



Assessing nonverbal and verbal interactional competence in a video-mediated oral test*

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Yang, Huijin. 2023. Assessing nonverbal and verbal interactional competence in a video-mediated oral test. *Linguistic Research* 40(Special Edition): 171-205. Interactional competence as a part of speaking proficiency involves communicating appropriately by taking turns with others. However, the assessment of nonverbal and verbal interactional competence is not common practice in most video-mediated oral tests. In addition, as interactional competence may vary according to task type, it is important to take this into consideration when designing an oral test. Therefore, this study investigated nonverbal and verbal interactional competence by levels in real-time video-mediated oral tests, including two task types: a small group discussion and an individual presentation with questions and answers. Each video transcript was used to code nonverbal and verbal interactional competence. Subsequent individual interviews were also conducted to more closely examine test takers' attitudes towards and opinions of the test format and test tasks. Results showed a statistically significant difference for 'facial expressions' in the category of nonverbal interactional competence and 'controversial opinions or questions' as well as 'topic-extensions of other topics' in the category of verbal interactional competence in a group discussion. In addition, 'reacting' and 'correction', in the category of verbal interactional competence, were statistically significant in asking and answering questions after the individual presentation. Finally, practical implications for the future test designers of video-mediated group oral tests and raters for nonverbal and verbal interactional competence are discussed. (Korea University)

Keywords nonverbal and verbal interactional competence, group oral task, video-mediated oral test, Korean EFL test takers

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1. Introduction

With the emergence of the concept of communicative competence, there was a need for communicative language tests to assess a test-taker's ability to use contextual language as well as language knowledge effectively (Hymes 1972). Consequently, oral tests have become an essential part of standardized assessments over the past 20 years (Vo 2019). For speaking assessments, oral ability is defined as “the use of oral language to interact directly and immediately with others...with the purpose of engaging in, acquiring, transmitting, and demonstrating knowledge” (Jamieson, Eignor, Grabe, and Kunnan 2008: p.74). Since oral communication will often involve interaction between two or more speakers, test developers interested in oral proficiency had to devise a way to include this aspect within final test instruments. Ockey and Li (2015) interpreted interactional competence of a second language (L2) to involve the process of actively structuring verbal interactions in real-time, requiring appropriate alternating opening and closing functions, and practices when responding to others.

However, computer-delivered oral tests include non-interactive tasks that require communication between two or more test-takers (Davies et al. 1999). It is still limited to sitting in front of the computer and recalling memorized repertoires or fixed frameworks in order to achieve high scores (Moon and Choi 2019). Although the oral test is in the form of an interview, the answers from the test takers often do not reflect authentic discourse (Van Lier 1989). In other words, it is unlikely that these tests can measure some elements of interactional competence needed to communicate with others, initiate and finish opinions, and develop a topic with appropriate pragmatic use.

In addition, previous studies on interactional competence have shown that nonverbal interactional competence plays a decisive role in communication efficiency (Rine and Hall 2011; Young 2011; Nakatsuhara et al. 2017). For example, nonverbal behaviors, such as *body posture* and *eye contact* help create more positive and fluent interactions (Ducasse and Brown 2009). Therefore, Galaczi and Taylor (2018) argued that verbal and nonverbal interactional competence should be considered together. For this reason, they suggested that more specific nonverbal interactive features should be uncovered to assess nonverbal interactional competence.

Although several studies on interactional competence have focused on verbal interactions, less research has been conducted in the area of nonverbal interactional competence (e.g., Wang 2015; Leaper and Brawn 2018; Nakatsuhara et al. 2021; Yang

2021). In addition, interactional competence measured as a part of practical discourse has the potential to more accurately differentiate between proficiency levels and thus provide a clear understanding of the assessment and development of interactional competence, especially in the context of online real-time communication (Galaczi 2014; Galaczi and Taylor 2018; Ockey et al. 2019). Therefore, it is necessary to closely examine Korean English as a foreign language (EFL) test takers' nonverbal and verbal interactional competence according to different proficiency levels through group discussions and presentations. This can be done by observing the asking and answering of questions that sufficiently elicit discourse during synchronous computer-mediated group oral tests. Lastly, it is essential to better understand the view of test takers towards this form of interactive assessment.

2. Literature review

2.1 Interactional competence

The social and behavioral sciences understand interactional competence to be an individual's ability to communicate with other interlocutors by using various features in the roles of speakers and listeners to achieve communication beyond language competence (Kramsch 1986; Hall 1995; He and Young, 1998). Others have argued that this interactional approach to interactional competence sees it as a set of available resources including knowledge of applying various strategies that appear in a specific situation that requires the comprehension of the meaning of the words to convey a message during the communication process (Cekaite 2007; Celce-Murcia 2007; Markee 2008; Young 2011). As awareness of the importance of interactional competence has improved, group tasks in the learning environment and their assessment in testing have become more widespread (Galaczi 2014). May (2011) emphasized the importance of the development of rating scales that contain the complexity of interactional competence and furthermore reflect the given context specificity.

Ducasse and Brown (2009) categorized nonverbal and verbal interactional competence as interactional behaviors in spoken interpersonal communication. In their empirical study, a test was conducted using pairs in a beginner Spanish class, and the raters' and test-takers' interactional discourse behaviors were investigated. The results showed that

the existence or absence of physical nonverbal fluency was critical to the quality of the interaction. It also included a flow of *eye movements* and *body gestures* that physically supported what happened verbally in the interaction of low-level discourse. Ducasse (2014) extended on this previous study by examining twenty-five test-takers' interactional features in successful interaction. The results uncovered that test-takers used *gestures* to inform unknown words during the interaction. In addition, *body posture*, *gaze*, *laughter*, and *facial expressions* were evidence of nonverbal interactional competence in communication at an intermediate-level. However, although research on the role of nonverbal interactional competence is well established, more needs to be done to determine how these features differ between proficiency levels (Young 2011).

In contrast, the characteristics of various levels can be seen through studies that analyzed interactive functions in terms of interactional competence using group tests. For example, Yang (2021) conducted a group oral discussion test with low, intermediate, and advanced-level test-takers through a video-mediated test format. The characteristics of test-takers at each level revealed that low-level test-takers demonstrated some specific interactive functions, which were giving *opinions* and *answers* repeatedly. In the case of intermediate-level test-takers, they demonstrated *follow-up questions*, *answers*, *reacting* and *develop* for adding information to what was said earlier. These types of interactive functions appeared without needing a pause and were the most evident collaborative characteristic among the three-level groups. The most prominent aspects of the advanced-level test-takers, were demonstration of *controversial opinions or questions* and *appraising* functions. In other words, the test takers who had higher proficiency levels were better able to critically engage with the opinion of other test takers while listening, discussing and challenging interlocutors by stating or asking questions in a potentially face-threatening way. In sum, it revealed that as the level of language proficiency increased, test-takers interacted more cooperatively and developed the opinions of other test-takers more so than their own opinions, and this is consistent with characteristics of interactive functions across proficiency levels described by Galaczi (2014). However, the focus was on assessing verbal interactional competence in holistic communication; thus, it is necessary to investigate both nonverbal and verbal interactional competence in group tasks.

