong

- Lam (2015)
 - Students given extended preparation time pre-plan the assessed interaction
 - Remove the information/opinion gaps – the need to communicate
 - Eliminate the spontaneity and contingencies inherent in interaction
 - Interactional competence observed in the assessed interaction is a ‘canned product’ rather than spontaneously executed

Assessment context: SBA in HKDSE

- **School-based Assessment** (SBA) component of the **Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination** (HKDSE)
 - 15% of the subject mark (another 10% = speaking exam)
 - Takes place in Secondary 5 and Secondary 6
 - Format: *Individual Presentation* and *Group Interaction*
 - Part A: based on books/movies in the extensive reading/viewing program
 - Part B: based on elective modules



Assessment context

- The **Group Interaction** task
 - 4 students per group, assessed by their own English teacher
 - Discussion time: 8-12 minutes
 - Preparation time: *varies!*
 - 10 minutes (School L); 2-6 hours (School P)

Data

- Data collected in the larger project
 - Video-recordings of assessed interactions (42 groups) from two schools
 - Stimulated recall interviews with students (14 groups) and with teachers (5 groups)
 - Mock assessments (2 groups) – preparation time video-recorded
- Data for this paper
 - **Same group of 4 students** performing the Group Interaction task under different task conditions:
 - (1) **4-5 hours** of preparation time (in the **real** assessment)
 - (2) **10 minutes** of preparation time (in the **mock** assessment)
 - Mock assessment conducted 2 months after the real assessment

Assessment task

- Discussion prompt – *real assessment*

Group Interaction (Elective module: Workplace Communication)

You are a member of the marketing team of Fabulous International Company. Your company is going to promote an existing / a new food item or drink. Discuss with your team ways to promote this product.

You should include the following:

- the target group(s)
- special features of the product
- strategies to promote the product
- anything else you think is important

Assessment task

- Discussion prompt – *mock assessment*

Group Interaction (Elective module: Workplace Communication)

You are a member of the marketing team of Slim Easy Ltd. Your company is going to promote a new slimming product / treatment package. Discuss with your team ways to promote this product / treatment package.

You may consider the following aspects:

- special features of the product / treatment package
- competitors and similar products on the market
- strategies to promote the product / treatment package
- anything else you think is important

Data analysis

- Micro-analysis of the test discourse
 - a conversation analytic approach
- Note cards the students used
 - to provide supplementary evidence of their pre-planning

Extract 1



PB14: 10-25

1. L: Mm. Yes, our company has just released (.) our beauty products
2. in- eh- uhm the teenagers. Mm:: (.) mm:: (1.9) uhm: so: are you
3. guys clear about the special features of the product?
4. K: °Mm.° I've heard that the new products .h are composed of a
5. traduditional Chinese medicine. That is quite special.
6. (..)
7. T: **Uhm:: but, do you think that the traditional Chinese medicine .h**
8. **have strong and strange smell? Many people may refuse to use**
9. **our ↑pro↓duct.**
10. S: Hey. You've missed out a ↑po↓int. That is our product also includes
11. (.) natural ingredients (.) li:ke lavender (.) which is successfully cover
12. (.) the:: ↑smell brought by the traditional Chinese medicine.
13. L: Mm:: (.) It's one of the fo- ma- m- main focus, that uh to promote our
14. product. .h Uhm, it is not smelly even if we have added the traditional
15. Chinese medicine into it.

Extract 1: PB14

T: Uhm:: but, do you think that the traditional Chinese medicine .h
have strong and strange smell? Many people may refuse to use our
↑pro↓duct.

- Student T challenges the idea proposed by K
 - T's turn builds on and topicalizes the previous speaker's contribution rather than deliver her own pre-planned idea
 - Favorably remarked by the teacher-rater in the stimulated recall
- BUT in fact a pre-scripted response
 - agreeing/disagreeing exchanges had been pre-planned and turns had been pre-allocated

Extract 2



(Words in orange:
looking at note card)

PB14Mock: 76-90

1. K: Yeah[r], besides websites, we might also think some
2. other ways to promote our products, like uhm we may set up
3. some big banners (.) everywhere like uhm the buses, the
4. MTR stations, both uhm places are: uh the teenagers always
5. will uhm go to, or: uhm >they may notice it<, so, they will (.)
6. realize that our products' uhm benefits, and then (.) uhm
7. they may have uh interest on them. °What do you think?°
8. (...) ((T turns to L and the two exchange looks))
9. T: \\°Uhm:::° (.)
10. \\((turns away from L and looks down at note card))
11. I think sell:: our product to school by free gift is (a great)
12. is a good idea also. .hh Because can let students to try our
13. products, and:: (.)
14. and:: understand more: (.) our:: (.) our: fo- our features of
15. our products. \\>°What do you think?°<
16. \\ ((turns from note card to K))

Extract 2: PB14Mock

- Student T – the weakest student-candidate
 - reliance on pre-planned ideas and speech
 - only managing peripheral participation when speaking turns are locally distributed/secured rather than pre-allocated
 - taking two turns rather than five

Extract 3a

PB14Mock: 91-112

1. T:
2. and:: understand more: (.) our:: (.) our: fo- our features of
3. our products. ((turns from note card to K)) °What do you
4. think?°
5. S: \\You guy got a- (you) got a good poi:nt.
6. \\((glances across the group))
7. And I think uh:: we can- or- \\>just similar to< what
8. \\((gestures to T))
9. XX((name of T)) has said, uhm we can: give some fr- free
10. goods to schools and cooperate with them, and promote our
11. product to- the student who:: got an: who have obesity p-
12. the problem of (.) obesity. So uh we can take reference for
13. their BMI to promote our products and, .h (on one side) we
14. can help (.) uh better (health){help}, on their health.

