

UNIVERSIDAD SAN FRANCISCO DE QUITO USFQ

Colegio de Posgrados

**Understanding The Nonverbal Communication Skills and The Four
Maxims of Discourse Theories Behind The IELTS Speaking Strategies
Taught To Students And Raising Students' Awareness Of The Importance
Of These Strategies**

Mecanismo de Titulación: Proyecto de Investigación y Desarrollo

Mehrshad Mina

**Janine Harriet Berger Mason
Director de Trabajo de Titulación**

Trabajo de titulación de posgrado presentado como
requisito para la obtención del título de Magíster en
Enseñanza de Inglés como Segundo Idioma

Quito, 23 de julio 2021

UNIVERSIDAD SAN FRANCISCO DE QUITO USFQ
COLEGIO DE POSGRADOS

HOJA DE APROBACIÓN DE TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN

**Understanding The Nonverbal Communication Skills And The Four
maxims of Discourse Theories Behind The IELTS Speaking Strategies
Taught To Students And Raising Students' Awareness Of The Importance
Of These Strategies**

Mehrshad Mina

Scott Thomas
Gibson PhD in
English
Director del programa de Maestría en
Enseñanza de Inglés como Segunda Lengua

Cristen Davalos O'Neill
PhD in Research in Geography
Decano del Colegio de Ciencias
Sociales y Humanidades COCISOH

Hugo Burgos
Yáñez PhD in
Media Studies
Decano del Colegio de Posgrados

Quito, julio

© DERECHOS DE AUTOR

Por medio del presente documento certifico que he leído todas las Políticas y Manuales de la Universidad San Francisco de Quito USFQ, incluyendo la Política de Propiedad Intelectual USFQ, y estoy de acuerdo con su contenido, por lo que los derechos de propiedad intelectual del presente trabajo quedan sujetos a lo dispuesto en esas Políticas.

Asimismo, autorizo a la USFQ para que realice la digitalización y publicación de este trabajo en el repositorio virtual, de conformidad a lo dispuesto en la Ley Orgánica de Educación Superior del Ecuador.

Nombre del estudiante: Mehrshad Mina

Código de estudiante: 00215430

C.I.: 1758807851

Lugar y fecha: Quito, 23 de julio de 2021

ACLARACIÓN PARA PUBLICACIÓN

Nota: El presente trabajo, en su totalidad o cualquiera de sus partes, no debe ser considerado como una publicación, incluso a pesar de estar disponible sin restricciones a través de un repositorio institucional. Esta declaración se alinea con las prácticas y recomendaciones presentadas por el Committee on Publication Ethics COPE descritas por Barbour et al. (2017) Discussion document on best practice for issues around theses publishing, disponible en <http://bit.ly/COPETHeses>.

UNPUBLISHED DOCUMENT

Note: The following graduation project is available through Universidad San Francisco de Quito USFQ institutional repository. Nonetheless, this project – in whole or in part – should not be considered a publication. This statement follows the recommendations presented by the Committee on Publication Ethics COPE described by Barbour et al. (2017) Discussion document on best practice for issues around theses publishing available on <http://bit.ly/COPETHeses>.

DEDICATION

I dedicate my thesis work to my students and all language learners around the world who are making great effort to pursue their dreams every day. A very special dedication to my professors Janine Berger and Scott Gibson who have unconditionally supported me during this project.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am so happy and grateful now that after three years of searching and looking for a great place to start my tertiary education, I was finally able to begin my master's journey at Universidad San Francisco de Quito in 2019 and successfully finish it now. As professional development and growth have always been my primary goal in life, I want to thank myself first for never quitting despite all challenges and difficulties I have faced these years being an immigrant on my own in a completely different continent.

I would also like to express my gratitude to all those who have supported me in different stages of this master's program, i.e., my professors, my peers, the university staff, and the participants of my capstone project, without whom achieving this success was never possible.

RESUMEN

Este estudio se centró en el papel de las máximas conversacionales de Gricean y la comunicación no verbal en el módulo de expresión oral del examen IELTS. Para ello, participaron ocho adolescentes que se preparaban para participar en la prueba IELTS. Esta tesis informa sobre su comportamiento basándose en un curso presencial grabado en video de 10 horas que se llevó a cabo en Zoom® como un intervalo de instrucción entre dos pruebas simuladas. Además, se pidió a los estudiantes que llevaran un diario para registrar sus pensamientos y su experiencia de las estrategias que se les enseñaron durante un período de 5 semanas. Los resultados demostraron que las dos variables independientes, es decir, las máximas conversacionales y la comunicación no verbal afectaron el desempeño de los futuros candidatos. Este estudio corrobora los hallazgos de la literatura en el sentido de que los dos factores antes mencionados sí tienen un efecto en pruebas de riesgo tan alto, aunque no se ha reconocido explícitamente.

Palabras clave: máximas conversacionales, Grice, IELTS, comunicación no verbal

ABSTRACT

This study focused on the role of the Gricean conversational maxims and nonverbal communication in the speaking module of the IELTS test. To this end, eight teenagers who were preparing to take part in the IELTS test participated. This thesis reports on their behavior by drawing on a 10-hour video-recorded classroom course which was held in Zoom® as an instructional interval between two mock tests. In addition, students were asked to keep a journal to record their thoughts and their experience of the strategies which were taught to them during a 5-week period. The results demonstrated that the two independent variables, i.e., the conversational maxims and nonverbal communication affected the performance of the to-be candidates. This study corroborates the findings of the literature in that the two aforementioned factors do have an effect on such high-stake tests, although it has not been acknowledged explicitly.

Key words: conversational maxims, Grice, IELTS, nonverbal communication

TABLE OF CONTENTS

RESUMEN.....	7
ABSTRACT.....	8
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	10
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	13
2.1. IELTS speaking test.....	14
2.1.1. Speaking test construct.....	15
2.2. Gricean conversation maxims.....	19
2.2.1. What are conversational maxims?.....	20
2.2.1.1. Maxims of Quantity (be informative).....	21
2.2.1.2. Maxims of Quality (be truthful).....	22
2.2.1.3. Maxim of Relation (be relevant).....	24
2.2.1.4. Maxims of Manner (be clear).....	25
2.3. Non-verbal communication.....	26
CHAPTER 3: METHOD.....	30
3.1. Approach.....	30
3.2. Data collection.....	31
3.3. Data analysis.....	32
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS.....	36
4.1. Conversational maxims.....	36
4.1.1. Maxim of Quantity.....	36
4.1.2. Maxim of Quality.....	37
4.1.3. Maxim of Relation.....	40
4.1.4. Maxim of Manner.....	41
4.2. Nonverbal communication skills.....	44
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS.....	48
REFERENCES.....	51
APPENDIX INDEX.....	53

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“Do you speak English?” this ubiquitous question can be heard anywhere near a second/foreign language learner. The popularity of this question arises from the very purpose of language learning: as a means of achieving mutual understanding. Language is a functional tool which bridges the gap between individuals for the purpose of communication. One may be learning a language, for instance, to promote their careers or they may be students who wish to pursue higher education in another country. One may be simply a tourist wishing would survive in a foreign country. The goal of language teaching, whatsoever it may be, should enable language learners to hold a conversation exchange and communicate in the real-world target language (Kramsch, 1986).

For that matter, language teaching underwent a paradigm shift from the structuralism school to communicative approaches of teaching a language in order to accommodate the communicative needs of learners. As language teaching and assessment are interrelated, there was likewise a call for change in sheer psychometric models of educational assessment. Nowadays, a wider range of assessment is available to tap into learners’ communicative competence, namely, norm-referenced testing, criterion-referenced testing, formative assessment, and performance-based assessment (Gipps, 1994). In the light of such changes, language is no more conceptualized as a set of vocabulary items and grammatical structures to be learnt, but the ultimate aim of language proficiency is to make learners interactionally competent in real-life situations. Similarly, testing the speaking skill, among others, is no more viewed as an achievement test, but a proficiency one.

The paradigm shift was triggered by the notion of communicative competence that was proposed by Hymes (1971) who redefined Chomsky’s definition of language competence. Only a decade later, Kramsch (1986) shed light on a subset of communicative

competence, i.e. Interactional Competence (IC). This novel notion of competence was put forward due to the fact that the concept of ‘interaction’ was misconstrued. According to McNamara (1996) interaction had been viewed as a one-sided psychological construct occurring within an individual. This perspective is rather misguided. Interaction, in the words of Kramsch (1986), is not one-way, “not the sound of one hand clapping, but a two-way negotiative effort” (p. 368). For this social behavior to take place and to hold an effective interaction, both individuals should cooperate to carry on the conversation. Consequently, anything that might break off the conversation must be avoided. To achieve a mutual understanding in a conversation exchange, Grice (1975) advanced conversational maxims and believed that attending to these maxims will yield an effective conversation exchange. The importance of these maxims is implicitly highlighted in the IELTS speaking test and examiners explicitly voiced concerns about the violations of the Relevance maxim, among others (Inoue, et al., 2021). Furthermore, one of the vital components of IC that fills in the gaps of conversation and facilitates understanding is Nonverbal Behavior (NVB). It is so important a factor that, though neglected, does have an effect on examiners’ evaluations of participants who were open or closed to this behavior (Ducasse and Brown, 2009; Jenkins and Parra, 2003; May, 2011).

To capture the intricacies of learners’ interactional competence, the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), like its predecessor ELTS, was developed to be a “non-static instrument” (Inoue, et al., 2021) to be harmonious with the dynamic nature of learners’ competence. Moreover, the ever-growing population of immigrants and students entering higher education in other countries, placed a demand on government and educational institutions to determine immigrants’ and students’ level of proficiency in order to find best matches with commensurate abilities. The IELTS test has been the leading language proficiency test in this essence as it has proved to be both valid and reliable (Inoue, et al.,

2021). That said, there are concerns in terms of the validity of the speaking construct which is the foundation of the speaking section of the IELTS. The aforementioned factors, nonverbal behavior and Gricean maxims, are absent from the speaking rubric. That is in direct contrast with the scoring procedure of the IELTS test; scores are assigned to candidates in accord with how test takers actually ‘used’ the language. Whether this “use” of language is reflected in the band descriptors or not is a question worth discovering the answer. This study’s implications can help both IELTS instructors and candidates to be more aware of the hidden factors involved.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The displacement of a vast number of people owing to the internationalization of higher education and workforce migration has created demands for individuals with elevated proficiency levels. Governments and target institutions employ a proficiency test as a means of assessing individuals' language ability. To fulfill this purpose, the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is one of the most reliable, valid tests to accommodate both individuals and governments' needs. In fact, according to the official IELTS website, the number of IELTS test takers reached 3.5 million a year in 2018 (IELTS, 2019). As the most widely used test for citizenship purposes and a major entrance gate for students to pursue international higher education, the test should be inspected with such critical eye as it is in the vanguard of the testing field for such high-stake decisions, the impact of which will be life changing for test takers.