2.2 Task types

The effectiveness of the task types has been considered to play a significant role in eliciting successful interactions (Ducasse and Brown 2009). Despite many different types of tasks being involved (Ockey et al. 2019), most of the studies on oral ability assessment have been carried out focusing on individual interviews and group discussion tasks (Brooks 2009; Ducasse 2014; Galaczi 2014). For example, Vo (2019) questioned the degree to which the ability to interact contributed to the difference in scores according to the individual interview and paired discussion tasks of test takers who have equivalent English proficiency test scores. It was also found that test-takers seem to have more opportunities to demonstrate their interactional competence in paired discussion task formats than in interviews. In particular, the results showed that nonverbal interactional features occurred more frequently in the paired discussion such as *hand gestures*, *head nodding*, and *body posture* were most evident, and *facial expressions* appeared less, with no significant difference in *eye contact* between the two tasks. As for the most frequently occurring verbal interactional features they were *disagreement*, *persuading*, *initiating topics*, *agreeing*, and *asking for information or opinions*, conversely no existing *confirmation check*, *clarification request*, or *self-correcting*.

This study helped expand the current understanding of what constitutes interactional competence and it could be argued that nonverbal interactional competence is an important component of the interactional competence construct. However, as the author pointed out there is a need to develop a more comprehensive picture of micro-level test-takers' interactional competence performances. Furthermore, Ducasse (2014) advised that it would be helpful to understand which task types more successfully derive nonverbal and verbal interactional competence from test-takers and how these interactional features differ by task type.

In this regard, Ockey et al. (2015) mentioned that group oral tasks and oral presentations are increasingly used in assessing academic oral competence in a university context. Group oral discussion tasks can assess students' ability to sustain collaborative discussions and have recently been more widely employed as test tasks. In addition, as many studies have provided evidence, this task is valid for assessment in the classroom and for estimating the oral competence of test-takers in the real world (Bonk and Ockey 2003; Van Moere 2006).

Oral presentations are also generally used to assess oral abilities as a main type of oral task in a university communicative context and often are directly related to academic or professional success (Ferris and Tagg 1996; Zappa-Hollman 2007). Ferris (1998) surveyed 768 international students studying at American universities and found that speaking using formal language was the most critical and problematic competence. It was also considered the most valuable skill to develop by respondents. Ockey et al. (2019) also asserted that the presentation task type provides opportunities for test takers to measure their abilities in many aspects of the oral ability construct, including interactional competence in responding appropriately to questions by the other test takers. Therefore, using small group discussions and presentations as main tasks are needed to assess for an evidence-based construct of nonverbal and verbal interactional competence for developing rating scales.

2.3 Video-mediated test

With the COVID-19 global health pandemic that occurred in early 2020, social distancing and remote learning environments due to physical proximity restrictions have increased the number of areas where technology enables remote management (Nakatsuhara et al. 2021). This trend has been accelerated dramatically for the growing number of fields where technology makes remote administration possible, and oral assessment was no exception (Choi 2022). Wang (2004) insisted that the combination of audio and visual features could simulate the immediate characteristics of interactive face-to-face communication. He also explained that video-conferencing is suitable for promoting collaborative learning and developing oral communication competence. In response to these changes, Ockey et al. (2019) conducted a feasibility study of computer video-mediated technology employed for delivering oral assessments remotely in an effective way and explored test takers' attitudes towards the oral tests. The synchronous interactive oral assessment was conducted in the U.S. and China separately and the given tasks included answering questions, small group discussions, and questions and answers after the presentation. The results uncovered a generally positive perception of the video-mediated oral test. For example, a test taker in the U.S. remarked on the convenience of use and good visual and sound quality. Test takers in China also commented that the oral test was quite engaging, yet there were many technical problems.

In addition, various opinions of test-takers were described, such as difficulty with the task, lack of preparation time, and selection of the presentation topic. However, as the authors described, since the research was focused on the technical aspect of the test through real-time video-mediated, interactional competence did not appear in the process of the tasks. Moreover, as shown in the research results from test takers' opinions, in the case of questions and answers after the presentation or a small group discussion, it is inevitably difficult to share opinions or understand and ask questions since the test-taker's level is different within one group. In other words, to examine sufficient interactional competence as strategies and behaviors, it should involve group members of a similar level, and furthermore, it is necessary to look at the spectrum by levels. Therefore, this study aims to explore nonverbal and verbal interactional competence among low, intermediate, and high-level Korean English as a foreign language (EFL) test-takers through a small group discussion and individual presentation, including questions and answers on video-mediated oral assessment synchronously. Research questions in the current study are as follows: RQ 1) What nonverbal and verbal interactional competence do low, intermediate, and high-level Korean EFL university students demonstrate in a video-mediated group oral test? RQ 2) What are the Korean EFL university students' attitudes towards and opinions regarding the small group discussion and individual presentation with questions and answers in a video-mediated group oral test?

3. Research method

3.1 Participants

3.1.1 Test-takers

A total of nine test takers participated in the study, who were Korean nationals and were currently university students in Korea. They were between 20 and 26 years old, with six males and three females. The test takers had completed a semester long course on the Test Of English for International Communication Speaking (TOEIC Speaking) to help them gain employment after graduating. The test-takers were placed into proficiency levels which were low, intermediate, and high levels based on the most recent levels on the TOEIC Speaking. Test takers were pseudonymized, and their background information

was as follows (see Table 1 for additional details).

Table 1. The background of the test takers

Group	Name	Gender	Age	Speaking level
Low-level	Woo	Male	23	Novice High
	Bin	Male	21	Novice Low
	Ho	Male	22	Novice High
Intermediate-level	Lim	Male	26	Intermediate Mid
	Young	Male	21	Intermediate High
	Hwan	Male	20	Intermediate Mid
High-level	Suh	Female	23	Advanced High
	Lee	Female	23	Advanced Mid
	Won	Female	23	Advanced Mid

3.1.2 Voice actor, moderator, rate

A voice actor recorded three proposals for summarizing and defending a position in a small group discussion. He is a native American English speaker, instructed to speak clearly and control pauses and pace naturally. A moderator participated in each test to briefly give a problem for summarizing and assigning turns. However, the moderator was not on the screen for questions and answers after the individual presentation session. Two raters participated to reliably rate the use of nonverbal and verbal interactional competence in video-mediated group oral tests. The first rater was a native speaking English conversation teacher at a university. He had been teaching and leading discussions for over 20 years. The second rater was a native-like speaker who had taught TOEIC Speaking and conducted free discussion classes for university students for 22 years.

3.2 Instrument

The video-mediated group oral test was conducted with two main tasks using Zoom (<https://zoom.us/>). Each test-taker was asked to introduce themselves at the beginning of the test for ten seconds. Then, on the first task, each test-taker listened and summarized

the proposal for resolving the problem which was to be discussed and it was assigned by the moderator. Test takers could take notes while listening to each proposal, and each test-taker was given 45 seconds to summarize. Next, each test-taker defended their position in a group discussion for six minutes on the second task based on their proposals. Finally, test-takers delivered a personal presentation for two minutes related to business. After the presentation, other test-takers asked questions, and the presenter answered their questions for the following two minutes. All processes were video recorded for analysis. Before conducting the test, the researcher recorded all information and e-mailed it to all the test-takers to understand the video-mediated group oral test, including the given steps. After the test, the researcher interviewed each test-taker online for up to 20 minutes concerning the tasks, feelings, and opinions of the video-mediated group oral test by comparing other English oral tests. The in-depth interview questions were adapted from Ockey et al. (2019) and some questions were altered for the purposes of the present study. A total of seven questions were employed for analysis (see Appendix A).

