Assessing Oral Proficiency for English Young Learners
through the Components of English Language Development Assessment (ELDA)

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Abstract

In the last decades, the teaching of English for young learners becomes very popular. It is because the government implements new policy to teach foreign language to the early ages. The national curriculum also decides to introduce English since elementary schools as include in local content subjects. However, some English teachers still find some difficulties in forming the teaching methodology and its assessment. Some debates coming whether English for young learners should concern on productive skills or receptive skills or cover all skills. Besides, some problems also arise from how to assess the young learners since it is as local subject and they also still learn the second language (Indonesian). Therefore, this article concerns on speaking or oral assessment since the writer think that speaking is the key points for young learner to study further.

This article describes the design of the speaking component of ELDA which consists of four components as key points to measure oral proficiency. The four components are reasons, tell, explain, and connect. The English language proficiency standards for ELDA Speaking (and the other three academic content areas) were developed in December 2002 in the United States. ELDA is a kind of assessment used in the United States and as a battery of assessments designed to enable schools to measure the annual progress of English language learners in Grades 3 to 12 in developing English language proficiency.

Keywords:*ELDA, assessment, EYL*

In the last ten years, the issue of English for Young Learners (EYL) in Indonesia has become a mega trend. The program to maintain and prepare the next generation to struggle in international society is well prepared through the English for young learners program. Preparing young people to study English at the early age will impact to their awareness of the importance of foreign language. In line with that the ministry of education of Indonesian Republic includes English subject as a local subject since elementary school. Therefore, EYL become more salient than the previous era.

Cameron (2001) says that "Although research has suggested that age may have an effect as to the way a language is learned, age alone does not determine success in learning a foreign language." Learning a foreign language is supported by various sociocultural contexts, government policies, and historical language practices. Therefore, there is no single best method to implement foreign language teaching to young learners. However, teachers or researchers should try to find effective EFL teaching for young learners by having clear understanding of the following factors and the relation amongst them. Those are Program

planning, content, and learner goals, Effective teachers, and Programmatic and institutional support.

Furthermore, McCloskey & Dolitsky (2006) explain that program planning, content, and learner goals provides a clear understanding of the program's objectives and goals, as well as the extent and structure of the program. What students should know and be able to do should be clearly outlined and established along with how that is to be measured. Where academic-level proficiency is desired, there should be long-term strategies for continued support and articulation between educational levels. The program should have a learner-centered approach, and materials should be selected in accordance with the age of the children, the length of the program, its objectives, and the learning environment. Teachers, trainers, and teacher associations should all be partners in program development, and planners should be flexible in regards to methodology.

The next one is *Effective teachers:* As the law 2005 about teachers that teachers should have four competencies: pedagogic, professional, social, and individual. The first two competences is the main requirement to be successful teachers. Therefore, qualified ESL and EFL educators not only should demonstrate written and oral proficiency in the English language (regardless of native language), but also should demonstrate teaching competency. By upgrading teacher, it will enhance the students' ability to improve their English.

Finally, *Programmatic and institutional support*: Support materials should be designed for both teachers and students with the appropriate cultural context of the country in mind. The culture of the EFL/EAL young learner should be regarded as a valued and respected. In this case the writer focuses on the program planning which is narrowing in the assessment which explains about English Language Development Assessment (ELDA).

ELDA measures English language proficiency in reading, writing, listening and speaking. In the United States, ELDA measures the use of these skills in the academic settings, through mathematics, English language arts, science, social studies, and school environment content. ELDA measures progress on English language proficiency and helps determine when a student has achieved full proficiency for their grade level.

Ferrara (2008) explains English Language Development Assessment (ELDA) comprehensively. He explained that ELDA is an approach to assess English speaking proficiency. It is designed to assess the development of proficiency in relation to English language proficiency. Therefore, ELDA is intended to enable identification of students who have reached full English proficiency. In ELDA, there are 5 levels of speaking proficiency; fully English proficiency (level 5), advance (level 4), intermediate (level 3), beginning (level 2), and pre-functional (level 1). The performance level of speaking proficiency standard divides into two big concerns; linguistic proficiency and cognitive performance level.