Extract 3b

PB14Mock: 91-112

1. All °Mm.° ((L and T nod; L and K exchange looks))
2. L: °Uhm:° uhm \\I agree that we should \\(.) uh we should
3. \\((looks at S)) \\((browses her note card))
4. promote our product like (.) uh by giving free gift to
5. \\different schools, .h uhm as being a:
6. \\((looks at different group members from this point on))
7. respode{responsible} social (.) cores- co-operatio- co-
8. operations{corporation} uh (.) I think our companies should bear the: (.)
9. social responsibility, which is like arisings{raising} the awareness of the
10. .h teenagers uh: to deal with the obesity problems.
11. Uh\\m by differ-distributing free gifts// to schools, .h
12. \\((browses note card))//
13. uhm:: (.) we ca:n (.) apart from promoting our products, we can also (.)
14. help the students to know more: (.) the importance (.) to uhm: to have
15. a: (.) good BM<(h)I(h)> level and index.=[Uh (.)

Extract 3: PB14Mock

- Student S
 - Makes explicit reference to previous speaker's talk ('just similar to what T has said')
 - Elaborates on how to operationalize the promotion in schools
- Student L
 - Gives an extended account for agreeing with the 'free gifts' proposal
 - Incorporates the idea of BMI mentioned by S
- Building own contribution upon that of previous speakers'
 - Sustaining and developing a topic
 - Displaying understanding of previous speakers' talk

- ① Chinese ^{medical} ingredient vs 別人 (沒 ingredient) No side effect
② (natural) ^
- suitable for ~~everyone~~ all skins

Target group = teenagers

others = toxic chemical
~~ingredient~~
→ sensitive skins
+ side effect

- ① - product placement ↑ transformers ↓
② - P&G products ⇒ free gifts to school.
③ Websites ^{official} facebook (Million "Like")
show the ways to use the product

L

Student L's note card for PB14Mock

Natural.
K Chinese ingredient.
~~* suitable for all types of skin~~ } Feature.

S

→ Compare with other product.

- ① product placement → Transformer.
- ② P & G ^{target group.} free gift → school ^{per day.} → sold for around 800 pieces.
(students) → try whether suitable for them
- ③ Social networking website. → small package size.
↓ volume ↓ ^{admin. cost} cost.

Student S's note card for PB14Mock

Findings

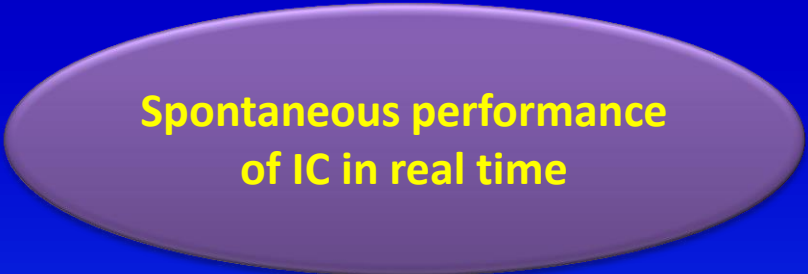
- The 10-minute planning time condition
 - Stronger students: able to *spontaneously* construct responses that were **contingent on previous speakers' contributions**
 - Weaker student: reliance on pre-planned ideas and speech; peripheral participation
- The extended planning time condition
 - The same weaker student produced a disagreeing response which was ostensibly contingent on the previous speaker's contribution, but in fact pre-scripted
- Some preliminary evidence that **this component of interactional competence manifests itself differently** in assessed performance under **different task conditions**
 - Amount of preparation time -> whether pre-planning and pre-scripting is enabled/disabled

Conclusions

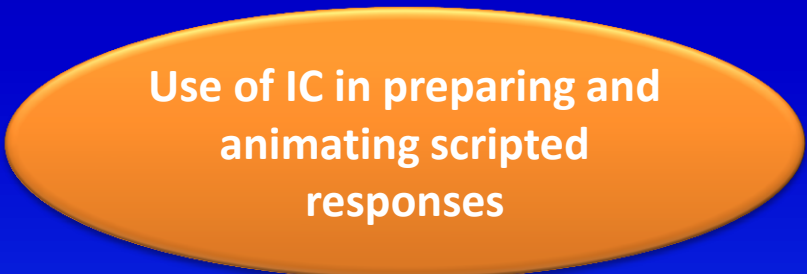
- GI task *without* extended planning time
 - Qualitative discourse evidence suggests that it has a higher capacity to **discriminate** between stronger and weaker candidates in terms of **spontaneous production of responses contingent on the previous speakers' talk**
 - “Speaking performance.....requires the extemporaneous integration of **procedural memory** into a **real-time performance.**” (Ross, 2012, p.225)

Conclusions

- GI task *with* extended preparation time
 - Students were found to pre-plan and pre-script the interaction



Spontaneous performance
of IC in real time



Use of IC in preparing and
animating scripted
responses

- The distinction is largely obscured

Implications

- From an **assessment-of-learning** perspective:
 - Changes in task implementation
- Extended pre-task planning time (approx. 30min)
 - just enough to brainstorm content ideas and research language items
 - time constraint might encourage students to abandon pre-planning or pre-scripting the interaction

Implications

- From an **assessment-*for*-learning** perspective:
 - Possible ‘*linguaging*’ opportunities: Extended planning time facilitated meta-discursive discussion about IC
 - More in-depth analysis of student interaction during planning time might be worthwhile
- SBA needs to be viewed differently from traditional assessment-of-learning notions of validity, reliability and fairness (Qian, 2014)
- Hamp-Lyons (2015)
 - ‘fairness’ as reliability
 - ‘fairness’ as ‘ensuring that every student has the opportunity to develop their knowledge and ability to the best of their capabilities’ (p.32)

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