To discover features of nonverbal and verbal interactional competency and the differences among low, intermediate, and high-level groups, an initial list of nonverbal interactional competency features was adapted from Vo (2019), and verbal interactional competence was adapted from Yang (2021). The scales were further modified based on the raters' perceptions regarding test performances and as such the final scale was better suited to the local assessment context (Vo 2021). This process played an important role in verifying the construct validity of the scale (Knoch 2009). The final framework for the analytic rating scale integrated five nonverbal and eleven verbal interactional competencies used by the raters. Nonverbal interactional competencies were composed of *hand gestures*, *body posture*, *eye contact*, *facial expressions*, and *head nod*. *Hand gestures* referred to using hands to stress essential points appropriately. *Body posture* referred to the posture of a test-taker's body to show engagement, such as resting one's chin in one's hand. *Eye contact* referred to directing the eyes towards the test-takers in their group to effectively involve communicative engagement. *Facial expressions* referred to making an expression on their own face to share ideas. Finally, *head nod* referred to a nod in the sense of accepting other test-takers' thoughts.

The verbal interactional competence consisted of *opening questions*, *controversial opinions or questions*, *appraising*, *function-initiate*, *agreement*, *reacting*, *develop*, *topic-extensions of other topics*, *reference*, *correction*, and *question-clarify*. *Opening*

questions referred to the opening or reopening for sharing opinions. *Controversial opinions or questions* referred to giving a statement or question to go further by politely challenging a test-taker in their group. *Appraising* referred to judging the opinions of other test-takers in the group. *Function-initiate* referred to bringing up the words to organize the topic. *Agreement* referred to when a test-taker agreed with the opinions of other test-takers. *Reacting* referred to repeated or short words to surprise or buy time. *Develop* referred to adding information to previous answers, and *topic-extensions of other topics* referred to expanding opinions or examples of other test-takers' topics or opinions. *Reference* referred to agreeing to another test taker's words and then adding to them. *Correction* referred to suggesting a different word when it was believed that another test-taker made a mistake. Finally, making a question to check for a more detailed explanation of the opinion the test-taker just heard was considered *question-clarify*.

3.3 Data Collection and Rating Procedures

3.3.1 Raters Training

Two raters examined the scale of nonverbal and verbal interactional competence introduced in Vo's (2019) work and Yang's (2021) work in order to become acquainted with the characteristics of each feature and the differences among the separate lists of competence. After individual training, the raters discussed information on both interactional competence and checked how they understood the meanings. Then the two raters analyzed together some examples to develop a rating scale for a final list of nonverbal and verbal interactional competence. The ensuing process supported the raters in making the right decision.

3.3.2 Rating procedures

The videos were transcribed verbatim to answer the two research questions guiding the present study. First, an individual and each group's nonverbal and verbal interactional competence was analyzed based on the transcript. Then, the two raters identified which one was used respectively. After all ratings, the two raters meticulously discussed what they decided for about an hour for each test-taker and group. Finally, 93.8% of inter-rater

reliability was obtained. Through subsequent discussion, all disagreement was resolved to attain 100% agreement.

3.4 Data analysis

For the data of this study, based on the nonverbal and verbal interactional competence demonstrated by groups and individuals, the results of the three groups were collected to identify the features corresponding to the group. The results of nonverbal interactional competence were classified into these five categories, never (1), sometimes (2), often (3), nearly continuously (4), and always (5), depending on the degree to which the test-takers used the feature. As for the results of verbal interactional competence, they were coded by the number of times according to each utterance spoken by the test-takers. Lastly, the qualitative results of the individual interviews were described thematically, showing the actual responses.

The following statistical analysis was performed using the SPSS 25.0 program. First, the Kruskal Wallis test and Mann-Whitney's U test were conducted to determine whether there was a difference in nonverbal and verbal interactional competence in the video-mediated group oral discussion, and presentation included asking and answers by the test-taker's proficiency level. Then, statistical significance was determined based on the significance level of 5% in the statistical analysis.

4. Results

4.1 The use of interactional competence among low, intermediate, and high-level groups

4.1.1 Low-level group

As shown in Table 2 below, low-level group test-takers used *eye contact* (12 points) the most, followed by *hand gestures* (11 points) and *head nod* (11 points) in nonverbal interactional competence in a small group discussion. The low-level group used *question-clarify* (7 points) and *reacting* (5 points) the most in verbal interactional competence. In other words, test-takers in the low-level group tried to work with their

eyes using hand gestures and asking questions to clarify. These results are consistent with previous studies, in which low-level test-takers may have difficulty understanding what other test-takers mentioned due to high cognitive demands and low confidence in their own English proficiency (Galaczi 2014).

Table 2. Types of interactional competence used by low-level students in a group discussion

Interactional competence		Brief explanation	Woo	Bin	Ho	total	mean
Non verbal	Hand gestures	Appropriate hand gestures to stress essential points	3	4	4	11	3.7
	Body posture	Appropriate body posture (e.g., rest one's chin in one's hands) to show engagement	5	2	2	9	3.0
	Eye contact	Eye contact with the test-takers in the group to involve communicative engagement effectively	4	4	4	12	4.0
	Facial expressions	Facial expressions appropriately (e.g., smiling, frowning) to share ideas	2	1	1	4	1.3
	Head nod	Nodding to acknowledge the others' thoughts	3	4	4	11	3.7
Verbal	Opening questions	Giving to open or reopen to communicate	1	1	1	3	1.0
	Controversial opinions/questions	Giving statements or questions to go further by challenging a test taker in the group in a polite way	0	0	0	0	0.0
	Appraising	Judging a test-taker in the group	1	1	2	4	1.3
	Function-initiate	Uttering to act of organizing the topic	0	1	0	1	0.3
	Agreement	Agreeing on the current topic	0	0	1	1	0.3
	Reacting	A short component representation that frequently repeats the components of the previous sentence at the beginning of the turn, such as surprises or to buy time to think	0	1	4	5	1.7
	Develop	Follow-up response with supporting information	1	1	0	2	0.7
	Topic-extensions of other topics	Giving more specific opinions or examples of statements to other topics	0	0	1	1	0.3
	Reference	Expanding their conversation to refer to other test-takers such as 'I agree with (name).'	0	0	0	0	0.0
	Correction	Suggesting an alternative to what another test-taker said in the belief that when the test-taker made a mistake	0	0	0	0	0.0
Question-clarify	Questions that elucidate something about what the test-taker just said	4	1	2	7	2.3	

The result of the presentation in the low-level group can be seen in Table 3 that *eye contact* (15 points), *head nod* (15 points), and *hand gestures* (13 points) were used more than other nonverbal interactional competence features. In verbal interactional competence, test-takers in the low level group used *opening questions*, *agreement*, *develop*, and *topic-extensions of other topics*, 6 points more than other verbal interactional competence features. In other words, looking at the results of group oral discussions and presentations of lower-level test-takers, it was found that more nonverbal interactional competence occurred in the individual presentation questions and answers time than in the group discussion. In terms of verbal interactional competence, the part of checking each other's questions was noticeable in the individual presentation. However, in the process of presenting one by one, asking another, and answering again, it was not just reacting but adding content to each other's opinions or sharing more opinions interactively.