The IELTS comprises four subtests, namely speaking, reading, writing, and listening skill to operationalize test takers' language proficiency or their language ability in Bachman's terms (1990). Based on test takers' performance in these sub-tests, their scores are awarded on a 9-band scale ranging from 1 that is interpreted to be a 'non-user' to 9 who is deemed an 'Expert user' of the language (IELTS, 2017). Interestingly, test takers are described as 'users' of the language which portrays the value attributed to the real-world use of the language. Warwick Freeland, one of the major IELTS stakeholders in IDP Education maintained that what separates IELTS from other tests is its focus on real-life conversation. It is what makes people connected as individuals and forms an empowered community (IELTS, 2020). Due to the importance of conversations in day-to-day life, the speaking skill stands out among other language skills, and it is deemed to be one of the most difficult ones as well. Considering the impact of the IELTS test and its effect on the speaking skill in individuals' everyday life, this

study intends to investigate whether speaking construct is actually operationalized in the IELTS speaking module or not. Moreover, the importance of conversational maxims is underscored as people ultimately strive to have conversations in different areas of life.

2.1. IELTS speaking test

The IELTS speaking test is an interview between an examiner and a candidate and is designed to last between 11 to 14 minutes. The test comprises three main parts. Part 1 serves as the warm-up or introduction phase of the test. The candidate's identity is confirmed and the examiner introduces him/herself. Then, the interview begins and general questions are posed from familiar topic frames, for example candidates are asked about themselves, their interests, their work/studies, their hometowns/families, etc. for four to five minutes. In part 2 (also known as the long run), a prompt is given to the candidates with a one-minute preparation time for them to take notes and talk about a particular topic. Candidates should speak at length for about two minutes. The examiner may end this part by asking few rounding-off questions. Part 3 (two-way discussion) is thematically related to the Part 2 topic in which more abstract concepts are discussed and delineated. This part lasts between 4 to 5 minutes. Unlike other parts of the speaking test, in part 3, examiners are free to reformulate their questions and actually interact with the candidates (Seedhouse et al., 2013). Candidates are rated on four criteria, namely fluency and coherence, lexical resource, grammatical range and accuracy, and pronunciation. Whether these four criteria accurately reflect the speaking construct is discussed in the next section.

2.1.1. Speaking test construct

To have a better understanding of the backbone of the IELTS speaking module, we should explore the philosophy behind the design of the test i.e., its theoretical model. There are numerous theoretical models of the language ability proposed in the literature, the first of which was Canale and Swain's (1990) model. Their model was to represent communicative competence to be in line with the advent of paradigm shift in language teaching and novel communicative methods of language teaching. This model of language had an added feature of sociolinguistic competence apart from the grammatical and strategic competence which taps into the pragmatic knowledge of the language learners. Later in 1983, Canale began to expand this model of communicative competence by distinguishing between 'competence' and 'performance' or 'actual communication'. He argued that the realization of such knowledge is affected by both psychological and contextual variables. In his expansion of the model, another category was added named discourse competence. Socio-linguistic competence now includes socio-cultural rules and pragmatics incorporation; furthermore, non-verbal behavior and proxemics are also considered a part of the socio-linguistic competence as it is an integral component of the creation of 'social meaning'. Furthermore, Bachman (1990) refined the model by first, distinguishing between 'skill' and 'knowledge', then he portrayed the interaction of various components of communicative language ability (CLA) and their processes in the context of language use.

As the purpose of this paper is the speaking section of the IELTS test, let us shift the focus to the 'interactional competence' which is specially defined to capture speakers' speech structure. Drawing on the notions of socio-linguistic competence, interactional competence focuses on the co-construction of meaning between individuals in a dynamic, social context. McNamara argues that in models of CLA, Canale and Swain or Bachman (1990) view *interaction* in a one-sided perspective. Interaction can be defined in two main senses: (1) It

can be viewed as a psychological construct referring to the mental activities which takes place *within* a single individual, and (2) a social one in which meaning is co-constructed *between* individuals. McNamara believes that in previous models of CLA, interaction was considered to be an ability within an individual. His contention is that we should take a ‘more dynamic’ approach towards social interaction and actualize performance within context to include factors that do affect interaction but are excluded in language assessment. To include both dynamic and static components of the speaking ability, Fulcher (2003) put forward a framework for describing the speaking construct. This framework is composed of (1) language competence, (2) strategic capacity, (3) textual knowledge, (4) pragmatic knowledge, and (5) sociolinguistic knowledge.

The IELTS test was developed to reflect the “dynamic” process of test development and the real-life conversations, i.e., to be a “non-static” instrument to tap into test takers’ not only language ability but also their use of the language. Nevertheless, if we consider the IELTS criteria for test takers’ oral proficiency, their speaking performance is rated based on their grammar knowledge, lexical resources, fluency, and pronunciation. The “relevance” of the answers and it being content related which appears only in Fluency and Coherence section in Bands 8 and 9.

If we juxtapose the IELTS speaking criteria and Fulcher’s framework of the speaking construct, we notice that IELTS test is only tapping the static parts of candidates’ language ability. Among different competences that Fulcher proposed, the language competence is reflected in the IELTS speaking criteria, since the static knowledge of vocabulary, syntax, and phonology do not change in the 15-minute period of the speaking test. However, other components of the Fulcher’s framework refer to the dynamic knowledge, namely strategic competence, pragmatic competence, textual knowledge, and sociolinguistic knowledge. One might wonder, like McNamara (1996), that addressing the dynamic knowledge would be an

attempt to ‘open the Pandora’s box: “perhaps this Pandora’s box has remained closed for very good reasons” (p. 140). After all, how can one rate a candidate’s non-verbal behavior among others? If in the IELTS speaking band descriptors “conversational maxims” are not included, maybe it is for the best; right? Wrong.

In a recent research report published by the official IELTS organization, Inoue, Khabbazzbashi, Lam, and Nakatsuhara (2021) explored a large number of IELTS examiners’ perspectives on the speaking section of the test. Through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, all aspects of the speaking section were examined in examiners’ eyes. As examiners were pressured not to guide test takers or utter a word during part two of the speaking test, they employed other strategies to communicate, for instance gestures and their body language. Some of the examiners employed non-verbal behaviors to invite test takers to continue talking; others used it to solve problematic circumstances as to show candidates that they are not ‘pressing’ them for a response. Moreover, examiners vividly expressed their concerns for the speaking construct being viewed narrowly. When examiners’ opinions were asked regarding computer-delivered tests, they held that computers cannot replace humans as they lack the elements of natural speech and interactive features of speaking. Some of their comments are mentioned below (p. 28):

Computers can’t replace human interactions; gestures, eye contact, etc. are all parts of language ability. The purpose of the speaking test is to test candidates’ ability to speak in a natural communicative environment. (ET25)

Answering questions on a computer is not enough. What about body language? Intonation? And also responding to what has been said? People need to be able to talk to a person. (E15)

Moreover, when examiners' opinions were asked with regard to audio- or video-recording the speaking section, they positively viewed the use of videos due to the fact that candidates' facial expression and body language were captured in a video. In contrast, negative remarks were expressed towards the use of audio-recording by an examiner for the absence of body language. The very examiner mentioned that he preferred to talk to candidates or see their videos in order to grade them as "nuance is lost without body language" (p. 49). Of note is the fact that none of these non-verbal behaviors are mentioned in the IELTS Speaking rating scale. When the research team interviewed IELTS stakeholders and partners, they said that the lack of mentioning such information was deliberate as visual information should not affect examiners' judgment. However, non-behavior does have an effect and help contextualize test taker's utterance, as examiners mentioned above.

Another vital source of information that calls for test takers' awareness not only in the speaking section of the IELTS but also in real world is Gricean conversational maxims. As the name suggests, conversation takes place under the influence of such maxims and to have an effective interaction, one should not violate or flout such maxims. These maxims are divided into four groups and named (after Kant) Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner. Each of these maxims is explained in detail in the following section; however, IELTS examiners voiced concerns with respect to the violation of the Relation maxim (Inoue, Khabbazbashi, Lam, and Nakatsuhara, 2021). Examiners identified relevance to be missing from the band descriptors except being mentioned once in Band 8 in Fluency and Coherence. Speaking off-topic is a sign of lack of coherence; moreover, test takers can give irrelevant memorized responses while examiners cannot consider that a deviation from the main topic and penalize them. Examiners pinpointed that 'answering the question' or 'relevance of their answers' should be included in the rubric. Such inadequacies should be addressed as the IELTS test was developed to be a non-static measure focused on real-life conversation.

2.2. Gricean conversation maxims

As language users, we are able to understand more than merely distinguishing between correct and incorrect types and structures. Yule (2005) corroborates this issue by mentioning that we are not particularly concerned with the correct representation of the forms and structures used in a language when we focus on its explanation. We can deal with bits and pieces of information in news stories like *Trains collide, two die* and understand that what occurred during the second part is caused by what happened in the first part. This may be a fine example which explains a clear argument on how we respond to language that includes non-grammatical forms. We attempt to make sense of the document rather than merely ignoring it as illegible, i.e., we try to decode what the author meant in a rational manner. To achieve this, we depend on our knowledge of linguistics and structure to make our messages interpretable and to arrive at a mutual understanding, but this knowledge, though necessary, seems to be inadequate.

When we talk about the description of language, making sure that both structure and form are accurately expressed is our primary concern. That said, our literacy or knowledge of forms and structures is not the only key element which determines meaning. Like the example of the fragmented news title above, instead of merely rejecting the text as an ungrammatical piece of writing, we always make an attempt to find the real meaning behind it. The same view is held by Sperber and Wilson (1996) who distinguished between ‘inferential’ and ‘code’ meaning.

Sperber and Wilson’s view is an interpretation of Grice’s controversial article, ‘Meaning’. In this article, Grice in an analytic manner explained what it means for an individual A to mean something by an utterance x (here, ‘utterance’ refers to both a linguistic utterance and a non-linguistic utterance or nonverbal behavior): “[A] meant something by x’

is (roughly) equivalent to ‘[A] intended the utterance of x to produce some effect in an audience by means of the recognition of this intention’” (Grice 1957, p. 384).

Obviously, it is very natural for us, speakers and hearers, to have intentions and inferences while communicating. As speakers of a language, we intend to inform our hearers of some pieces of information. As hearers, we are to recognize and understand what the meaning behind a speaker’s utterance is. In this vein, for successful communication to take place, we, hearers, need to go beyond linguistic meaning and infer the speaker’s ‘intention’ or ‘meaning’ from it. Language, therefore, is not merely summarized as a system of codes, but it is about our attribution of meaning to it, our ‘intentions’. In response to philosophers who argued that there exist divergences in meaning, Grice rejected such perspectives as misguided and claimed that these mistakes are the result of inadequate attention to the importance of conditions that govern conversation. We now know them as conversational maxims (Grice, 1975).

2.2.1. What are conversational maxims?

Conversation is not a set of random talk exchange, rather a successful communication requires interlocutors to cooperate in order to co-construct meaning. Grice (1975) argued that native speakers of a language implicitly follow a cooperative principle in their conversations: they co-operate towards a mutually accepted purpose. This purpose may evolve during the conversation (e.g., everyday conversations) or it might be fixed from the beginning (e.g., IELTS speaking questions). Regardless of the purposes of each conversation, several maxims are employed to achieve a maximally effective exchange of information. To follow in the footsteps of Kant, Grice (1975) divided the nine conversational maxims into four categories and labelled them as Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner.