The level 5 English learners, as the ideal output of an English teacher, are able to perform fully English proficient. The categories of level 4 to level 1 are missing some performance from fully English proficiency. The categories of these learners are explained as follow.

1. Learners are able to supply coherent, unified, and appropriately sequenced responses to an interlocutor.

2. Learners are able to use a variety of devices to connect ideas logically.
3. Learners are able to use variety of ideas connectors.
4. Learners are able to use complex grammatical structures which appropriate to any types of discourses.
5. Learners are able to use a variety of idiomatic phrases.
6. Learners are able to use language effectively to connect, tell, explain, and reason.
7. Learners are able to show flexibility, creativity, and spontaneity in speech in a variety of contexts.

1. The Nature of Speaking

Based on the explanation from Clark and Clark (1997: 223) speaking is fundamentally an instrumental act. Speakers talk in order to have some effects on their listeners. They assert things to change their state knowledge. They ask them questions to get them to provide information. They request things to get them to do things for them. It refers to oral proficiency and is very similar to the notion of communicative competence. Proficiency itself refers to a high degree of competence trough training (Omaggio, 1986: 2).

To most people, especially for foreign learners, mastering the art of speaking is the single most important aspect of learning a second or foreign language, and success is measured in terms of the ability to carry out a conversation in the language. Learning English is different from learning Math. In Math learners just need to sit down and concentrate to the problems and they become master of Math, but in English they need to practice a lot.

Levelt (1989) as quoted by Bygate (2001) in Carter and Nunan (2001:16) proposed that speech production involves four major processes. They are (1) conceptualization, (2) formulation, (3) articulation, and (4) self-monitoring.

Conceptualization is concerned with planning the message content. It draws on background knowledge, knowledge about topic, about the speech situation, and on knowledge of patterns of discourse. In line with this (Grice: 1975) in Yule (1983) describes that the topic framework represents the area of overlap in the knowledge which has been activated and is shared by the participants at a particular point in a discourse. He suggests that in conversation there should have a general agreement of co-operation between participants in doing conversation, then each participant can expect the other to conform to certain conventions in speaking. These conventions or maxims have to do with the quantity (or in formativeness), the quality (truthfulness), the manner (clearness) and relevance of conversational contributions.

The second process is the formulation which refers to finding words and phrases the meaning, sequencing them and putting in appropriate grammatical markers (such as inflection, auxiliaries, articles). It also processes the language processing, effective speakers need to be able to process language in their own heads and put it into coherent order so that it comes out in forms that are not only comprehensible, but also convey the meanings that are intended (Harmer: 2003:271) .

The next process is articulation. This involves the motor control of the articulation organs; in English: the lips, tongue, teeth, alveolar palate, velum, glottis, mouth cavity and breath. Besides, Harmer (2003: 269) adds that effective speakers of English need to be able not only to produce the individual phonemes of English (as in saying *I would have gone*) but also to use fluent 'connected speech' (as in *I'd have gone*). In connected speech sounds are

modified (assimilation), omitted (elision), added (linking r), or weakened (through contractions and stress pattering).

The last one is self-monitoring. Self-monitoring is one process in speech production. It is concerned with language user being able to identify and self-correct mistakes. Sometimes students fell afraid to speak because of making mistakes. By practicing lots they will investigate and study other speakers then they can contemplate how to be a good speaker and avoid making lot of mistakes.

2. Teaching Speaking

From a communicative, pragmatic view of the language classroom, listening and speaking skills are closely intertwined. More often than not, ESL curricula that treat oral communication skills will simply be labeled as "listening/speaking" courses. The interaction between these two modes of performance applies especially strongly to conversation, the most popular discourse category in the profession. And, in the classroom, even relatively unidirectional types of spoken language input are often followed or preceded by various forms of oral production of the part of students.