Table 3. Types of interactional competence used by low-level students in a presentation with questions and answers

Interactional competence	Brief explanation	Woo	Bin	Ho	total	mean	
Non verbal	Hand gestures	Appropriate hand gestures to stress essential points	5	5	3	13	4.3
	Body posture	Appropriate body posture (e.g., rest one's chin in one's hands) to show engagement	4	3	2	9	3.0
	Eye contact	Eye contact with the test-takers in the group to involve communicative engagement effectively	5	5	5	15	5.0
	Facial expressions	Facial expressions appropriately (e.g., smiling, frowning) to share ideas	2	4	2	8	2.7
	Head nod	Nodding to acknowledge the others' thoughts	5	5	5	15	5.0
Verbal	Opening questions	Giving to open or reopen to communicate	2	2	2	6	2.0
	Controversial opinions/questions	Giving statements or questions to go further by challenging a test taker in the group in a polite way	2	1	1	4	1.3
	Appraising	Judging a test-taker in the group	1	1	1	3	1.0
	Function-initiate	Uttering to act of organizing the topic	2	1	2	5	1.7
	Agreement	Agreeing on the current topic	1	2	3	6	2.0

Reacting	A short component representation that frequently repeats the components of the previous sentence at the beginning of the turn, such as surprises or to buy time to think	1	2	2	5	1.7
Develop	Follow-up response with supporting information	2	2	2	6	2.0
Topic-extensions of other topics	Giving more specific opinions or examples of statements to other topics	2	2	2	6	2.0
Reference	Expanding their conversation to refer to other test-takers such as 'I agree with (name).'	1	1	2	4	1.3
Correction	Suggesting an alternative to what another test-taker said in the belief that when the test-taker made a mistake	1	2	2	5	1.7
Question-clarify	Questions that elucidate something about what the test-taker just said	1	1	2	4	1.3

4.1.2 Intermediate-level group

The intermediate-level group used *eye contact* (13 points), *head nod* (12 points), and *hand gestures* (9 points) and they were used more than other nonverbal interactional competence in group discussions. As explained above, these results are similar to those of low-level groups. However, as shown in Table 4, intermediate-level test-takers were found to use *facial expressions* (9 points) characteristics in the process of interacting through a small group discussion. In addition, *agreement* (5 points) and *function-initiate* (4 points) were used more in verbal interactional competence than others. In the discussion, it was shown that intermediate-level test-takers agreed with the opinions of other test-takers and interacted with various topics from one topic to another.

Table 4. Types of interactional competence used by intermediate-level students in a group discussion

Interactional competence	Brief explanation	Lim	Young	Hwan	total	mean
Hand gestures	Appropriate hand gestures to stress essential points	4	3	2	9	3.0
Non verbal	Body posture	1	2	2	5	1.7
	Eye contact	5	4	4	13	4.3

	Facial expressions	Facial expressions appropriately (e.g., smiling, frowning) to share ideas	3	4	2	9	3.0
	Head nod	Nodding to acknowledge the others' thoughts	4	4	4	12	4.0
	Opening questions	Giving to open or reopen to communicate	1	1	1	3	1.0
	Controversial opinions/questions	Giving statements or questions to go further by challenging a test taker in the group in a polite way	0	0	1	1	0.3
	Appraising	Judging a test-taker in the group	1	1	1	3	1.0
	Function-initiate	Uttering to act of organizing the topic	1	2	1	4	1.3
	Agreement	Agreeing on the current topic	1	2	2	5	1.7
Verbal	Reacting	A short component representation that frequently repeats the components of the previous sentence at the beginning of the turn, such as surprises or to buy time to think	0	1	0	1	0.3
	Develop	Follow-up response with supporting information	0	1	2	3	1.0
	Topic-extensions of other topics	Giving more specific opinions or examples of statements to other topics	0	0	0	0	0.0
	Reference	Expanding their conversation to refer to other test-takers such as 'I agree with (name).'	0	2	0	2	0.7
	Correction	Suggesting an alternative to what another test-taker said in the belief that when the test-taker made a mistake	0	0	0	0	0.0
	Question-clarify	Questions that elucidate something about what the test-taker just said	2	0	0	2	0.7

Topic-extensions of other topics (7 points), *appraising* (5 points), and *agreement* (5 points). They were found to use a wide variety of verbal interactional competence to perform presentation tasks. It can be assumed that various verbal interactional competence features were evident because it is easier to convey one's opinions, unlike low-level test-takers with limited English proficiency in interaction.

Table 5. Types of interactional competence used by intermediate-level students in a presentation with questions and answers

Interactional competence		Brief explanation	Lim	Young	Hwan	total	mean
Non verbal	Hand gestures	Appropriate hand gestures to stress essential points	2	4	4	10	3.3
	Body posture	Appropriate body posture (e.g., rest one's chin in one's hands) to show engagement	1	2	2	5	1.7
	Eye contact	Eye contact with the test-takers in the group to involve communicative engagement effectively	5	4	5	14	4.7
	Facial expressions	Facial expressions appropriately (e.g., smiling, frowning) to share ideas	4	4	3	11	3.7
	Head nod	Nodding to acknowledge the others' thoughts	4	3	3	10	3.3
Verbal	Opening questions	Giving to open or reopen to communicate	2	1	1	4	1.3
	Controversial opinions/questions	Giving statements or questions to go further by challenging a test taker in the group in a polite way	0	1	1	2	0.7
	Appraising	Judging a test-taker in the group	1	1	3	5	1.7
	Function-initiate	Uttering to act of organizing the topic	0	1	1	2	0.7
	Agreement	Agreeing on the current topic	2	1	2	5	1.7
	Reacting	A short component representation that frequently repeats the components of the previous sentence at the beginning of the turn, such as surprises or to buy time to think	0	0	0	0	0.0
	Develop	Follow-up response with supporting information	1	3	3	7	2.3
	Topic-extensions of other topics	Giving more specific opinions or examples of statements to other topics	1	2	4	7	2.3
	Reference	Expanding their conversation to refer to other test-takers such as 'I agree with (name).'	0	0	2	2	0.7
	Correction	Suggesting an alternative to what another test-taker said in the belief that when the test-taker made a mistake	0	0	0	0	0.0
Question-clarify	Questions that elucidate something about what the test-taker just said	2	0	0	2	0.7	

4.1.3 High-level group

Eye contact (15 points) and *facial expressions* (15 points) were used the most among the test-takers in the high-level group in a small-group discussion, as shown in Table 6. In particular, *facial expressions* show the most significant characteristics, and these results are the same as those shown in individual presentations. *Agreement* (12 points) was used the most in the outcome of verbal interactional competence, followed by *controversial opinions or questions* (9 points). It can be seen that *develop* (7 points) was also used more than other verbal interactional competence. In other words, it can be seen that test-takers with high English proficiency always maintain *eye contact* and *facial expressions* during a small group discussion. In addition, the high-level group also showed that verbal interactional competence does not end simply with communication and consent but leads to more challenging discussions by asking their own opinions or questions.