2.2.1.1. Maxims of Quantity (be informative)

Under the supermaxim of Quantity falls the following maxims: (1) try to contribute in an informative manner as much as it is necessary and give every piece of information that is required for being able to exchange information purposefully not to miss the important parts. (2) Do not contribute more than what is required i.e., leave the unnecessary details that are not important in a conversation. As an example, based on this maxim, if a person asks, “how can I go from the bus station to the library”? one should respond with an answer that both (a) has sufficient amount of information for the person to comprehend and (b) no more than that. One can answer sufficiently as in: “go straight and turn left until you arrive at the corner then your destination is on the right side”.

Conversely, if one is unable to attend to the Quantity maxim, they may in Gricean terms, violate the maxim by uttering: “keep going!”. One may as well be a loquacious person or be over informative; their circumlocution will be considered a violation of the Quantity maxim if they become a source of confusion or if they are misleading. For instance, for someone who is asking for direction one might say: “keep moving forward and go all the way down. You will see some beautiful flowers on the left side of the street and some outstanding trees that were perfectly planted on the right side a few days ago. When you arrive at the crossroad, you will see a huge area full of buildings that makes your head spin, then you need to turn left.” After that, the person who asked for direction might wonder bemused: “what did I ask?”

Consequently, one’s contribution of information must be neither more nor less than what their speaking partner asked. The importance of this maxim is underscored in the IELTS speaking module; as in each part of the speaking test, a hidden criterion exists for the amount

of time that each IELTS candidate speaks. Part one of the IELTS speaking test serves as an icebreaker and comprises a series of simple questions the answers of which should not be long. Candidates should respond to these questions with a short answer followed by a reason to justify their responses; no extra explanation is needed as it would be in contrast with the purpose of this part. Part two of the speaking test requires candidates to prepare for one minute, then speak up to two minutes about a general topic in the form of a monologue. Now, attending to the maxims of quantity becomes vital in this part; since if test takers are not as informative as required, it can have a negative effect on their score. On the other hand, if they are over informative, the examiner might interrupt them if their time is past two minutes which has no effect on their score, however, this interruption may have a negative influence on their performance in the following part of the test. Part three is the exact opposite of Part one; in this part, test takers must provide adequate explanations due to the abstractness of the questions. In this phase of the test, short answers like that of part one will not suffice and candidates' unawareness of this fact may adversely affect their scores.

2.2.1.2. Maxims of Quality (be truthful)

The supermaxim of Quality stipulates that one's contributions should be truthful and it comprises two specific maxims: (1) Say what you believe to be true, and (2) support your claims with adequate evidence. If you had to speak otherwise, one needs a disclaimer or some hedges to show their doubts about what they are about to utter. An example of the second maxim of Quality would be a situation like the following: A is planning to go on a trip with B; their destination is France; however, A likes to visit his friend C if it does not interfere with their plan and prolong their journey (an excerpt of Grice 1975, p. 51):

A. Where does C live?

B. Somewhere in the south of France. (B seems to be violating the maxim of Quantity in that he is less informative than is required, however, his violation of the maxim of Quantity was to account for the maxim of Quality, ‘Don’t say what you lack adequate evidence for’, B probably does not know where exactly C lives.)

Even though the gist of this supermaxim maintains one to be genuine in their contributions, Grice holds that the practice of these maxims should be reasonable (rational) to follow. Similarly, if a candidate is asked about sports about which they do not have an iota of clue, it is alright if they speak in place of their cousin who is a professional sport player. If we take it at face value, “white lies” are considered absolute infringements of the maxim of Quality as lies are the exact opposite of truth, hence they flout the Quality maxim. While we can define “White Lies” differently in any given context, unlike what we call as “real lies” or “big lies”, they are related to inconsequential matters or small things which are harmless to others and the reason why these lies are said is simply to have courtesies and hold onto polite social manners. That said, the maxim of Quality holds that one should utter what they believe to be true. In this sense, these utterances are not regarded spurious contributions as they genuinely contribute to the ultimate goal of the conversation as they help the speaker to hold the floor. As an example, I was told to tell my grandma I liked the sweaters she knitted me so I wouldn’t hurt her feelings by telling her the truth; in reality, they were awful. I did so, and she made me more! In this scenario, I broke the maxim because she believed what I said. Moreover, figures of speech can be employed without flouting this maxim if they are used appropriately. For instance, ‘I’m starving’ is not literally true, but it is an acceptable alternative to say I’m very hungry.

2.2.1.3. Maxim of Relation (be relevant)

Being relevant and making sure that every piece of information that you produce has sufficient relevance is another important maxim. The terse definition of Grice's maxim of Relation is quite vague and very much not self-explanatory. For this reason, we define this maxim through the lens of Sperber and Wilson (1996) who they elegantly put forward the Principle of Relevance in which it retains the Gricean conception of the inferential process of communication, but in a more detailed manner. Sperber and Wilson (1996) contrast two forms of communication processing i.e., "inferential" and "code" processes. What we make use of in our daily conversations is mostly inferential processes, since code processes refer to conventional mapping rules that by the help of the parser, our so-called syntactic machine, assigns meaning to each sentence. Now, the code processes are simply not adequate as in our casual conversations, a speaker may have a special intention in mind that can only be 'inferred' according to the context in which the conversation is taking place. For instance, a phrase like "Shall we?" can be interpreted in numerous ways contingent on the context. If it is uttered by one of the two people sitting in a car, the listener interprets it as the speaker wants to start the engine and start moving. However, if it is uttered in a club, while the speaker is pointing to the dance stage, the listener interprets it as an invitation to dance. Inferential processes, therefore, help hearers to better understand an intended meaning and disambiguate a rather straightforward utterance in a certain context.

In the IELTS test, a commonly suggested technique for test takers is if the question is a little unfamiliar, for instance, if the examiner's question pertains to the most common means of transportation in a metropolis and the test taker has never been to a metropolis, s/he can buy some time by beginning with formulaic language and then, talk about the most common means of transportation in their city; test takers can use an approximation technique as long as it shares a common presupposition with the question. The examiner is not looking for

accurate answers as is the case in coding processes, the answer they are looking for should be optimally relevant unless the irrelevance of the response can be justified by the test takers i.e., when irrelevance is intentional which makes it quite meaningful.

That said, according to IELTS examiners, off-topic answers adversely affect speakers' scores. One of the examiners in an interview with Inoue et al. (2021) provided an example of such memorized, irrelevant response (p. 44):

“Tell me about a book you've read', and the candidate says 'I read so many books. Reading is very good. Normally we do read at school. My school has many students...’”

Examiners cannot penalize test takers for such answers as Relevance is not explicitly and adequately addressed in the band descriptors. However, they can detect these memorized responses which will negatively influence their grading the candidates. Moreover, examiners believed that answering the question can help the flow of a conversation and while some of them regarded IELTS as a test of “language” proficiency, most of them, while accepting the former belief to be true, mentioned that the “content” should make sense as well (Inoue et al., 2021).

2.2.1.4. Maxims of Manner (be clear)

Clarity is at the heart of the maxim of Manner which contains four specific maxims: First, one's contributions in a talk exchange should not have obscurity i.e. the language should be easy to understand and should not contain lexical terms which equivocate the listener. Second, ambiguous structures should be avoided as the comprehension process becomes more difficult for the listeners due to the multilevel interpretation of meaning. Third, briefness is another maxim of clarity. It means providing concise information which helps the listeners concentrate on key elements in the conversation. The fourth and last maxim is to provide information in an orderly manner so that the listener can logically process it.

There are cases in which flouting the maxim of Manner can actually contribute to the conversation, none of which is advised in the IELTS test. The first scenario is when three people, while two of which converse in an obscure manner so that the third party, for example a child, would not understand the purpose of their conversation. Another case occurs in a literary work in which the author is being deliberately ambiguous. For example, consider Blake's poem: "*Never seek to tell thy love, Love that never told can be.*" This poem has double ambiguity; the word *love* has dual meaning of either the state of love or the object of it; also the line *love that never told can be* is ambiguous in that if the love is told, it cannot exist or the literal meaning of the line is another interpretation. What a beautiful literary trick, one might say, so it is a good idea to use it in the test to impress the examiner, right? Wrong. In the IELTS test, one's explanations should be as clear as rain since the ultimate goal is to convey the piece of information that can be understood. What good would it do if the examiner is wondering what to interpret of one's ambiguous utterance? In the light of that, one should avoid both ambiguity and obscurity in all parts of the test. Briefness should be attended to in part one of the IELTS speaking test and prolixity must be avoided. Last but not least, one should express their thoughts in a logical order especially in part two while describing an event requires telling a story in an orderly fashion.

2.3. Non-verbal communication

What's in a smile, a gaze, movements of the hands while someone is speaking? Are these iconic gestures divorced from meaning? Research shows that they are not. Gestures are not a set of redundant movements, but they are symbols that contribute to expressing the meanings which arise from speakers' minds (McNeill, 1992). With the help of iconic gestures, speech reveals the underlying processing system i.e. dimensions of a speaker's thought. To be more precise, Birdwistell (1970, p. 158) stated that "probably no more than 30

to 35 percent of the social meaning of a conversation or an interaction is carried by the words.” Therefore, meaning is co-constructed via both linguistic and nonverbal behavior or in Mehrabian’s (1972) terms: through “implicit communication”.

Three dimensions or meanings that are associated with nonverbal communication is highlighted by Mehrabian (1972): *immediacy*, *status*, and *responsiveness*. Immediacy is a set of behaviors that evoke positive or negative evaluations; status is revealed by the degree of one’s relaxation and arises from their perception of dominance versus submissive behavior; responsiveness is an offshoot of one’s reactivity and awareness; for instance, being active or passive. The following studies will set the scene by reviewing these replicable dimensions in kinesics.

During social interaction, eye contact becomes very important as it is believed to convey positive feelings toward others. Increased eye contact, on the one hand, increases chances of getting hired during job interviews and hence, has been linked with intimacy, liking, attraction, and trust (Mehrabian, 1972). Low levels of eye contact, on the other hand, signifies lack of involvement, nonimmediacy, and psychological distance. Another nonverbal cue that is associated with more positive ratings during job interviews is the forward body lean. Like eye contact, it shows immediacy, involvement, attraction, and rapport. Opposite feelings of less intimacy, nonimmediacy, and detachment are evoked with backward body lean (Imada & Hakel, 1977). Last but by no means least is smiling. As a positive facial affect, smiling is an element of persuasion and is linked to attraction, liking, and trust. All in all, smiling, gestures, and increased eye contact are important nonverbal cues resulting in higher evaluation by interviewers. Relatedly, Jenkins and Parra (2003) investigated the impact of nonverbal behavior in an oral proficiency interview test. Microanalysis of videotaped tests revealed that linguistically weaker examinees compensated their weak proficiency by employing nonverbal behavior. These participants who considered the interview as a

conversation rather than an examination, were more comfortable with themselves and exerted control over their behavior in such a way that reduced the interview asymmetry.