Speaking is one of the most important skills in learning a second or foreign language especially English. This is true in line with Nunan (1991: 39) states that speaking skill involves many language elements, such as grammar, vocabulary, intonation, pronunciation, stress, and the choice of language functions.

Nunan also states that learning to speak in a second or foreign language will be facilitated when the learners are actively engaged in attempting to communicate. It is like the other skills of English, learning to read by reading, learning to write by writing, and of course learning to speak by speaking. Just the same when people learn to swim by swimming and learn to ride bicycle by riding bicycle. Therefore, exercise for speaking should help learners use the language essential to real-life situations.

Approach to teaching speaking has moved from the traditional structural approach to the communicative one. In structural approach, grammar is emphasized on students' learning, however communicative is emphasized on communicative operation.

According to Richard (1990: 76-77), two major approaches characterize "current" teaching of conversation, an indirect approach in which learners are more or less set loose to engage in interaction, and a direct approach that "involves planning a conversation program around the specific micro-skills, strategies, and processes that are involved in fluent conversation."

The goal of teaching speaking skills is communicative efficiency. Learners should be able to make themselves understood, using their current proficiency to the fullest. They should try to avoid confusion in the message due to faulty pronunciation, grammar, or vocabulary, and to observe the social and cultural rules that apply in each communication situation.

To help students develop communicative efficiency in speaking, teacher can use a balanced activities approach that combines language input, structured output, and communicative output. *Language input* comes in the form of teacher talk, listening activities, reading passages, and the language heard and read out side of class. It gives learners the material they need to begin producing language themselves. Language input may be content oriented or form oriented. The explanation of content and form oriented as follow:

1. Content-oriented input focuses on information, whether it is a simple weather report or an extended lecture on an academic topic. Content-oriented input may also include descriptions of learning strategies and examples of their use.
2. Form-oriented input focuses on ways of using the language: guidance from the teacher or another source on vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar (linguistic competence); appropriate things to say in specific contexts (discourse competence); expectations for rate of speech, pause length, turn-taking, and other social aspects of language use (sociolinguistic competence); and explicit instruction in phrases to use to ask for clarification and repair miscommunication (strategic competence).

Structured output focuses on correct form. In structured output, students may have options for responses, but all of the options require them to use the specific form or structure that the teacher has just introduced.

Structured output is designed to make learners comfortable producing specific language items recently introduced, sometimes in combination with previously learned items. Teachers often use structured output exercises as a transition between the presentation stage and the practice stage of a lesson plan. Textbook exercises also often make good structured output practice activities.

In *communicative output,* the learners' main purpose is to complete a task, such as obtaining information, developing a travel plan, or creating a video. To complete the task, they may use the language that the teacher has just presented, but they also may draw on any other vocabulary, grammar, and communication strategies that they know. In communicative output activities, the criterion of success is whether the learner gets the message across. Accuracy is not a consideration unless the lack of it interferes with the message.

In everyday communication, spoken exchanges take place because there is some sort of information gap between the participants. Communicative output activities involve a similar real information gap. In order to complete the task, students must reduce or eliminate the information gap. In these activities, language is a tool, not an end in itself. In a balanced activity approach, the teacher uses a variety of activities from these different categories of input and output. Learners at all proficiency levels, including beginners, benefit from this variety; it is more motivating, and it is also more likely to result in effective language learning.