Table 6. Types of interactional competence used by high-level students in a group discussion

Interactional competence	Brief explanation	Suh	Lee	Won	total	mean	
Non verbal	Hand gestures	Appropriate hand gestures to stress essential points	4	3	2	9	3.0
	Body posture	Appropriate body posture (e.g., rest one's chin in one's hands) to show engagement	3	2	2	7	2.3
	Eye contact	Eye contact with the test-takers in the group to involve communicative engagement effectively	5	5	5	15	5.0
	Facial expressions	Facial expressions appropriately (e.g., smiling, frowning) to share ideas	5	5	5	15	5.0
	Head nod	Nodding to acknowledge the others' thoughts	2	4	2	8	2.7
Verbal	Opening questions	Giving to open or reopen to communicate	1	0	0	1	0.3
	Controversial opinions/questions	Giving statements or questions to go further by challenging a test taker in the group in a polite way	3	5	1	9	3.0
	Appraising	Judging a test-taker in the group	3	1	1	5	1.7
	Function-initiate	Uttering to act of organizing the topic	1	2	1	4	1.3

Agreement	Agreeing on the current topic	8	3	1	12	4.0
Reacting	A short component representation that frequently repeats the components of the previous sentence at the beginning of the turn, such as surprises or to buy time to think	2	1	0	3	1.0
Develop	Follow-up response with supporting information	3	1	3	7	2.3
Topic-extensions of other topics	Giving more specific opinions or examples of statements to other topics	3	1	2	6	2.0
Reference	Expanding their conversation to refer to other test-takers such as 'I agree with (name).'	0	1	2	3	1.0
Correction	Suggesting an alternative to what another test-taker said in the belief that when the test-taker made a mistake	1	0	0	1	0.3
Question-clarify	Questions that elucidate something about what the test-taker just said	0	0	0	0	0.0

In the high-level group, *eye contact* (14 points) and *facial expressions* (14 points) were used the most in the process of individual presentation and questions and answers (see Table 7). It seems that test-takers in the high-level group showed facial expressions as if they were making eye contact and smiling or laughing while answering other test-takers' questions. *Agreement* (11 points) and *topic extensions of other topics* (11 points) were the most common in verbal interactional competence. *Develop* (10 points) also used more than other competence. In other words, it can be seen that the presenter agreed to interact with other test-takers and had a deeper conversation by exchanging more specific examples of the opinions of other test-takers.

Table 7. Types of interactional competence used by high-level students in a presentation with questions and answers

Interactional competence		Brief explanation	Suh	Lee	Won	total	mean
Non verbal	Hand gestures	Appropriate hand gestures to stress essential points	4	3	3	10	3.3
	Body posture	Appropriate body posture (e.g., rest one's chin in one's hands) to show engagement	1	1	2	4	1.3
	Eye contact	Eye contact with the test-takers in the group to involve communicative engagement effectively	4	5	5	14	4.7
	Facial	Facial expressions appropriately (e.g., smiling,	5	4	5	14	4.7

	expressions	frowning) to share ideas					
	Head nod	Nodding to acknowledge the others' thoughts	2	5	2	9	3.0
	Opening questions	Giving to open or reopen to communicate	3	1	1	5	1.7
	Controversial opinions/questions	Giving statements or questions to go further by challenging a test taker in the group in a polite way	3	3	1	7	2.3
	Appraising	Judging a test-taker in the group	1	2	2	5	1.7
	Function-initiate	Uttering to act of organizing the topic	2	3	0	5	1.7
	Agreement	Agreeing on the current topic	6	3	2	11	3.7
Verbal	Reacting	A short component representation that frequently repeats the components of the previous sentence at the beginning of the turn, such as surprises or to buy time to think	1	0	0	1	0.3
	Develop	Follow-up response with supporting information	2	4	4	10	3.3
	Topic-extensions of other topics	Giving more specific opinions or examples of statements to other topics	4	3	4	11	3.7
	Reference	Expanding their conversation to refer to other test-takers such as 'I agree with (name).'	0	2	1	3	1.0
	Correction	Suggesting an alternative to what another test-taker said in the belief that when the test-taker made a mistake	1	1	0	2	0.7
	Question-clarify	Questions that elucidate something about what the test-taker just said	1	1	0	2	0.7

4.2 Comparing interactional competence used by low, intermediate, and high-level groups

The overall results of interactional competence according to levels for the group oral tasks can be seen in Figure 1 and 2 below. First, as can be seen in Figure 1, the differences of nonverbal and verbal interactional competence according to levels are clearly evident. For nonverbal interactional competence, the most frequently occurring features were *eye contact* by low, intermediate, and high-level test takers. *Head nod* and *hand gestures* were more common than other features. Importantly, these features became less evident the higher the proficiency of the learner. Ducasse and Brown (2009) explained that using *head nod* and *hand gestures* can be considered as a negative element for lower level test takers since it indicated a lack of linguistic resources. In verbal

interactional competence, all group levels demonstrated *agreement* and *appraising* as well as *develop*. In regard to the high level test takers, they demonstrated *agreement* and *controversial opinions or questions*. A possible explanation for this behavior is that more proficient learners had established a linguistic routine where they would first agree with whom they were speaking to and then challenge their interlocutor's opinion by making polite statements.

When comparing the results of nonverbal and verbal interactional competence features in the small group discussion, the synthesized data showed a richer number of questions and answers. In nonverbal interactional competence, *eye contact* and *head nod* were more apparent than other features. In the case of *head nod*, it was more evident for lower levels, conversely at higher levels the *facial expression* feature was observed more frequently. In verbal interactional competence, *develop*, *agreement*, and *topic-extensions of other topics* were most noticeable. Among them, *develop* and *topic-extensions of other topics* showed that as proficiency level increases, test takers demonstrated more of these features compared to lower level test takers. That is, it was found that the higher the level of test takers, the more they put forward additional opinions, not just simple answers, and the more interactional competence was visible when engaging with test takers' opinions rather than focusing on their own opinions.