To critically analyze the accuracy of rating scales and the validity of peer-to-peer oral assessment, Ducasse and Brown (2009) investigated raters' evaluation of test takers. 34 beginner-level university students of Spanish were interviewed by 12 teacher-raters in a paired speaking test. Then, the video-recorded tests were evaluated and raters provided verbal protocols on them. Nonverbal behaviors, namely gaze and hand gestures, were among the salient features that positively affected the test results in raters' eyes. Ducasse and Brown (2009) also consider nonverbal communication as a contributing factor to the flow of speech. They also mentioned that raters regarded nonverbal communication somehow culture specific. According to one of the raters: "the girl ... uses her hands when she talks. It gives a nice color and is more in tune with the Latin American speech and culture... It helps her interaction to be more positive and fluent" (p. 434).

Following the same thread of research, May (2011) investigated the operationalization of the dynamic components of interactional competence in paired speaking tests. Her findings corroborated Ducasse and Brown's (2009) results in that raters viewed aspects of body language such as eye contact, gestures and facial expressions as means of reaching an effective interaction. In addition, test takers' who employed nonverbal behavior in their interaction were believed to indicate "openness to the discussion" (p. 137) which was considered a positive trait. They also negatively viewed the absence of nonverbal behavior and considered candidates not using these behaviors to be "closed" and not interested in the discussion. Nonetheless, May (2011) voiced concerns with regard to the inclusion of such features in assessment of interactional competence since "this would entail a consensus as to exactly what constitutes effective body language in a particular context" and in alluding to

McNamara (1996), she argues that “perhaps this Pandora’s box has remained closed for very good reasons” (p. 140).

There were attempts to categorize these nonverbal behaviors, one of which was Ekman and Friesen’s (1969) who put forward five major categories of nonverbal behavior. The first category, *emblem*, refers to a small class of expressive acts which can be directly translated into words (for example, a smile, a frown, a handshake, etc.). The second category, *illustrators*, synchronize with speech to emphasize, stressed words are an example of such behavior. The third category, *affect display*, refers to primary affects (happiness, sadness, anger, surprise, fear, disgust, and interest), plus emotional reactivity. The fourth category, *regulators*, refer to behaviors that signal initiation, turn-taking, and termination of a conversation such as head nodding, verbal reinforces, postural shifts, and eye contacts. The last category, *adaptors*, are acts that respond to the satisfaction of bodily needs, for example scratching, or moving into a more comfortable chair.

In line with these findings, Skipper et al. (2009) during functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) attempted to see whether gestures orchestrate brain networks for language comprehension or not. There were three conditions for participants to listen to spoken stories: (a) “no visual input” condition in which the stories were heard without any visual input, (b) “face” condition in which there was a video of the storyteller with visible, still face and arms and (c) “gesture” condition in which the storyteller produced cospeech gestures which was believed to semantically accompany speech. The results of the study showed that the “gesture” group in comparison with others recalled 100% of the items in the story suggesting that cospeech gestures indeed incorporate to the semantic goal of communication. In other words, when gestures marry up with speech, the motor system in the brain works with the language comprehension part and eases up the burden of processing language understanding.

Therefore, the importance of nonverbal communication needs to be brought into spotlight especially in high stake tests such as IELTS. Many students enter the exam room while they try to portray a proficient version of themselves by creating a facade of fluency via memorizing some cliché phrases in the hope of covering their linguistic flaws. However, their lack of confidence can easily be detected by their manner in how they sit, the way they use their hands, and even averting their gaze reveal aspects of one's behavior. Although the role of nonverbal behavior is neglected and even not mentioned in the rubrics of the IELTS test, it is vital to raise students' consciousness about the determining role of such behaviors because if they fail, their failure will show itself not only in their tests, but also in everyday communication (Jenkins and Parra, 2003).

CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

3.1. Approach

As the purpose of this study is primarily to raise the level of students' awareness and gain more understanding of the nonverbal communication elements of speech coupled with the four maxims of Grice, a case study with a group of students whose knowledge is to be applied in this matter was deemed necessary. The researcher ran an intensive 10-hour course in a period of 5 consecutive weeks with eight teenage students who were planning to take the IELTS test within the next three months and had no prior knowledge on how this test is taken. The reason why this group was chosen was due to a number of factors. First, the primary reason for choosing this group of students was their teacher's experience who had worked with this group in the past and whose expertise proved to be a valuable asset in detecting the relevance of research questions that were the target of this study with this specific group's

performance. In addition, students at this range of age do not pay much attention to their interpretation of ideas due to their lack of experience communicating in English, neither do they care about their body language while talking, therefore, it seemed to be a wise choice for the case study not to mention their intention on sitting the test. Eight students were selected for the teacher to have sufficient amount of time to analyze data thoroughly and provide individual feedback throughout the study. Besides, in order for the activities to be conducted in pairs, an even number of students were required, so that they could work together more effectively. Moreover, a 10-hour timeframe was considered to carry out two mock exams, write four journals, and successfully execute strategy sessions to teach students effective techniques to implement during the test.

3.2. Data collection

The data for this study was gathered from a series of activities from two mock exams and journals. The first full IELTS speaking module was selected from Cambridge English IELTS Authentic Examination Papers (2018) which served the purpose of a diagnostic test at the beginning of the course. No specific strategies were taught to the group with respect to the objectives of the study. Students were only informed of the basic instructions such as how the test is taken, what the major parts are, and how much time they have to finish each section. The test was conducted in Zoom®; therefore, participants had the opportunity of working in pairs inside breakout rooms where they were allowed to record themselves while one participant played the role of the examiner and the other played the role of the candidate; then, they swapped roles. Each round of the test took 15 minutes in total and consisted of three different parts with a set of open-ended questions that the participants had to answer. During the test time, the teacher was not present and only the two participants are communicating with each other. As part of the instruction at the beginning, they were told

that the recordings are going to be checked and graded by the teacher afterwards and that is why all the breakout rooms Zoom recordings were sent to the teacher to be analyzed later on.

3.3. Data analysis

The data was qualitatively gathered and it was analyzed primarily by the researcher due to the nature of the task. Basically, the four maxims needed to be interpreted and described based on words and sentences that the participants produced during the simulation tests as well as journals. Moreover, the nonverbal communication elements were evaluated and scrutinized by observation so that traits and characteristics as well as trends in participants' performance could be examined properly.

The participants were asked to record themselves while taking the mock test and to send the recordings to the teacher. The criteria for the analysis of the recordings were the most important elements of nonverbal communication skills in the speaking exam including eye contact, posture, hand gestures, vocal projection, and overall body language along with the four conversational maxims, namely Quality, Quantity, Relation, and the maxim of Manner.

This method was deemed to be the best option at hand as a mock exam is a simulation of the real test and candidates face the same challenge as if they were taking the real test. Furthermore, the researcher was able to watch the recordings constantly to interpret data and also look for trends and patterns within journals. Thus, the data allowed the researcher to observe how much participants have understood and applied the techniques they have learned.

One of the challenges that occurred at the early stages of data collection as a result of the global pandemic was that the whole project has been conducted virtually by Zoom®, a video conferencing tool for operating online classes, which potentially caused a few shortcomings. First and foremost, there was a huge difference between a virtual exam and a

real one. As we know the IELTS speaking test is conducted face-to-face where both the examiner and the examinee are in the same room physically seeing each other whereas an online mode cannot fully resemble the same circumstance. The interlocutor cannot observe students' nonverbal behavior and the overall state of the person is not fully visible. Second, some people are just not comfortable seeing themselves on the screen like a mirror in front of them while talking and this would adversely affect their performance. Third, environmental variables were also an issue affecting participants' performances. Clothing can be an example of such variables since people do not normally wear formal clothes at home, at least not on their lower body parts while in a real test they should be smartly dressed. Consequently, participants were asked not to wear pajamas while taking the test and to pin the video of the other participant in order not to see their own faces while answering questions during the mock test. Likewise, they were requested to sit back a little bit so that their upper body part would be visible to be analyzed easily both by the examiner and later by the researcher. It is worthwhile to mention that this does not simulate the real IELTS speaking test because of the fact that in a Zoom session you might want lean forward to the screen to see or hear better whereas your posture in a real one-on-one interview does not necessarily follow this pattern. You may lean back and still do not feel distant but in a Zoom class or a computer-based test it is rather uncomfortable and feels too distant.

When the video recordings were completed, the next step was to hold strategy session classes to discuss the right techniques to implement in the test which took three sessions each of which lasting two hours. In between classes, participants were urged to write journals on what they learned during the class regarding the strategies and how they evaluated their own video recordings based on the tactics learned in class. The final step was a second mock test carried out as the final stage of the experiment to see how much of what participants learned was applicable and whether their results changed accordingly or not.

The participants of the study were 8 high school students (7 girls and 1 boy) between 15-17 years of age with no knowledge of the IELTS exam prior to the course taken with the researcher. However, they have done other Cambridge exams such as KET and PET which are designed for A2 and B1 English proficiency level respectively. At the time of the participation in the course, their level was roughly B1 according to the teacher's experience working with them for around a year and the multiple tests that they have taken throughout the school year.

They are all from Quito (born and raised), Ecuador and living in the North part of the city and they have been participating in this same Christian private school since they were first graders at primary school. They come from a rather middle-class socio-economic background according to the geographical location that they reside as well as the school they go to (which is a private institution with quite an expensive monthly tuition fee compared to public sector). Since all the participants are from the capital of the country, their socio-economic class is relatively high , they know their classmates for almost 10 years as they have been going to the same school since the beginning, and the researcher has been their teacher for almost a year, they demonstrated a decent level of social skills during the course (being relatively outgoing, open, warm, and gregarious) with minimal shyness in girls more than the boy. This would certainly affect their performance within the study as opposed to outside it due to the reasons mentioned earlier. In the face of a real examiner who is a stranger and has the position of authority, a candidate would naturally feel more timidity and lose confidence; therefore, both their nonverbal communication and speaking ability would experience shifts whereas what has been recorded and analyzed in this study came from mock exams where the examiner was the students' peers which did not simulate the test in this sense.

One more thing worth mentioning here is that Ecuador has a wide range of cultural speaking styles. People from the coast do speak partially differently comparing to the ones

from the Andes (highlands) or the Amazon in terms of gesture, speed, and general verboseness. It has been said that some people are warm, and others are cold because of where they reside geographically which can affect their communication skills to some extent, and this can be seen in Ecuador where three geographical regions are located within the same country. Also, some cultures tend to speak longer because they feel it makes them look more "cultured/educated". The fact that meeting someone from the coast is easier because they are friendlier and more open whereas for another person from the highlands it might take a longer period of time to trust you and therefore the opening conversation would tend to be more conservative at first, will indubitably impact both verbal and nonverbal interactions between two individuals. The participants of this study were all from the highlands (Quito) so we could not see a great shift in cultural and behavioral actions of each individual and therefore not much of a difference in their performance in this regard.