3. Speaking Component Assessment using ELDA

Ferrara (2008) said that ELDA assesses language skills with content drawn from school curricular and non-curricular sources that is age appropriate for each grade cluster assessment. The component of ELDA assessment consists of four speaking functions. The first is reason. It is defined as arguing in favor of or against a particular relevant topic and support the argument. The response required is clear position and information to support the position. The second is explain. It is defined as providing detailed information on a relevant topic in a conversation. The response required is relevance, specific ideas and information. The next function is tell. It is defined as providing basic information on a relevant topic in a conversation. The response required us relevance, extends with details or examples. And the last one is connect. It is defined as establishing a verbal connection with an interlocutor in

order to converse on a topic. The response required is relevance as a demonstration of connection.

Students' oral responses to these prompts are scored by the test administrator using a scoring guide. Students get 0, 1, or 2 points for each response they give, depending on the appropriateness and quality of the response according to the scoring guide. For each function the teacher gives input, scaffolding, provides the prompt, and finally repeats the prompt to encourage the students to demonstrate their speaking abilities.

Sample Speaking Item Set

1. Connect Item

> Input
> **Sometimes there are special events at school.**
> Prompt
> **Tell me about a special event at your school.**
> Scaffold
> **For example, you might talk about having an important guest speaker or a musical performance.**
> Prompt Repetition
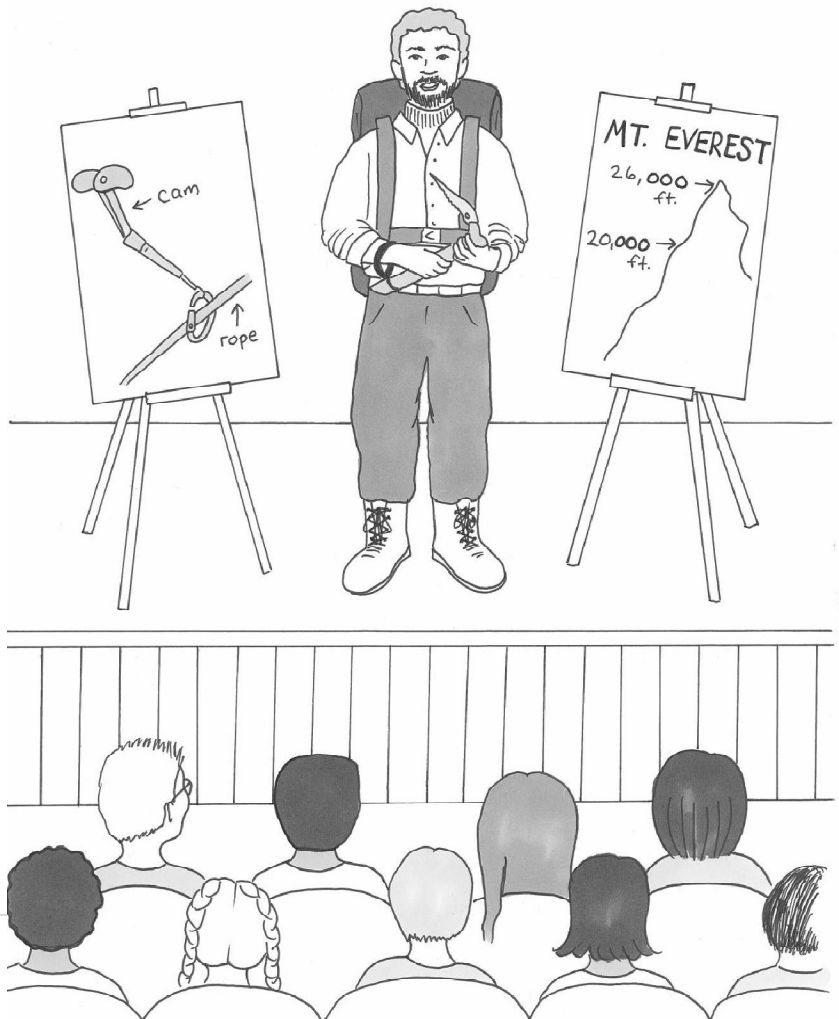> **Speak in complete sentences. Tell me about a special event at your school.**

2. Tell Item

> Input
>
> **Now look at this picture (picture 1).**
>
> Prompt
>
> **Describe what you think is happening in this picture.**

Scaffold

For example, you might talk about why these students are gathered together or what the man is talking about.