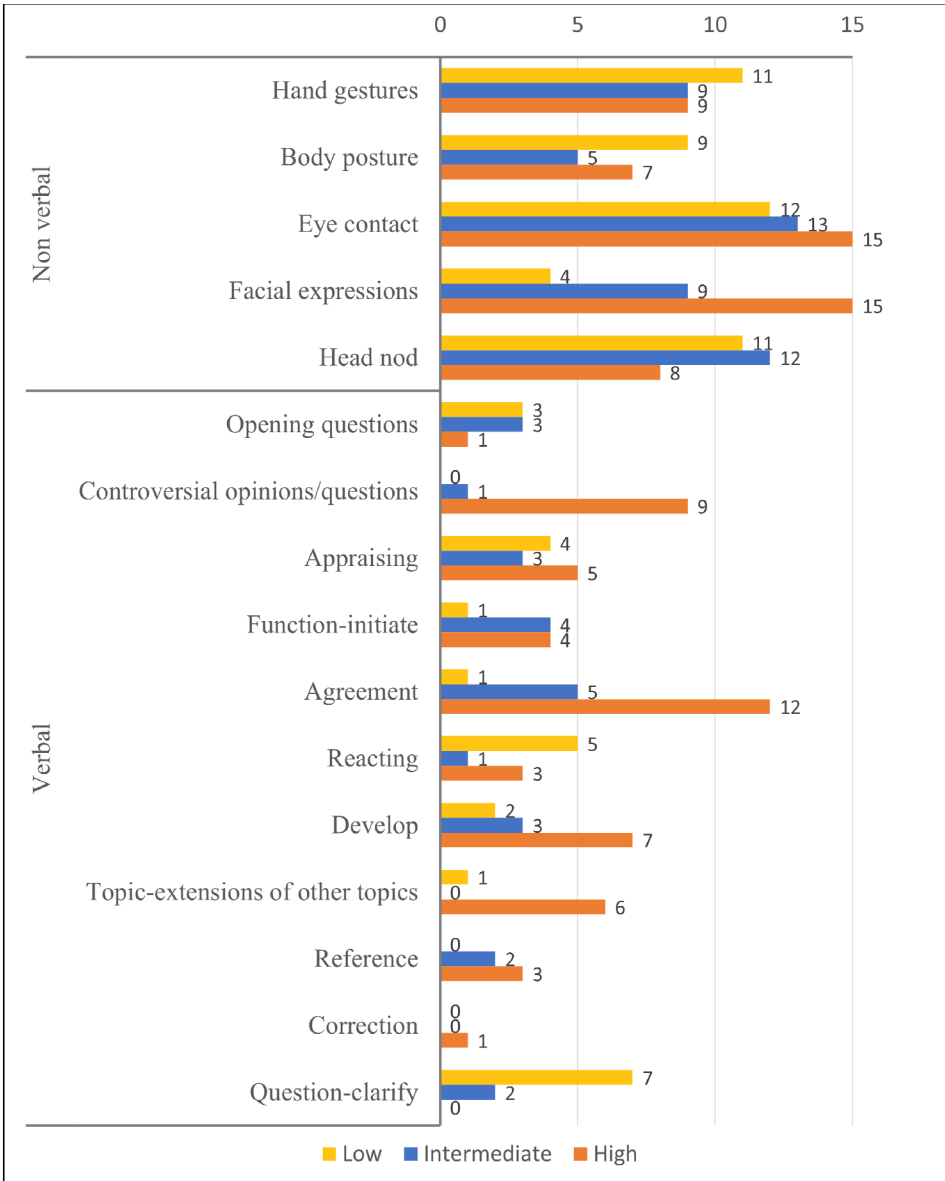


Figure 1. The results of each group's nonverbal and verbal interactional competence in a small group discussion

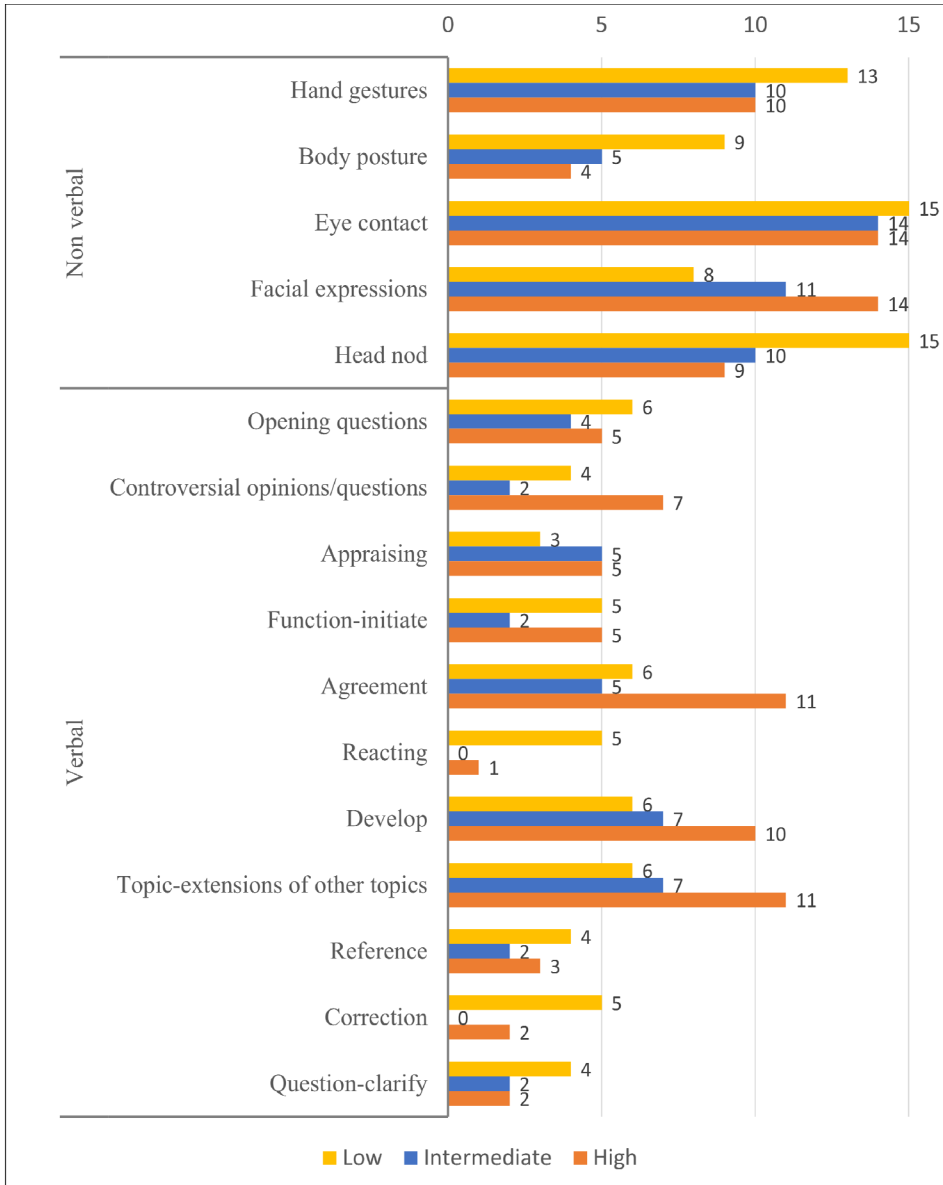


Figure 2. The results of each group's nonverbal and verbal interactional competence in a presentation with questions and answers

4.2.1 Differences in the results of a small group discussion

The Kruskal Wallis test was conducted to determine whether there was a difference in the small group discussion in video-mediated oral test results according to test-takers' level. When comparing the test results according to the low, intermediate, and high levels, *facial expression* ($\chi^2=7.181$, $p<.05$), *controversial opinions or questions* ($\chi^2=6.168$, $p<.05$), and *topic-extensions of other topics* ($\chi^2=6.168$, $p<.05$) were found to be statistically significant (see Table 8). More specifically, *facial expressions* and *controversial opinions or questions* were ranked higher on average in the order of high, intermediate, and low levels, and *topic-extensions of other topics* in the order of high, low, and intermediate levels.

Table 8. Differences in a small group discussion test results according to the levels

Interactional competence		Level	Mean(SD)	Rank	χ^2	p
Non verbal	Hand gestures	Low	3.67(0.58)	6.33	1.219	.544
		Intermediate	3.00(1.00)	4.33		
		High	3.00(1.00)	4.33		
	Body posture	Low	3.00(1.73)	6.00	2.384	.304
		Intermediate	1.67(0.58)	3.33		
		High	2.33(0.58)	5.67		
	Eye contact	Low	4.00(0.00)	3.00	5.600	.061
		Intermediate	4.33(0.58)	4.50		
		High	5.00(0.00)	7.50		
	Facial expressions	Low	1.33(0.58)	2.17	7.181*	.028
		Intermediate	3.00(1.00)	4.83		
		High	5.00(0.00)	8.00		
	Head nod	Low	3.67(0.58)	5.33	3.270	.195
		Intermediate	4.00(0.00)	6.50		
		High	2.67(1.15)	3.17		
Verbal	Opening questions	Low	1.00(0.00)	6.00	4.571	.102
		Intermediate	1.00(0.00)	6.00		
		High	0.33(0.58)	3.00		