The study has been done under the supervision of Universidad San Francisco de Quito (USFQ), department of Social Sciences and Humanities, as the researcher's thesis during the master's program in Teaching English as a Second Language. The university is recognized as the top in Ecuador for the past several years in a row and it is one of the most credible ones among South American higher education institutions as well. USFQ is the only university in the world that has campuses in three completely varied geographical regions (Galapagos Islands, Andean Mountain range, and Amazon Rainforest), the first completely private and self-financed university in the country and is known as the first Liberal Arts institution in Andean region.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

4.1. Conversational maxims

4.1.1. Maxim of Quantity

A remarkable similarity was found in all video recordings and journals: most responses were normally shorter than necessary when participants were to answer questions. Particularly, in part one of the test where all the answers should be sufficient, straightforward, direct and to the point, almost all candidates gave information that was not adequately developed based on what was asked in the question. This problem was mostly observed when it came to giving responses in the part one of the tests as participants had no idea with regard to the structure of their answers. For instance, in responding to the question “What’s your favorite TV program?” some answers in the first mock exam were: (S age 16) “a specific show from Netflix”, (M age 17) “I don’t watch TV but it’s a TV show with Jimmy Fallon” which are far from sufficient based on the IELTS criteria band descriptors. Having learned about this maxim however, over 50% of their statements during the second exam were still either too lengthy or short. Another issue they addressed during the class time and within their journals was their justification of giving large chunks of information that were unnecessary: they ran out of ideas, but they thought they should still keep going to provide the perfect answer. As a result, they went off on a tangent without even realizing it.

Table 1

The percentages of the students' responses regarding Quantity Maxim (8 participants)

Maxime Of Quantity	Long Answers	Short Answers	Sufficient Answers
First Mock Test	25%	62.5%	12.5%
Second Mock Test	37.5	25%	37.5
Students' Evaluation on Their Own Performance Mentioned in The Journals	25%	25%	50%

They mentioned and acknowledged this fact that their answers were too long or too short at times in the journals after the test, and they were aware of their mistakes:

(ME age 15, p. 54) "I give extra information that isn't that important, this is something I've just noticed and have to improve" or (L age 17, p. 57) "it is important to answer the questions accurately, that is, not take too long to answer but analyze what is going to be said".

One student (J age 16, p. 57) left a comment in his journal regarding the first mock test acknowledging: "I have to be clear and direct with the information I have to talk about, and when I'm nervous or I don't remember what to say I start forgetting words and saying their literal translation".

4.1.2. Maxim of Quality

The observations received from the first set of videos showed a relative truth in participants' answers where they were trying to include their own experiences which were coming from their life situations. For example, they answered the question "Are you happy to

be the age you are now?” during the second mock test with responses such as (A age 15) “yes, I’m pretty happy but sometimes I feel like I need more independence because I don’t have the money when I want to buy something” or (AN age 17) “Yes, because I get to experience a lot of new things and visit many places with my family together”.

However, one pattern was found in all responses which was mentioned in journals and could be clearly observed in the videos: a sense of fear. Fear of being criticized and perfectionism in a sense that pushed them to provide the best possible answer in order not to be embarrassed in front of their peer. Therefore, some answers were exaggerated in that the candidate had to lie in order to give a full answer or to provide sufficient evidence and examples to justify their statement even though the incident didn't happen to them either partially or fully. Consider some of these answers to the question “what will be different about your life in the future?” from the second mock test: (A age 17) “In the future I want to become a doctor, leave and don’t want to stay in this country that’s why I’m putting so much effort learning languages” or (L age 17) “I think now a lot about the future and I always plan to see what I want to become and what degree to get at the university.” Nevertheless, when Quality Maxim was discussed with the class, and they were asked to address it in the second mock test, something fascinating happened. Because they tried to be more truthful and have evidence for what they wanted to say, they ended up violating the Quantity Maxim instead and provided shorter answers as a result of that. In fact, there was a direct negative correlation between the two maxims in the videos in that when one increased, the other decreased.

With respect to this problem, it is worth mentioning that an exam is not a real conversation; the examiner, therefore, genuinely does not care if the candidate is telling the truth or not. In fact, they would rather have test takers who are able to fabricate a story just to give an answer long enough for them to grade. The students are getting themselves confused about a moral/ethical issue which is irrelevant. They may have misunderstood the purpose of

truth-telling in the exam. In fact, the examiner is looking for ways around the truth such as “well I don't really know how my life will be different in the future because I haven't thought about it”.

Table 2

The percentages of the students' responses regarding Quality Maxim (8 participants)

Maxime Of Quality	Truthful Answers with Relevant Evidence	Overexaggerated Answers	Answers Containing False Ideas And/or Lack of Evidence
First Mock Test	50%	37.5%	12.5%
Second Mock Test	37.5	12.5%	50%
Students' Evaluation on Their Own Performance Mentioned in The Journals	50%	12.5%	37.5%

They admitted this fact that whenever they thought about giving an answer which is high quality, they got stuck on finding the right idea to say and therefore ended up giving a shorter response. In the journals between the two exams someone mentions: (S age 16, p. 56) “I don't know why when I try to think about giving evidence about my real life, I forget everything and stop talking”, or (M age 17, p. 55) “It's very hard to give a good and long answer because I don't remember any examples when I start to speak”. (L age 17, p. 57) says: “I learned my answers is better if they came from my own life so I can have some reasons and

evidence.” (J age 16, p. 57) admitted “I see some questions are very difficult and I never think about it before, so I tried to invent something to say that wasn’t happened in my life.”

4.1.3. Maxim of Relation

During the first exam given to the test takers, the answers were generally sufficiently relevant to what was asked in that none of the candidates went off topic in a way that the message gets distorted. Plus, there was no sign of memorized answers during the exams. A trend, however, can be tracked in all recordings i.e., a lack of grammatical structure and vocabulary which led the examinees to lose precision and conciseness, hence, they gave answers that were either too general or too short that did not cover the most significant aspects of the questions. A few responses to the question “who is best at advising young people choosing a job: teachers or parents?” in the second mock test were as follows: (M E age 15) “I think I will go for parents. Basically, they make you grow up, they know you in the inside, they know you’re false”. (AN age 17) “Sometimes with your parents because they know you maybe what are your things that you are good to”. We should be aware of the fact that the candidates miss the point if they really give their opinion. What they need to do is analyze what the examiner wants, which in this case is a well-reasoned argument on one side or the other.

According to one of the IELTS speaking criteria that is Fluency and Coherence, responses should be coherently and appropriately developed without signs of too much repetition or hesitation. The minor irrelevance of some of the responses from the whole group came from their lack of knowledge and language competency which resulted in providing such answers.

Table 3

The percentages of the students' responses regarding Relation Maxim (8 participants)

Maxime Of Relation	Relevant Responses	Irrelevant Responses	Sufficient Answers but Somewhat Vague
First Mock Test	25%	62.5%	12.5%
Second Mock Test	37.5	25%	37.5
Students' Evaluation on Their Own Performance Mentioned in The Journals	25%	25%	50%

Even the participants themselves could tell after watching their own videos that occasionally the responses were irrelevant; "when I see my video sometimes my answer is it not related to the question, I think is because I don't remember the question" (L age 17, p. 57) said. (J age 16, p. 57) "I guess my answers were generally long but sometimes the question wasn't clear(S age 16, p. 56) "the answer is ok osea its related to the question but not fully I think the teacher understand."

4.1.4. Maxim of Manner

Regarding this maxim there are a few areas to be discussed. One is the clarity of responses, which in most cases due to the simplicity of the language being used by the

candidates, the majority were fully clear. One response to the question “when you were a child, did you think a lot about your future?” in the second mock exam by (A age 15) was: “when I was a child, I didn’t think so much about my future, and I only lived in the present”. On a few occasions, lack of precision led to ambiguity and made the answers difficult to comprehend for the listener in the same mock exam. (S age 16) said: “if I ever thought about something, I would be when I grow up”.

Now, it is very important to differentiate between grammar errors that obscure meaning and those that do not. The last sentence of this student’s utterance is difficult to comprehend. Whereas this sentence is full of errors, but a sympathetic listener will have no trouble understanding it: (J age 16): “I think is more important choosing something that we like and not something that give us more money”. Of note is that this error happened mainly because of the interference of students’ first language as all of them speak Spanish and they tend to translate literally from their mother tongue directly to English. Students do not consider the fact that in some situations the meaning is not exactly the same in English and in others the structure of the sentence does not correspond to the same rules and regulations that exist in English. As an example, it is natural for a sentence in Spanish to start with a verb but in English, a subject at the beginning of each sentence is imperative. Look at the example from a conversation in one of the video recordings from the first mock test:

Examiner: Is money always the most important thing when choosing a job?

(L age 17): “I don’t think so because I think is more important choosing something that we like and not something that give us more money.”

Additionally, to maintain a logical order in the long run, specifically in Part 2 of the exam, where the candidate should have a monologue for two minutes without pause and respond to a series of questions on a similar topic was a major challenge for all students. As the cue card containing the main question has an order for its sub questions as well, the

candidate was expected to follow them in an orderly fashion and cover both main and sub questions. What was seen in the videos, however, shows that in most situations the order of the questions was not followed, and the candidate responded according to what s/he remembered rather than covering all the sections orderly from top to bottom without missing any parts. Thus, sometimes the listener could not logically process the information due to the aforementioned factors.

An example of part 2 (cue card) with a response from one candidate in the first mock exam is illustrated here.

Examiner: "Describe someone you know who has started a business.

You should also say: *Who* this person is, *what* work this person does, *why* this person decided to start a business and explain whether you would like to do the same kind of work as this person."

(J age 16): "this person is my sister. She recently starts a new job, is a restaurant but is only online. Is from, it's called the Wings Corner and they sell all kinds of food like hamburger or potatoes and things like that. She decided to start mainly for she's in another house, so she has to generate her own money."

It can be directly observed that the candidate vividly attempted to start covering all the aspects of the question but then she went off topic, forgetting to cover the last part of the question, and ended up with an incomplete answer. The response is clear meaning wise and even with a couple of grammatical mistakes, it can be still understood by the listener.

However, each sub question was answered very shortly, hence, participants did not follow the Quantity maxim which caused their answer to be much less than 2 minutes (the amount of time necessary for part 2 of the IELTS Speaking module).

Table 4

The percentages of the students' responses regarding Manner Maxim (8 participants)

Maxime of Manner	Obscure And Ambiguous Responses	Brief And Orderly Responses
First Mock Test	50%	50%
Second Mock Test	25%	75%
Students' Evaluation on Their Own Performance Mentioned in The Journals	62.5%	37.5%

(L age 17, p. 57) believes “when I answer I need to follow a order so the listener understand me very good and I shouldn't speak too much.” (J age 16, p. 57) “when I couldn't understand I was giving also answers that didn't make sense”. (S age 16, p. 56) “Maybe when I listen, I understand my answer but when I ask my partner she say she's confused because I talk about many things and it don't make sense.”