Prompt Repetition

Speak in complete sentences. Describe what you think is happening in this picture.

3. Explain Item

Input

Now look at the two pictures (picture 1 and picture 2).
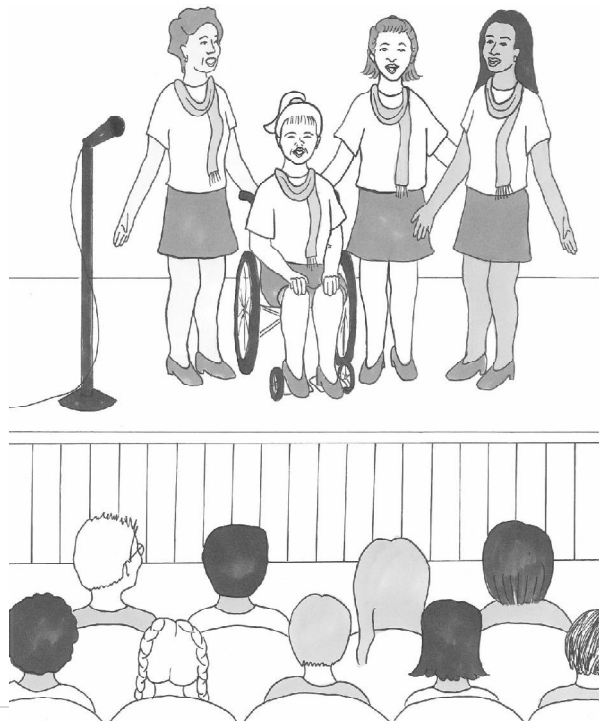
Prompt

Say at least two sentences about how the two pictures are similar or different.

Scaffold

For example, you might talk about why the students are gathered in the auditorium or what the different activities are.

Prompt Repetition

Speak in complete sentences. Remember to say at least two sentences about how the two pictures are similar or different.

4. Reason Item

Input

Some people think that school assemblies help students better understand lessons in the classroom.

Prompt

Tell me whether or not you think school assemblies help you learn. Then give at least two reasons why you think that.

Scaffold

For example, you can talk about how school assemblies add meaning to the classroom lessons, how they make you feel about school, or the new things you learn at them.

Prompt Repetition

Speak in complete sentences. Remember to tell me whether or not you think school assemblies help you learn. Then give at least two reasons why you think that.

ELDA Speaking Scoring Rubric

Function	Score Point 2	Score Point 1	Score Point 0
Connect (Questions 1, 5, and 9 on the short form) (Questions 1,5,9, and 13 on the long form)	Response establishes/confirms conversational connection; essential information provided (e.g., name or number of person, place, thing) clearly and without ambiguity *Errors in mechanics or conventions do not impede understanding*	Response partly establishes/confirms conversational connection; at least some essential information provided (e.g., name or number of person, place, thing); other information is missing or unclear *Errors in mechanics or conventions may impede understanding*	Response fails to confirm conversational connection; essential information (e.g., name or number of person, place, thing) is either not provided or is unclear/ambiguous
Tell (Questions 2, 6, and 10 on the short form) (Questions 2, 6, 10, and 14 on the short	Response provides essential information cued for and describes/extends with specific detail and/or example *Errors in mechanics or conventions do not*	Response provides essential information cued for and attempts to describe/extend with general information; OR response provides some specific detail or example without	Response fails to provide essential information cued for and/or to describe/ extend with specific detail and/or example; response may include only essential

