

USING AUTOMATED PRONUNCIATION TESTS TO PLACE STUDENTS AND TRACK PERFORMANCE

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INTRODUCTION

- ◉ Why test pronunciation?
- ◉ Why use an automated test?
- ◉ How can scores and subscores be used?
- ◉ What test is right for you?
- ◉ Interpreting overall scores and subscores
- ◉ Integrating pronunciation tests into the classroom or language lab
- ◉ Example: the test used at SNHU

WHY TEST PRONUNCIATION?

*“The Intensive English Program (IEP) at SNHU prepares international students for entrance to and success in University programming. The IEP welcomes comments and suggestions from undergraduate and graduate faculty as to how to better prepare our students. One of their most frequent comments is that **some students’ pronunciation skills are low to the point that they are incomprehensible to the professor and to other students.** To this end, the IEP has begun to offer additional pronunciation classes to assist students. The problem we faced was in doing the initial diagnosis of the student’s needs. Face-to-face interviews are labor and time intensive. We needed a better solution - one that is both fast and accurate.”*

*Tim DiMatteo, M.Ed.
Director, Institute for Language Education
Southern New Hampshire University*

WHY USE AN AUTOMATED TEST?

Previous technologies for intelligibility analysis (deciding whether a student can be understood) either were constrained by labor- and time-intensive processes (face-to-face interviews) and subjective assessment, or were based on older technology.

Automated tests are:

- ◉ Cost-effective
- ◉ Fast
- ◉ Objective
- ◉ Accurate

HOW CAN PRONUNCIATION TEST SCORES AND SUBSCORES BE USED?

- For placement
 - As an addition to admissions or placement testing
 - Replacing time- and labor-consuming individual interviews
- To chart progress
 - Pre- and post-testing at the beginning and end of a term or semester shows where there is improvement and where more work can be done.
 - **Objectivity** - a teacher's ear "learns" students' accents and accommodates them; a computer does not.
- As part of a grade

WHAT TEST IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

- What kind of automated tests are there?
 - Assessment only
 - Assessment with training modules
 - Assessment with online training
- How do you decide - questions to ask:
 - Will the test be used for placement or also to track progress?
 - Do you have a pronunciation program in place?
 - Will pronunciation training be stand-alone or integrated into the classroom or language lab?
 - Does the test measure the skillsets you care about?

INTERPRETING OVERALL SCORES AND SUBSCORES - SAMPLE INDIVIDUAL SCORESHEET

Phonologics
APST INDIVIDUAL TEST RESULTS

TEST RESULT

SESSION ID: _____
INST. CODE: _____
SITE CODE: _____
DEPT. CODE: _____

NAME: _____
ID: _____
ORGANIZATION: _____
TEST DATE: _____

OVERALL SCORE

RESULT	DESCRIPTION
_____	The Overall Score represents the proportion of words and phrases that are likely to be understood by a typical native speaker of English, who is unfamiliar with the speaker, in spontaneous conversation. This score is comprised of a weighted combination of all subscores and is a measure of the speaker's ability to communicate effectively.

SUB SCORES

CATEGORY	RESULT	DESCRIPTION
PHONETICS	_____	The Phonetic Index subscore is a measurement of how accurately the speaker produces specific acoustical sounds that if mispronounced may change the interpreted meaning of the words and phrases spoken.
COARTICULATION	_____	Coarticulation measures how well the speaker combines certain vowel-consonant combinations within a specific phrasing and pronunciation context.
FLUENCY	_____	Fluency refers to the smoothness of voicing drawing inferences from both voiced periods and periods of rest. Unanticipated interruptions and pauses lower this score.
ENUNCIATION	_____	Enunciation is a measurement of the clarity of speech and measures how close the speaker's pronunciation is relative to that of a native speaker of American English.
PROSODY	_____	Prosody is a measure of the cadence or "rhythm" of the speaker's voice. This measure combines the measures of enunciation and fluency.

TEST HISTORY

TEST DATE	OVERALL SCORE

Overall Score


Definitions

Subscores

Test History

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INTERPRETING OVERALL SCORES AND SUBSCORES - SAMPLE GROUP SCORESHEET

**Phonologics**
APST TEST RESULTS

TEST REPORT

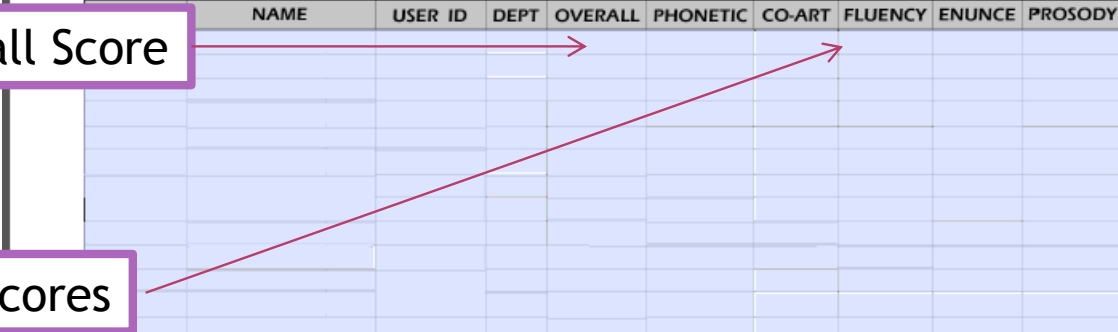
ORGANIZATION: _____
ADMINISTRATOR: _____
TEST DATE: _____