4.2. Nonverbal communication skills

So many behaviors with respect to nonverbal communication was observed in both videos and journals, the result of which is summarized and discussed below. First and foremost, it was clearly seen that most participants occasionally shook their bodies (especially fidgeted their legs) while responding and moved their chairs back-and-forth or in a circle-like manner which apparently portrayed a degree of nervousness and being in an uncomfortable

state. Of note is that this issue was even more common while they were answering questions than when they were listening to it.

Another sign that was vivid in everybody's performance was their lack of using hands and hiding them either under the table or behind them. Only two of the participants put their hands in front of them and tried to use them while talking. Even with these two, nervousness could still be noticed as they were pushing their fingers strongly together and moving them abnormally.

Another noticeable factor was eye contact that can be categorized into two groups. The first group comprised of the ones who seemed more fluent and comfortable and knew what they were talking about. This group maintained a natural eye contact throughout the exam and most of the time kept looking at the screen while giving their answers. The other group was those who were not prepared and kept forgetting how to answer properly. These participants looked away occasionally and could not maintain their eye contact for more than a couple of seconds and they were either looking down or looking away. It seemed as if there was a correlation between having a natural eye contact and their level of knowledge, meaning the more sophisticated the candidate was, the easier it became to keep looking at the examiner while talking.

Finally, vocal projection was another factor being reviewed. None of the candidates were under pressure while taking the test especially because of two reasons: first, taking the test at home knowing that it was just a practice test, and the other one was having their own peers as examiners instead of the teacher. Therefore, almost everyone spoke with a sufficiently good voice quality which was loud enough to be heard; they were also able to pronounce words correctly and easily.

An observation worth mentioning is the interference of students' first language which influenced their performance in a way that many sounds like /b/ in words such as "job" were

pronounced as / dʒɑ:v/. Furthermore, sentences with certain intonations were articulated following the L1 patterns; as an example, statements were pronounced in a question tonality which is common in Spanish as the Spanish tend to use an affirmative statement with a rising intonation of a question as it was seen in the first test by (S age 16): “You agree that many people are nowadays under pressure?” The manner of voice projection in the responses did not cause misunderstanding or misinterpretation of meaning yet at some points they sounded awkward.

Table 5

The percentages of the students’ performance regarding Nonverbal Communication (8 participants)

Nonverbal Factors	Effective Eye Contact	Usage Of Hand Gestures	Natural Body Posture	Loud And Clear Vocal Projection
First Mock Test	50%	25%	62.5%	75%
Second Mock Test	75%	50%	87.5%	87.5%
Students’ Evaluation on Their Own Performance Mentioned in The Journals	62.5%	37.5%	75%	100%

Some examples where they mentioned the power of hand gestures in their journals after the first mock test and the third strategy session are as follows: (M age 17, p. 55) “I need to start using my hands a bit more because I was too stiff.” (J age 16, p. 57) “I have to improve even my body language because I didn’t know where to put my hands at first but in the second part was better and myself was really tickling.” (ME age 15, p. 54) “It is important to practice gestures when speaking and to convey confidence and precision to the examiner”. (A age 15, p. 55) “I learned a position for my hands that encourages my confidence”.

Regarding eye contact (J age 16, p. 57) wrote in his journal: “I didn’t pay attention to my eyes but when I see my video, I was looking at the other person most of the time. I think I was comfortable.” Two other participants noticed that in their own analysis of the first mock test video: (S age 16, p. 56) “I wasn’t looking at the camera when I was speaking and looked down or to other directions most of the time.” (ML age 17, p. 55) “The ones I remember the most were the usual eye contact because through it the examiner can also see if you are nervous.” Another journal commented by (L age 17, p. 57) emphasized this after the first strategy session: “maintain eye contact, you don’t have to stare because this will make things uncomfortable, but you have to make the evaluator know you are paying attention to them and that you know what you are talking about”.

They acknowledged the significance of vocal projection in their journals to some extent. (A age 15, p. 55) wrote this on her second journal: “We were speaking loudly, and I could understand everything from the video, only sometimes we were quiet for some parts, and I didn’t understand some words.” After discussing this, the students realized it more consciously. (M age 17, p. 55) mentioned this in her journal before the second mock test: “You can have the best pronunciation in the world but if you don’t enunciate and talk with a good volume and clearly the evaluator won’t be able to hear you”. (L age 17, p. 57) noticed

“In the exams I could hear my voice perfectly and I think the teacher didn’t have problems hear me in the video.”

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

This research aimed to raise students’ awareness of the importance of the four maxims as well as non-verbal communication skills in the IELTS speaking exam. Based on the qualitative data analysis, mock exams, and students’ journals, it can be concluded that none of the participants during this research study were aware of the elements analyzed in the project. Consequently, the results of applying these techniques demonstrated that they can significantly improve test takers’ performance in the IELTS Speaking module.

The method chosen for conducting this study has effectively helped both the researcher and the participants to answer the research question thanks to choosing live video recording sessions where participants could exhibit their nonverbal signs and language responses. In addition to that, writing in their journals was another great strategy where participants provided their personal opinions regarding their own performance and what they learned. These strategies had a substantial benefit to the success of the project.

Moreover, some new questions and unexpected insights arose during the process. While this research clearly illustrates the fact that being aware of the conversational maxims and being conscious about our nonverbal communication skills can undoubtedly accelerate our performance in speaking exams, it also raises the question that why the physical expression of an emotion such as nervousness might tremendously influence one’s behavior and performance in speaking?

Future studies could also address the relationship between the band score descriptors and each maxim separately in the rubric chart of the IELTS Speaking test, since what is

included in the rubric is a general set of criteria which illustrates a broad and undetailed description of the necessary attributes of the rubric for mass of candidates who are preparing to take part in this test. Nonetheless, for individuals who are willing to perform at the highest level and get the best results, more definite and specific explanations should be taken into consideration.

Finally, the result of this study strongly confirms the research question “Can the awareness of non-communication skills and the four maxims help improve students' performance on the speaking portion of the IELTS exam?”. Since the understanding of students has positively affected their performances during the second exam, then, the answer is yes.

To put it in a larger framework, this concern has also been voiced in the literature. When the official IELTS organization explored a large number of examiners' perspectives through interviews and surveys, they all admitted the fact that they preferred videos or in person interviews for the speaking section of the test as it gave them the elements of natural speech and interactive features of speaking. Moreover, the idea that they themselves were using non-verbal behavior during the test to send and convey messages to the candidate was relieving (Inoue et al. 2021). Ducasse and Brown (2009) also investigated university students in a paired speaking test; they reported nonverbal behaviors were among the salient features that positively affected the test in raters' eyes and considered nonverbal communication as a contributing factor to the flow of speech. To fill in the gap which was addressed in the literature i.e., the missing element of nonverbal communication in exams, we attempted to account this factor in our study. In the end, it was shown that nonverbal behavior does play a role even in such high-stake exams.

Furthermore, IELTS examiners expressed their concerns with regard to the violation of the Relation maxim (Inoue et al., 2021) and its being missed from the band descriptors for

most parts. Despite candidates' speaking off-topic or their giving irrelevant memorized answers, these responses cannot be considered a deviation from the main topic or be penalized. Consequently, elements such as the maxim of Relation is needed in the rubric to prevent candidates from going off on a tangent. That is another gap that this study has attempted to cover.

References

- Bachman, L. F. (1990). *Fundamental considerations in language testing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Birdwhistell, Ray L. 1970. *Kinesics and context*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Ducasse, A., & Brown, A. (2009). Assessing paired orals: Raters' orientation to interaction. *Language Testing*, 26(3), 423–443.
- Ekman, P., & Friesen, W. (1969). The repertoire of nonverbal behavior: Categories, origins, usage and coding. *Semiotica*, 1, 49–98.
- Fulcher, G. (2003). *Testing second language speaking*. London: Longman.
- Fulcher, G., Davidson, F. (2007). *Language Testing and Assessment: An advanced resource book*. London; New York: Routledge.
- Gipps, C. V. (2012). *Beyond testing: Towards a theory of educational assessment*. London: Routledge.
- Grice, H. (1975) Logic and conversation. In P. Cole and J. Morgan (eds.): *Syntax and Semantics, Speech acts*, 3, 41-58. New York: Academic Press.
- IELTS. (n.d.). *How IELTS is scored*. <https://www.ielts.org/for-test-takers/how-ielts-is-scored>
- IELTS. (2019). *IELTS grows to 3.5 million a year*. <https://www.ielts.org/en-us/news/2019/ielts-grows-to-three-and-a-half-million-a-year>
- IELTS. (2020). *Universities and students welcome IELTS Indicator around the world*. <https://www.ielts.org/en-us/news/2020/universities-and-students-welcome-ielts-indicator-around-the-world>
- Imada, A. S., & Hakel, M. D. (1977). Influence of nonverbal communication and rater proximity on impressions and decisions in simulated employment interviews. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 62(3), 295–300. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.62.3.295>

- Inoue, C., Khabbazzbashi, N., Lam, D., and Nakatsuhara, F. (2021.) Towards new avenues for the IELTS Speaking Test: Insights from examiners' voices, *IELTS Research Reports Online Series, No. 2*. British Council, Cambridge
- Jenkins, S., & Parra, I. (2003). Multiple Layers of Meaning in an Oral Proficiency Test: The Complementary Roles of Nonverbal, Paralinguistic, and Verbal Behaviors in Assessment Decisions. *Modern Language Journal*, 87(1), 90–107.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/1540-4781.00180>
- Kramersch, C. (1986). From language proficiency to interactional competence. *The Modern Language Journal*, 70(4), 366–372.
- May, L. (2011). Interactional competence in a paired speaking test: Features salient to raters. *Language Assessment Quarterly*, 8(2), 127–145.
- McNamara, T. F. (1996). *Measuring Second Language Performance*. London: Longman.
- McNeill, D. (1992). *Hand and mind: What gestures reveal about thought*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mehrabian, A. (1972). *Nonverbal communication*. Chicago: Aldine-Atherton.
- Seedhouse, P., Harris, A., Naeb, R., & Üstünel, E. (2014). The relationship between speaking features and band descriptors: A mixed methods study, *IELTS Research Reports Online Series, No. 2*. British Council, Cambridge.
- Sperber, D., & Wilson, D. *Relevance*. (1986). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Skipper, JI., Goldin-Meadow, S., Nusbaum, HC., Small, SL. (2009). Gestures orchestrate brain networks for language understanding. *Current Biology*. 19(8), 661-7.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cub.2009.02.051>
- [Surian, L., Baron-Cohen, S., & Van der Lely, H. \(1996\). Are children with autism deaf to Gricean maxims? *Cognitive Neuropsychiatry*, 1\(1\), 55–71.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/135468096396703>](https://doi.org/10.1080/135468096396703)

Yule, G. (2006). *The Study of Language*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