Controversial opinions/questions	Low	0.00(0.00)	3.00	6.168*	.046
	Intermediate	0.33(0.58)	4.17		
	High	3.00(2.00)	7.83		
Appraising	Low	1.33(0.58)	5.33	1.167	.558
	Intermediate	1.00(0.00)	4.00		
	High	1.67(1.15)	5.67		
Function-Initiate	Low	0.33(0.58)	2.67	4.000	.135
	Intermediate	1.33(0.58)	6.17		
	High	1.33(0.58)	6.17		
Agreement	Low	0.33(0.58)	2.33	4.865	.088
	Intermediate	1.67(0.58)	5.67		
	High	4.00(3.61)	7.00		
Reacting	Low	1.67(2.08)	5.83	1.233	.540
	Intermediate	0.33(0.58)	3.67		
	High	1.00(1.00)	5.50		
Develop	Low	0.67(0.58)	3.50	3.284	.194
	Intermediate	1.00(1.00)	4.33		
	High	2.33(1.15)	7.17		
Topic-extensions of other topics	Low	0.33(0.58)	4.17	6.168*	.046
	Intermediate	0.00(0.00)	3.00		
	High	2.00(1.00)	7.83		
Reference	Low	0.00(0.00)	3.50	2.317	.314
	Intermediate	0.67(1.15)	5.17		
	High	1.00(1.00)	6.33		
Correction	Low	0.00(0.00)	4.50	2.000	.368
	Intermediate	0.00(0.00)	4.50		
	High	0.33(0.58)	6.00		
Question-clarify	Low	2.33(1.53)	7.50	5.091	.078
	Intermediate	0.67(1.15)	4.50		
	High	0.00(0.00)	3.00		

* p<.05 ** p<.01 *** p<.001

4.2.2 Comparison of post hoc test results in a small group discussion

Mann-Whitney's U test was performed to determine the difference in specific post hoc test results between groups, and the significance level was corrected using the Bonferroni method (see Table 9). The results of the small group discussion test showed a significant difference in the levels, but the post hoc test did not significantly differ between the low and intermediate levels and low and high-level groups ($p > .0167$).

Table 9. Comparison of the results of the post hoc test in a small group discussion

Interactional competence		Level	Rank	Rank sum	Z
Non verbal	Facial expressions	Low	2.17	6.50	-1.798
		Intermediate	4.83	14.50	
		Low	2.00	6.00	-2.121
		High	5.00	15.00	
		Intermediate	2.00	6.00	-2.087
		High	5.00	15.00	
Verbal	Controversial opinions /questions	Low	3.00	9.00	-1.000
		Intermediate	4.00	12.00	
		Low	2.00	6.00	-2.087
		High	5.00	15.00	
		Intermediate	2.17	6.50	-1.798
		High	4.83	14.50	
	Topic-extensions of other topics	Low	4.00	12.00	-1.000
		Intermediate	3.00	9.00	
		Low	2.17	6.50	-1.798
		High	4.83	14.50	
		Intermediate	2.00	6.00	-2.087
		High	5.00	15.00	

4.2.3 Differences in the results of a presentation with questions and answers

The Kruskal Wallis test was conducted to decide whether there was a difference in the results of the individual presentation test with questions and answers according to the levels. When comparing the test results according to the low, intermediate, and high levels, for *reacting* ($\chi^2=6.231$, $p<.05$) and *correction* ($\chi^2=6.121$, $p<.05$), the difference in the average ranking was statistically significant. In other words, *reacting* and *correction* ranked higher on average in the order of low, high, and intermediate-level groups.

Table 10. Differences in a presentation with questions and answers test results according to the levels

Interactional competence	Level	Mean(SD)	Rank	χ^2	p	
Non verbal	Hand gestures	Low	4.33(1.15)	6.67	1.826	.401
		Intermediate	3.33(1.15)	4.33		
		High	3.33(0.58)	4.00		
	Body posture	Low	3.00(1.00)	7.50	4.553	.103
		Intermediate	1.67(0.58)	4.33		
		High	1.33(0.58)	3.17		
	Eye contact	Low	5.00(0.00)	6.00	1.143	.565
		Intermediate	4.67(0.58)	4.50		
		High	4.67(0.58)	4.50		
	Facial expressions	Low	2.67(1.15)	2.83	4.914	.086
		Intermediate	3.67(0.58)	4.67		
		High	4.67(0.58)	7.50		
Head nod	Low	5.00(0.00)	7.50	4.222	.121	
	Intermediate	3.33(0.58)	4.00			
	High	3.00(1.73)	3.50			
Verbal	Opening questions	Low	2.00(0.00)	6.50	1.787	.409
		Intermediate	1.33(0.58)	3.83		
		High	1.67(1.15)	4.67		
	Controversial opinions/questions	Low	1.33(0.58)	5.00	3.879	.144
		Intermediate	0.67(0.58)	3.00		
		High	2.33(1.15)	7.00		

Appraising	Low	1.00(0.00)	3.50	2.127	.345
	Intermediate	1.67(1.15)	5.33		
	High	1.67(0.58)	6.17		
Function-Initiate	Low	1.67(0.58)	6.00	2.186	.335
	Intermediate	0.67(0.58)	3.17		
	High	1.67(1.53)	5.83		
Agreement	Low	2.00(1.00)	4.50	2.889	.236
	Intermediate	1.67(0.58)	3.50		
	High	3.67(2.08)	7.00		
Reacting	Low	1.67(0.58)	7.83	6.231*	.044
	Intermediate	0.00(0.00)	3.00		
	High	0.33(0.58)	4.17		
Develop	Low	2.00(0.00)	3.50	2.543	.280
	Intermediate	2.33(1.15)	4.67		
	High	3.33(1.15)	6.83		
Topic-extensions of other topics	Low	2.00(0.00)	3.50	3.799	.150
	Intermediate	2.33(1.53)	4.17		
	High	3.67(0.58)	7.33		
Reference	Low	1.33(0.58)	6.00	0.889	.641
	Intermediate	0.67(1.15)	4.00		
	High	1.00(1.00)	5.00		
Correction	Low	1.67(0.58)	7.67	6.121*	.047
	Intermediate	0.00(0.00)	2.50		
	High	0.67(0.58)	4.83		
Question-clarify	Low	1.33(0.58)	6.50	1.549	.461
	Intermediate	0.67(1.15)	4.17		
	High	0.67(0.58)	4.33		

* p<.05 ** p<.01 *** p<.001

4.2.4 Comparison of post hoc test results in a presentation with questions and answers

Mann-Whitney's U test was performed to determine the difference in specific post hoc test results between groups. Test results showed a significant difference in the individual presentation with questions and answers, but the post hoc test did not significantly differ between the low and intermediate levels and low and high-level groups ($p > .0167$).

Table 11. Comparison of the results of the post hoc test in a presentation with questions and answers

Interactional competence	Level	Rank	Rank sum	Z	
Verbal	Low	2.17	6.50	-2.121	
	Intermediate	4.83	14.50		
	Reacting	Low	2.00	6.00	-1.826
		High	5.00	15.00	
	Correction	Intermediate	2.00	6.00	-1.000
		High	5.00	15.00	
Verbal	Low	3.00	9.00	-2.121	
	Intermediate	4.00	12.00		
	Correction	Low	2.00	6.00	-1.650
		High	5.00	15.00	
Correction	Intermediate	2.17	6.50	-1.581	
	High	4.83	14.50		

4.3 Test-takers' attitudes towards the video-mediated group oral tests

Overall, the attitudes of the test-takers in the small group discussion and individual presentation with question and answer sessions were highly positive. In addition, most test-takers indicated that video-mediated group oral tests were exciting and engaging to interact with while taking tests. Test-takers also felt that seeing others allowed them to communicate in real time, and the quality was good. In particular, since all classes had been conducted online at universities during the COVID-19 pandemic, all test-takers reported no awkwardness about the English oral test through real-time video and were satisfied with the actual conversation. Excerpt (1) describes how the test taker felt about a video-mediated group oral test.