SESSION ID: _____
INST. CODE: _____
SITE CODE: _____

SCORES

NAME	USER ID	DEPT	OVERALL	PHONETIC	CO-ART	FLUENCY	ENUNCE	PROSODY

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INTERPRETING OVERALL SCORES AND SUBSCORES



APST SCORE & SUBSCORE INTERPRETATION

Overall Score Interpretation

OVERALL SCORE RANGES

7 - 10	Fully Understandable
5 - 7	Mostly Understandable
3 - 5	Difficult to Understand
0 - 3	Unable to be Understood

Note: Subscores range from approximately 3.8 to 7.5

SUB SCORES

CATEGORY	Below 5.5 Hard to Understand	5.5 - 6.5 Can be Understood	Over 6.5 Easy to Understand
PHONETICS	You have difficulty pronouncing the full range of sounds in English.	You can be understood, but you are not consistently pronouncing all the sounds of English correctly.	You have achieved a satisfactory level of skill in correctly pronouncing the sounds of English.
COARTICULATION	You are pronouncing some combinations of consonants and vowels incorrectly, and confusing long and short vowels.	You are pronouncing most combinations of vowels and consonants correctly but not all are correct all the time.	You are correctly pronouncing combinations of vowels and consonants.
FLUENCY	Your sentences are often choppy with pauses that make understanding you difficult.	Your sentences are sometimes choppy with pauses that make understanding you difficult.	Your sentences are generally smooth, making you easy to understand.
ENUNCIATION	Not all your syllables are pronounced with the linkage, emphasis and clarity of a native speaker.	Some of your syllables are pronounced with the linkage, emphasis and clarity of a native speaker, but some are not.	Most of your sentences are now pronounced with the linkage, emphasis and clarity of a native speaker.
PROSODY (Comprising factors that make messages clear to listeners, including fluency and enunciation)	Your prosody is still at a basic level and needs some more work.	Your prosody is fairly good but could still be improved.	Your prosody is good, which helps make your meaning clear.

Subscore Interpretations

INTEGRATING PRONUNCIATION TESTS INTO THE CLASSROOM OR LANGUAGE LAB

- ◉ Use the overall score for initial placement.
- ◉ Use the subscores to customize training.
- ◉ Whole-class training.
- ◉ Individualized training.
- ◉ Post-test after six to eight weeks to gauge progress.

EXAMPLE: THE TEST USED AT SNHU

- ◎ **SNHU already had:**
 - Speaking classes required at all levels for all students.
 - Once a week pronunciation lab for students identified by their speaking teacher as needing intensive instruction.
 - A trained pronunciation instructor.
- ◎ **What SNHU didn't have** was a way to *objectively and efficiently* judge who needed training and what progress was made.
- ◎ **SNHU's choice:** an assessment-only automated tool.

THE TESTING PROCESS

- Have a quiet place for testing, where test-takers won't be interrupted. Close windows and turn off background noise such as TV and radios.
- Make sure test-takers are timing their utterances correctly and speaking only when appropriate.
- Encourage test-takers to speak in their normal accents and at their normal speeds. Soft-spoken test-takers may need to speak up slightly.
- Proctor the tests. Ensure that test-takers do not pause to practice repeatedly before recording.

MICROPHONE/HEADSET CONSIDERATIONS

- Use a simple headset with an external mike to ensure the most accurate results.
- If an external mike is being used, make sure it is approximately three (3) fingers distant from the side of the mouth and that it does not shift its position during the test.
- Test the headset or microphone (whether external or internal) before starting the test.
- In a multi-user lab, make sure the mikes aren't picking up “cross-talk” from other stations.

LOGIN

APST Login

User Name:

Password:

TEST-TAKER INFORMATION

User

* Name:

* Gender: Date of Birth:

Address: * ID Number:

*

Recording Device

* Choose Device:

CHECKING SOUND QUALITY

Recording

Before we begin the actual test, let's start with a few practice words and phrases. We will then play the first word or phrase back to you. In this way, you can be comfortable and know that your microphone and set up is working properly. When you are ready, please press the record button below and speak the word or phrase.

rest



Record

This word or phrase is for practice only

PRACTICE

The paintings in the museum were beautiful.



Stop

This word or phrase is for practice only


SCORED TEST BEGINS

Recording

When you are ready, please press the record button below and speak the word or phrase.

he's


Progress bar: [] [] [] []

Go Back to Prior Word Record

GET SCORE INFORMATION

Phonologics APST Administration Console

NAVIGATION
Manage/View ...
 **LOGOUT**

TEST RESULTS
REPORTS: Download ... Select data from the table below, then use the dropdown to generate reports.
Number of Results Per Page: 30 Results Per Page

All	Score	Test Subject	Test Date	Test Admin	Client
<input type="checkbox"/>	10	MAC AUSLAN, RITA	2013-02-21	Test Admin, Auburn U.	Auburn U.
<input type="checkbox"/>	9.4	PAZ, JENNIFER	2013-02-20	Test Admin, Auburn U.	Auburn U.

AT A GLANCE: Test Results
User: MAC AUSLAN, RITA
ID: 531170
Files: 53 / 53 (Upload/Record)
Rec.: v2.0.1


Test Date:	2013-02-21
Overall:	10
Phonetic:	7
Coarticulation:	7.5
Prosody:	7
Enunciation:	7
Fluency:	7.2

See the scores

DOWNLOAD INDIVIDUAL OR COMBINED SCORE SHEETS

Phonologics APST Administration Console

NAVIGATION



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Automated Pronunciation Testing

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST!

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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