APPENDIX INDEX

APPENDIX A. RESEARCH PROTOCOL APPROVAL..... pp. 54

APPENDIX B. INSTRUMENTS..... pp. 58

APPENDIX C. PARTICIPANTS' JOURNALS..... pp. 62

APPENDIX A. RESEARCH PROTOCOL APPROVAL



Revisión Exenta de protocolos de investigación

A. DATOS IDENTIFICATIVOS			
Título de la Investigación	Understanding The Nonverbal Communication Skills And The Four maxims of Discourse Theories Behind The IELTS Speaking Strategies Taught To Students And Raising Students' Awareness Of The Importance Of These Strategies		
Código CEISH-USFQ	2021-018TPG HUBI: 00215430		
Área de Investigación	Ciencias de la Educación		
Duración de la investigación	Tres (3) meses		
Investigadores e instituciones participantes	Mehrshad Mina, Universidad San Francisco Quito		
Financiamiento-Monto	NA		
Evaluadores	IS		
Código informe de evaluación	IE01-E030-2021-CEISH-UESF	Versión	001
		Fecha:	26 mar 2021
Historial de evaluación	Recepción de documentos:	17 febrero 2021	
	Inicio de evaluación:	Check List: 17 febrero 2021	
	Envío IE al IP:	Check List: 17 febrero 2021	
	Respuestas del IP:	Check List: 28 febrero 2021	

Tipo de Investigación exenta	
Investigación con recopilación y/o análisis de datos anonimizados, obtenidos de registros existentes.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Investigación con recopilación y/o análisis de datos disponibles públicamente.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Investigación con recolección de datos de manera anonimizada.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Investigación que evalúe anónimamente programas públicos o prácticas educativas.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Investigación que evalúe anónimamente el sabor y/o calidad de alimentos, o estudios de aceptación del consumidor.	<input type="checkbox"/>

B. DOCUMENTOS REVISADOS		Versión	Fecha Doc.	# Pág.	Evaluación	Observaciones Pre-revisión
1	Solicitud de evaluación ética del protocolo de investigación suscrita por el investigador principal	E	17 feb 2021	01	Adecuado	
2	Protocolo de investigación	VI2.0	17 feb 2021	07	Adecuado	
3	Consentimiento informado	VE2.0	17 feb 2021	03	Adecuado	Retirar del consentimiento la siguiente frase: "...que lo lleva a cabo Universidad San Francisco De Quito USFQ."
4	Instrumentos:	VI2.0	17 feb 2021	01	Adecuado	
	4.1. IELTS Speaking Mock test 1			01		
	4.2. IELTS Speaking Mock test 2			02		
	4.3. Speaking test 1			01		
4.4. Speaking test 2						
5	Hoja de vida del investigador principal	E	Feb 2021	02	Adecuado	
6	Certificados: Human Subject Protection & Responsible Conduct of Research	I	Feb 21021	02	Adecuado	
7	Solicitud de evaluación ética del protocolo de investigación suscrita por el investigador principal	E	17 feb 2021	02	Adecuado	
Total				22		



IE01-E030-2021-CEISH-USFQ

C. ASPECTOS METODOLÓGICOS		
Criterio de evaluación	Evaluación	Observaciones
1. La solicitud incluye todos los documentos necesarios, firmas y fechas.	Adecuado	
2. El protocolo incluye los datos de identificación completos: nombre de investigador principal, director de tesis (si aplica), datos de contacto, financiamiento)	Adecuado	
3. El título describe claramente el propósito del estudio, el lugar, el período de ejecución y la población.	Adecuado	
4. El período de duración del estudio está bien especificado. Para la estimación de la fecha de inicio de ejecución de la investigación se tomó en consideración los tiempos de aprobación del CEISH.	No Adecuado	Ajustas fechas a partir de la aprobación del CEISH-USFQ.
5. Se justifica la relevancia científica/social de la investigación.	Adecuado	
6. Las metas y objetivos son claros, de acuerdo con el problema de investigación. y medibles en el tiempo que dura el estudio.	Adecuado	
7. El tipo de estudio corresponde a lo descrito en el diseño de la investigación.	Adecuado	
8. Describe la población objeto (universo) del estudio, y la muestra mínima que requiere el estudio.	Adecuado	
9. Describe los criterios de inclusión-exclusión y los procesos de reclutamiento de los participantes	Adecuado	
10. Describe las variables a analizar, y el procedimiento de análisis de datos.	Adecuado	
11. Se explica breve, pero claramente, el proceso de recolección y análisis de datos.	Adecuado	
12. Describe todos los procedimientos que se realizarán durante la investigación.	Adecuado	
13. Describe los recursos humanos y materiales necesarios para alcanzar los objetivos del estudio.	Adecuado	



IE01-E030-2021-CEISH-USFQ

14. Incluye un cronograma factible.	Adecuado	
-------------------------------------	----------	--

D. ASPECTOS ÉTICOS

Criterio de evaluación	Evaluación	Observaciones
1. Se describe cómo se han tomado en cuenta los principios bioéticos para la selección de los participantes	Adecuado	
2. Los beneficios que ofrece el estudio justifican los riesgos que pudieran presentarse, y se describe el proceso para minimizarlos.	NA	
3. Detalla los beneficios para la población o comunidad.	Adecuado	
4. Explica claramente los procesos para asegurar la confidencialidad de los datos que se recolecten en cada fase de la investigación.	Adecuado	
5. Describe claramente el proceso para almacenar los datos en la fase postestudio, garantizando su seguridad y estipulando el tiempo que se guardará la información, lugar, custodios y qué se hará con la información al finalizar el tiempo estipulado de almacenamiento.	NA	
6. Describe las medidas adoptadas para garantizar la autonomía y los derechos de los participantes.	Adecuado	
7. Justifica de manera sustentada las razones por las que el estudio no requiere de la aplicación de un formulario de consentimiento informado.	NA	
8. Se evidencia la idoneidad ética del investigador principal.	Adecuado	
9. Se evidencia la experticia técnica del investigador principal.	NA	Estudiante de maestría.

E. ASPECTOS JURÍDICOS

Criterio de evaluación	Evaluación	Observaciones
1. La investigación contempla y aplica la legislación y normativa nacional e internacional vigente.	NA	



UNIVERSIDAD SAN FRANCISCO DE QUITO USFQ



IE01-E030-2021-CEISH-USFQ

G. RESOLUCIÓN Y JUSTIFICACIÓN

Periodo de evaluación:

Evaluable	Resolución	Justificación
IS	Aprobado	Estudio educacional exento de IRB.

Firma de evaluadores	Fecha evaluación
	28 Marzo, 2021

APPENDIX B. INSTRUMENTS

Understanding The Theories Behind The IELTS Speaking Strategies Taught To Students And Raising Students' Awareness Of The Importance Of These Strategies

Instrumentos de recopilación de datos

Mehrshad Mina, Investigador Principal

2.2. Instrumentos para recolección de datos

1. IELTS Speaking Mock test 1

- **Protocol:** The class sessions will be conducted through Zoom teleconferencing software. With the consent of the participants, they will be recorded with video and audio. The investigator will read a script that informs the participant of the purpose of the interview, the process, and a request for consent.
 - **Informed Consent Script:** These series of live sessions are part of a research study on IELTS exam strategies. The purpose of these is to help candidates and students understand the necessary techniques and strategies of how to answer questions in the IELTS Speaking module. All information provided in these sessions will be reported anonymously. You can end the mini course at any time by telling me, the teacher and the investigator, that you no longer wish to participate. I will ask you if you consent to record the video and audio of our class as well. You can refuse to record or request that the recording be stopped and erased at any time. Also, the grades for your mock exams are not real and it is just for analysis purposes.
- Are you willing to be interviewed for this research study?
(a clear yes / no answer is required)
 - Do you agree to record video and audio of our sessions?
(a clear yes / no answer is required)
 - Do you have any other questions or concerns before starting the class?

Understanding The Nonverbal Communication Skills And The Four maxims of Discourse
Theories Behind The IELTS Speaking Strategies Taught To Students And Raising Students'
Awareness Of The Importance Of These Strategies
Instrumentos de recopilación de datos Mehrshad Mina, Investigador Principal

Test 1

SPEAKING

PART 1

The examiner asks the candidate about him/herself, his/her home, work or studies and other familiar topics.

EXAMPLE

Television programmes

- Where do you usually watch TV programmes/shows? [Why?/Why not?]
- What's your favourite TV programme/show? [Why?]
- Are there any programmes/shows you don't like watching? [Why?/Why not?]
- Will you will watch more or fewer TV programmes/shows in the future? [Why?/Why not?]

PART 2

Describe someone you know who has started a business.

You should say:

**who this person is
what work this person does
why this person decided to start a business
and explain whether you would like to do the
same kind of work as this person.**

You will have to talk about the topic for one to two minutes. You have one minute to think about what you are going to say. You can make some notes to help you if you wish.

PART 3

Discussion topics:

Choosing work

Example questions:

What kinds of jobs do young people not want to do in your country?

Who is best at advising young people about choosing a job: teachers or parents?

Is money always the most important thing when choosing a job?

Work–Life balance

Example questions:

Do you agree that many people nowadays are under pressure to work longer hours and take less holiday?

What is the impact on society of people having a poor work–life balance?

Could you recommend some effective strategies for governments and employers to ensure people have a good work–life balance?

Understanding The Nonverbal Communication Skills And The Four maxims of Discourse
Theories Behind The IELTS Speaking Strategies Taught To Students And Raising Students'
Awareness Of The Importance Of These Strategies
Instrumentos de recopilación de datos Mehrshad Mina, Investigador Principal

2. 2. IELTS Speaking Mock test 2

- **Protocol:** The class sessions will be conducted through Zoom teleconferencing software. With the consent of the participants, they will be recorded with video and audio. The investigator will read a script that informs the participant of the purpose of the interview, the process, and a request for consent.
 - **Informed Consent Script:** These series of live sessions are part of a research study on IELTS exam strategies. The purpose of these is to help candidates and students understand the necessary techniques and strategies of how to answer questions in the IELTS Speaking module. All information provided in these sessions will be reported anonymously. You can end the mini course at any time by telling me, the teacher and the investigator, that you no longer wish to participate. I will ask you if you consent to record the video and audio of our class as well. You can refuse to record or request that the recording be stopped and erased at any time. Also, the grades for your mock exams are not real and it is just for analysis purposes.
- Are you willing to be interviewed for this research study?
(a clear yes / no answer is required)
 - Do you agree to record video and audio of our sessions?
(a clear yes / no answer is required)
 - Do you have any other questions or concerns before starting the class?

Understanding The Nonverbal Communication Skills And The Four maxims of Discourse
Theories Behind The IELTS Speaking Strategies Taught To Students And Raising Students'
Awareness Of The Importance Of These Strategies
Instrumentos de recopilación de datos Mehrshad Mina, Investigador Principal

Test 2

SPEAKING

PART 1

The examiner asks the candidate about him/herself, his/her home, work or studies and other familiar topics.

EXAMPLE

Age

- Are you happy to be the age you are now? [Why/Why not?]
- When you were a child, did you think a lot about your future? [Why/Why not?]
- Do you think you have changed as you have got older? [Why/Why not?]
- What will be different about your life in the future? [Why]

PART 2

Describe a time when you started using a new technological device (e.g. a new computer or phone).