- (1) I naturally thought that the process of synthesizing and discussing opinions with other test-takers in real time was like meeting foreigners and expressing oral competence while improvising body language (Test taker, intermediate level group).

Most test-takers commonly mentioned that preparing and participating in the test for the presentation test task in advance positively affected their motivation to improve their oral competence by asking more questions and talking more because they were well aware of their importance. In addition, they felt it motivated them to do well in the next test as they could learn the interactional competence to convey various expressions or opinions to other test-takers during the discussion process (Excerpt 2).

- (2) I tried to use accurate grammar and intonation and support specific opinions through broader thinking in delivering my opinion. However, it did not work well due to my English proficiency. Next time, I want to prepare more and participate more actively in small group discussions and individual presentation tests (Test taker, low level group).

In addition, most of the test-takers said that it was fresh to fully express the test-taker's oral competence in the process of listening, looking at their nonverbal interactional competence, inferring, and negotiating other test-takers' opinions, rather than delivering memorized scenarios while sitting in front of a computer (Moon and Choi 2019). Excerpt (3) describe the test taker's attitude towards a real-time video-mediated group oral test.

- (3) I think the English oral test such as TOEIC Speaking is training to memorize templates simply using skills to score higher than assessing practical English oral competence. However, I felt that the real-time video discussion and individual presentation test made me listen to other test takers' opinions and assess their authentic oral competence through thinking in English (Test taker, high level group).

However, some participants noted a number of benefits and drawbacks to the process, such as note-taking, on screen timers, and group formation. First of all, low-level

test-takers pointed out the need for note-taking, and they mentioned that note-taking is essential because they are very nervous and their English proficiency is not high. Accordingly, intermediate and high-level test-takers commented that audio recording of fewer than 200 characters is unnecessary. In addition, regardless of levels, most test-takers expressed positive opinions about the on screen timer, but some negative opinions about the timer being seen during the test due to time pressure. On the other hand, some test-takers were delighted with discussing, presenting, and answering questions at the same level of group formation. For the tasks, the age of the participant influenced the topic that was chosen, but gender had no effect. These results were related to empathizing and understanding in selecting a topic for individual presentation.

5. Discussions and conclusions

The current study attempted to discover nonverbal and verbal interactional competence used by low, intermediate, and high-level groups of Korean EFL test-takers, the differences, and the perspective of a synchronous video-mediated group oral test. In particular, the characteristics of each level appeared in two types of tasks: a small group discussion and an individual presentation with questions and answers. First, the low-level group used more verbal interactional features such as open questions, agreement, develop, and topic-extensions of other topics when asking and answering after an individual presentation than in a small group discussion. They could actively participate in the task and were more motivated to engage in in-depth conversations. In other words, the choice of a topic by the test-takers positively motivates them and makes them more confident and courageous (Ellis 1990; Wolf 2013). Unlike the low-level group, test-takers at the intermediate level showed a variety of usage of verbal interactional competence in the small group discussion. In addition, the results of the presentation with questions and answers, eye contact, and facial expressions were used the most as nonverbal interactional competence. Intermediate-level test-takers can convey their opinions to some extent, so they seem to have used frowns, which means focusing on the opinions of other test-takers and showing smiles or concentrating. In this regard, Galaczi (2014) presented evidence that the characteristics of interactional competence according to proficiency level are the degree of development on the topic and turn-taking management that is closely exchanged, indicating that it is related to the results of intermediate-level test-takers, that

is, the degree of use.

However, it was discovered that high-level test-takers focused on particular nonverbal and verbal interactional competence. *Eye contact* and *facial expressions* were used the most in the small group discussion of high-level test-takers, and *hand gestures* were less relied upon. This finding is also in line with what was discovered about the nonverbal interactional competence of the individual presentation with questions and answers. The results of verbal interactional competence showed that *agreement* and *develop* were commonly used in small group discussions and individual presentations, and *controversial opinions or questions* and *topic-extensions of other topics* were also used. These findings accord with Yang's (2021) study that the characteristics of the high-level test-takers add more information to previous opinions, expand their opinions further, and ask challenging comments or questions in the process. In the same vein, Jung (2006) agreed that high-level learners are able to improve fluency through English oral group discussions and set up a communicative environment that actively listens to others' opinions.

When looking at the results of the spectrum by levels, the average ranking was in the order of higher, intermediate, and low-levels of *facial expressions* and *controversial opinions or questions*. As mentioned above, it can be seen that high-level test-takers have no difficulty in conveying their opinions, so they smile or judge other test-taker's opinions using various *facial expressions* and sometimes present alternative opinions. In the results of individual presentations, including questions and answers, it was found that the difference in the average ranking was statistically significant in the order of *reacting* and *correction* in the low, high, and intermediate levels. In other words, it can be inferred that *reacting* and *correction* may be different for individuals according to their English proficiency level.

In addition, when participants were asked about their perspective of the test format, they were highly satisfied with answering questions after the presentation and the spontaneous discussions with other test-takers, and did not simply memorize repertoires to get high scores in front of the computer (Moon and Choi 2019). In particular, in the small group discussion, it was possible to learn from other test-takers and show greater passion for the next test, resulting in a positive washback effect (Alderson and Wall 1993).

However, this study is not without limitations. First, the number of test takers who participated in the present study may have affected the results. More test-takers and micro-level grouping assignments in video-mediated oral tests, including a small group

oral discussion and individual presentation with questions and answers session, may influence the result of further studies of similar video-mediated oral tests. For example, although there were significant differences among groups in *facial expressions*, *controversial opinions or questions*, and *topic extensions of other topics* in small group discussions, there was no significant difference between levels in the post hoc test due to the small number of test-takers. The inclusion of a greater number of test-takers in future studies will help to better explore this difference in detail and to produce more meaningful results. In addition, the present study focused on only one performance of the test. Therefore, it is necessary for future research to investigate multiple settings of an oral test to establish a greater level of reliability of the findings.

In addition, it would be worthwhile for EFL test-takers who are afraid of ambiguity to participate in group oral discussions while intentionally using various interactional competence features (Choi 2009; Thrasher 2013). Based on the individual presentation with questions and answers test task, it was discovered that test-takers at each level concentrated more on their nonverbal and verbal interactional competence, which led to richer interactions, and proved to be a positive learning experience.

In particular, most previous studies on nonverbal and verbal interactional competence for group oral tasks have been conducted in the context where English is used as the mother tongue or in Europe (e.g., Ducasse and Brown 2009; Ockey et al. 2019). Furthermore, a difference was found between the results derived from the present study and interactional competence shown in the group oral discussion conducted in Japan. For example, Leaper and Brawn (2018) examined verbal interactional competence through group oral discussions with Japanese university students over a two-year period, but no *controversial opinions or questions* appeared. The authors suggested the possibility that since Japanese test takers encourage other test takers to accept ideas, according to their native Japanese cultural norms, rather than raise questions that may pose a threat to keeping face, which is not common in Japanese language conversation such as overlaps and intervention (Furo 2013). That is, some norms of interactional features may not be shared by test takers in their own culture (Vo 2021). Therefore, it is necessary to examine how test takers in each culture, even within an Asian context, see the interaction effect and how it can affect their interaction performance in future studies.

Finally, it is hoped that the present study acts as a stepping stone to providing greater insights into online English oral proficiency test designs. Furthermore, going forward raters should be better able to assess their broader nonverbal and verbal interactional

competence for group oral test tasks in video-mediated group oral tests, especially in a variety of EFL contexts.

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