form)	*impede understanding*	making explicit essential information cued for *Errors in mechanics or conventions may impede understanding*	information cued for with no development
Expand (Questions 3, 7, and 11 on the short form) (Questions 3, 7, 11, and 15 on the long form)	Response provides both essential information cued for and specific ideas/information that serve to explain, elaborate, and convey order (temporal or spatial) *Errors in mechanics or conventions do not impede understanding*	Response provides both essential information cued for and attempts to explain, elaborate, and convey order (temporal or spatial); information included as development may be partial or overly general *Errors in mechanics or conventions may impede understanding*	Response fails to provide essential information cued for and/or ideas/information that serve to explain, elaborate, and/or convey order (temporal or spatial); response may include only essential information cued for with no development
Reason (Questions 4, 8, and 12 on the short form) (Questions 4, 8, 12, and 16 on the long form)	Response expresses a clear position (explicit or implied) and includes information to clearly support that position (personal experience or observation, fact, hearsay, etc.) *Errors in mechanics or conventions do not impede understanding*	Response expresses a position (explicit or implied) and partially supports that position with information (personal experience or observation, fact, hearsay, etc.) that may be incomplete, only partially plausible, or overly general *Errors in mechanics or conventions may impede understanding*	Response fails to express a clear position (position cannot be inferred) or response expresses a position but lacks information that may serve as support for that position; response may include only an unsupported position statement

Performance Level Descriptors

In classifying the students' performance level, the teacher can use standard setting process. Bejar (2008) defines it as the methodology used to define *levels* of achievement or proficiency and the *cutscores* corresponding to those levels. A cut score is simply the score that serves to classify the students whose score is below the cut score into one level and the students whose score is at or above the cut score into the next and higher level. Since there are four topics and four prompts, so, there are sixteen questions. Each response to each question is scored with a 0-2 rubric, so the maximum possible raw is 32.

The classification is as follow, will be written from the top possible score to bottom.

Level 5: Fully English Proficient (32-27)

- sequenced responses
- connect ideas logically
- complex and simple grammatical structures
- grammar and vocabulary are comparable to those of a minimally proficient native English speaker
- use circumlocution
- idiomatic phrases
- non-interactive speech
- use language effectively to connect, tell, explain, and reason
- pronunciation patterns

Level 4: Advanced (26-21)

- supply mostly coherent, unified, and appropriately sequenced responses
- use some devices to connect ideas logically
- make errors in modality, tense, agreement, pronoun use, and inflections, but do not interfere with communication
- have sufficient vocabulary to communicate in nonacademic situations and some academic and technical vocabulary
- use circumlocutions
- engage in extended discussions
- use language to connect, tell, and explain, and they can begin to use it to reason pronunciation occasionally interferes with communication.

Level 3: Intermediate (20-15)

- use of discourse features but mainly rely on familiar, discrete utterances
- rely on simple transitional markers and use common, straightforward grammatical structures
- make errors in modality, tense, agreement, pronoun use, and inflections but they do interfere
- limited in vocabulary, especially academic and technical vocabulary
- use repetition; everyday, imprecise words; and code switching to sustain conversations begin to use idiomatic expressions
- retell, describe, narrate, question, and give simple, concrete instructions
- often use language to connect and tell and sometimes to explain
- pronunciation patterns frequently interfere with communication.

Level 2: Beginning (14-9)

- use predominantly formulaic patterns in speech without regard to their connectivity
- use some very simple transitional markers
- use formulaic patterns and memorized phrases
- word order is frequently inappropriate, and frequent grammatical mistakes impede communication
- vocabulary is limited to key words; they have little or no technical vocabulary

- able to name or list and can sometimes use language to connect or tell
- limited vocabulary and knowledge of English structures

Level 1: Pre-functional (8-0)

- repeat common phrases with very simple structures
- able to say a few, common, everyday words
- able to provide some basic information in response to requests

Conclusion

Finally, the writer comes up with the conclusion that ELDA is a new term in Indonesia context and in assessing students' speaking skill as well. The writer believes that it can be one of the ways to promote students' speaking ability by having appropriate assessment.

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