You should say:

**what device you started using
why you started using this device
how easy or difficult it was to use
and explain how helpful this device was to you.**

You will have to talk about the topic for one to two minutes. You have one minute to think about what you are going to say. You can make some notes to help you if you wish.

PART 3

Discussion topics:

Technology and education

Example questions:

What is the best age for children to start computer lessons?

Do you think that schools should use more technology to help children learn?

Do you agree or disagree that computers will replace teachers one day?

Technology and society

Example questions:

How much has technology improved how we communicate with each other?

Do you agree that there are still many more major technological innovations to be made?

Could you suggest some reasons why some people are deciding to reduce their use of technology?

APPENDIX C. PARTICIPANTS' JOURNALS

Below you would find the journals that the participants have written during a part of the course in their original form.

Project journal

this class had many tips and techniques and we practiced our speaking very much. The test was interesting and we learned the ielts format and every week that we had a meeting with the teacher, I think everything was good only I see my lack in grammar and vocabulary and the maxims and body language signals were new to me.

The teacher say that have a good level of volume and sit in a normal way because if you don't look the examiner and use hands it shows a low level in confidence. Teacher say that if you move all the time the examiner understand that you are nervous.

I think my answer was very short because I was looking the clock all the time to not pass the limit, and in the second part I completely forgot the story because I didn't write anything on the paper to remember and my anser was very bad, only sufficient to finish the time but I didn't like it when I saw the video. My position was fine and the voice was good but I don't like to use my hand or look the examiner. I was nervous and looked in the mouse all the time.

journal

This course was very helpful as teacher Shad said is going to help with every type of speaking exams. It was my first time to do a full Cambridge test and we had nerves and axiety, the exam was not very long but some questions were difficult, I didn't have any ideas talking about them in Spanish too.

We learned that not only is important to have good language but we have to pay attention to our body too. it's important to look in the eyes when speaking, we should use hands or keep them on the table, and don't move too much because it shows you are not comfortable.

In the video The ones I remember the most were the usual eye contact because through it the examiner can also see if you are nervous. My eyes was ok I see but it was not possible to concentrate in the other person all the time because we have a lot of distractions. I was a bit nervos so I didn't move too much and all of the test I was stable. I always speak loud and this time was more important because techer said speak loud and don't be quiet. The language part was more difficult because for some parts I don't understand why my answer didn't make any sense. I could check the order was correct but not long answers and sometimes I forgot to give reasons and examples.

Mock speaking experience

During the speaking practice of the mock exam, I liked it because it was a nice experience, not only because I can continue reinforcing my pronunciation and fluency also because I can speak about things that I like and socialize with another person. I'm grateful to be part of this project in where I can improve my English level. It is important to analyze every part of the questions and answer them in a correct way without being nervous.

Strategies

Putting the strategies that I learned into practice, now I know the correct position in which I should place myself and how I have to dialogue with the evaluator, feeling confident and calm.

It is also very important to have a correct vocabulary and answer the questions accurately, that is, not take too long to answer but analyze what is going to be said.

Evaluation of my video

When I re-watched my video, I realized that I have a good level in terms of fluency but I have to improve my use of vocabulary and use new words. I give extra information that isn't that important, this is something I've just noticed and have to improve. Our answers in the group were based on the things that happened to us in life can we try to didn't lie. I was very sure when I give the answers but it seemed like my partner didn't understand what I said from some questions oh but the good thing was the grammar structure and sentences were correct. It is important to practice gestures when speaking and to convey confidence and precision to the examiner. We both were on glasses and it was hard to see if I look at the examiner all the time but I think it was normal and I didn't look down or up. The sound was really good, I had my headset and microphone was very near to my mouth. Finally, I think with my gaming chair it was easy to sit and have a good position. In my opinion, being a participant in the project will help me improve my level of English as well as not being afraid when speaking.

Journal

Experience during MOCK Exam

At first, this experience made me nervous but preparation is key to passing the exam and I was constantly worried about my performance during preparation. I didn't have any speaking partner with whom I can practice for PET/MOC exam but this MOC exam gave me the opportunity to practice with one to improve my fluency and command over the language that are the factors that can help anyone in the speaking test. You can have the best pronunciation in the world but if you don't enunciate and talk with a good volume and clearly the evaluator won't be able to hear you.

Strategies

During this project, I learned some strategies to improve the speaking part of the IELTS exam some of them are: keep a straight posture with your hands over the desk and if it is possible while you are speaking try to use your hands to express yourself in a better way. Also, when you practice giving these answers make sure you use good intonation in your voice to make them sound more natural. In addition, I learned that I have to avoid speaking in monotone, to be natural when you speak keeps the listener engaged and one of the most important strategies it is not panic when you make a mistake.

Analyzing the Video

Giving me some feedback about the video I speak quickly or utter a wrong word accidentally. But I believe in general my answers were not too long or too short. In the video I saw some parts that I forgot everything because the question was new so I only made up something in order to escape. It's very hard to give a good and long answer because I don't remember any examples when I start to speak. In many occasions when my classmate asked a question it was about something that I don't talk about in English in my life every day I need the exam I give answers that I think was good but when I watch the video it's like they are not exactly the answers that were correct and also I didn't understand what I said to myself. Also I'm not very good at non-verbal language, I need to start using my hands a bit more because I was too stiff, I think it's much harder. I've never tried that, because I haven't been in that situation yet, but I think if I practice harder I would make it. My eyes were not very distracted and I was looking naturally only when I was thinking I was looking up to remember. My partner and me both had a good position because teacher said keep your upper body in the video and sit normal and we tried to speak loud to record the video in a good quality. Overall I could identify some of my weakness and strengths of my communication skills which I can improve.

Mock speaking exam

It was very long because of the four parts it had and at a certain point I didn't want to respond all the questions given as there were a lot but in general it was a good way to get to know how the real exam is and this helped me to realize that not only I need to prepare in my knowledge about the topics in reading, writing, speaking and listening but also be mentally prepared to be doing the exam for quite a long time and quite a lot of questions.

Tips

The first tip I consider is important this: speak clearly and with a good volume. This is important because and even if you have a good pronunciation skill and you speak like a native speaker if they don't hear you very well it doesn't matter. However, I learned a position for my hands that encourages my confidence too.

Another one is be confident and have a decent body language. This point brings together different tips such as: maintain eye contact, you don't have to stare because this will make things uncomfortable but you have to make the evaluator know you are paying attention to them and that you know what you are talking about and finally body expressions. If you have a good posture this will show self-confidence also moving your hands a bit but not wildly.

My videos

By watching my video, I realized I need to improve these things. First of all, as we are in virtual I need to change the position of my camera as you can barely see my face, this was kind of difficult as my computer doesn't move easily. I was giving responses which were sufficiently enough for the questions but I need to talk a bit more clearly and not get too nervous because then or I speak too slowly or too fast. I need to develop my answers a bit more because I feel like in many topics I had a life experience to talk about and give logical reasons but in a few others I had to think to remember something to say. I don't know why but when I speak for too long I finish talking about another thing! So I guess when I finish talking about the actual answer, I should end it in that moment. In the part 2 of the exam I answered all the questions in the correct order one after another and I finished on time less than two minutes as the teacher recommended. Finally, my body, I wasn't using my hands properly and they were hidden. I was sitting normally but because of my camera sometimes I had to move closer to be seen. We were speaking loudly, and I could understand everything from the video, only sometimes we were quiet for some parts, and I didn't understand some words. As I'm using glasses it's difficult to see where I was looking but from what I remember I was looking at my partner most of the time.

This year the experience was new to practice in virtual and with a friend it helps you gain more confidence, but at the same time you think that when you are at that moment with the examiner you will still be nervous because he is not your friend but thanks to that experience I could learn too much from my partner her body language, how she unfolds, I could also learn that nerves are not always going to help you if not everything is in you in your confidence, I felt good working with someone known especially when they transmit that to you confidence.

The guidelines or recommendations that the teacher gave us were very useful but the ones I remember the most were the usual eye contact because through it the examiner can also see if you are nervous, I wasn't looking at the camera when I was speaking and looked down or to other directions most of the time. body language always tries to accompany your answer with body language and I think my body was not bad but when you put your hands on your lap or on the table, a good reward for speaking and my hands are normally on it when I see my videos. If you stutter or don't know how to say a word or if you stay quiet, those who qualify will also see you and can lower your score, but if you try to rescue quickly you percance they may not realize it.

Watching my video I realized that many times I have to keep my hands still since I think he uses them to show things but I always move them, but my voice heard by my partner with no problem. I think that in my vocabulary I make pauses when I speak and I think that happens because I get nervous talking about a specific topic. In many situation I speak a lot maybe more than the time I have. When I have nervous I talk with fantansy and I make up a story to answer because the question is something I don't know. But the answer is ok osea its related to the question but not fully I think the teacher understand. Maybe when I listen I understand my answer but when I ask my partner she say she's confused because I talk about many things and it don't make sense.

Mock speaking exam:

I did this exam this year and it was amazing. First, it was a good practice and you had to do it with a friend so that was amazing, it reinforced a friendship with my pair. On the other hand, I was a little nervous and we had to repeat it several times, in the last one everything started to flow really well and it went really well.

Things that I learned:

I learned to control my nervousness and better strategies/tips to have a better grade on the real exam. I learned a position for my hands that encourages my confidence, I learned also a new tone of voice that could get me more confidence and instantly a better grade. I could learn that I have to be clear and direct with the information I have to talk about and don't say things that are not related, when I'm nervous I start forgetting words and saying their literal translation. Looking back in our videos I see

some questions are very difficult and I never think about it before so I tried to invent something to say that wasn't happened in my life.

My video evaluation:

My video was almost perfect, in the video I was fully nervous and I have to learn from our mistakes. Watching me having nervousness helped me learning. At first, I started forgetting words and made me seen insecure, I guess my answers were generally long but sometimes the question wasn't clear, and then when I couldn't understand I was giving also answers that didn't make sense, I have to improve even my body language because I didn't now where to put my hands at first but in the second part was better and myself was really tickling. I didn't pay attention to my eyes but when I see my video, I was looking at the other person most of the time. I think I was comfortable. My voice was better than my friennds well I use a good gaming microhone. It was just difficult to sit normally because my microphone is near to the monior.

Analyzing carefully my video, I noticed that I usually give the necessary information but also, I give extra information that isn't that important, this is something I've just noticed and have to improve. By reading these texts with the teacher, There are many things I have to improve. It is important to answer the questions accurately, that is, not take too long to answer but analyze what is going to be said. also, I learned my answers is better if they came from my own life so I can have some reasons and evidences. And when I see my video sometimes my answer is it not related to the question, I think is because I don't remember the question. the teacher told us when I answer I need to follow a order so the listener understand me very good and I shouldn't speak too much.

We had some classes about body language too. teacher Shad said maintain eye contact, you don't have to stare because this will make things uncomfortable, but you have to make the evaluator know you are paying attention to them and that you know what you are talking about. In the exams I could hear my voice perfectly and I think the teacher didn't have problems hear me in the video. I didn't see myself sleeping on the table or be outside the video, I think I was sitting normally.