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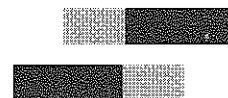## The Revised Test of Spoken English (TSE): Discourse Analysis of Native Speaker and Nonnative Speaker Data

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Foreward

The TOEFL® Monograph Series features commissioned papers and reports for TOEFL 2000 and other Test of English as a Foreign Language program development efforts. As part of the foundation for the TOEFL 2000 project, a number of papers and reports were commissioned from experts within the fields of measurement and language teaching and testing. The resulting critical reviews and expert opinions were invited to inform TOEFL program development efforts with respect to test construct, test user needs, and test delivery. Opinions expressed in these papers are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views or intentions of the TOEFL program.

These monographs are also of general scholarly interest, and the TOEFL program is pleased to make them available to colleagues in the fields of language teaching and testing and international student admissions in higher education.

The TOEFL 2000 project is a broad effort under which language testing at ETS will evolve into the 21st century. As a first step in the evolution of TOEFL language testing, the TOEFL program recently revised the Test of Spoken English (TSE®) test and announced plans to introduce a TOEFL computer-based test (TOEFL CBT) in 1998. The revised TSE, introduced in July 1995, is based on an underlying construct of communicative language ability and represents a process approach to test validation. The TOEFL CBT will take advantage of the new forms of assessments and improved services made possible by computer-based testing while also moving the program toward its longer-range goals, which include

- the development of a conceptual framework that takes into account models of communicative competence
- a research agenda that informs and supports this emerging framework
- a better understanding of the kinds of information test users need and want from the TOEFL test
- a better understanding of the technological capabilities for delivery of TOEFL tests into the next century

It is expected that the TOEFL 2000 efforts will continue to produce a set of improved language tests that recognize the dynamic, evolutionary nature of assessment practices and that promote responsiveness to test user needs. As future papers and projects are completed, monographs will continue to be released to the public in this new TOEFL research publication series.

TOEFL Program Office
Educational Testing Service

Introduction

This paper reports on a discourse analysis of native speaker and nonnative speaker responses to the revised Test of Spoken English (TSE). Two sets of goals guided this study:

1) to describe the native speakers' speech, identify the speech functions that the 15 tasks elicited, and explain any differences between the native speakers in their speech production

2) to identify speech functions elicited from the nonnative speakers on the 15 tasks, and to describe their match to the functions elicited from the native speakers and from the nonnative speakers at other band levels

The six native speaker subjects for the study included:

#2	female in the medical profession
#3	male in the medical profession
#4	female in the medical profession
#5	female student; psychology major
#6	male; unknown profession
#7	female student; unknown major

The 12 nonnative speaker subjects were:

#1144	Band 20; male in business
#1115	Band 30; male in physics
#1226	Band 30; male in political science
#1378	Band 30; female in the medical profession
#1303	Band 40; male in the medical profession
#1054	Band 40; female; unknown profession
#1068	Band 40; male; unknown profession
#1256	Band 50; male in education
#1268	Band 50; female in the medical profession
#1083	Band 60; male in engineering
#1236	Band 60; female in applied linguistics
#1260	Band 60; male in the medical profession

RESULTS

The results are reported as follows. First, the native speaker speech is analyzed task by task. Then, recommendations for further analysis or test revision are made based on the analysis of the native speaker data. A listing of the intended and elicited communicative functions follows. The nonnative speaker data are then analyzed for the communicative functions elicited by the 15 tasks. Recommendations based on these data are then put forward.

I. Language Analysis: Native Speaker (NS) Data

TASK #1: GIVING A PERSONAL DESCRIPTION

This first task requires the NS to give a personal description. The NS response data include the following categories of personal characteristics: sex, height, weight, hair color and length, and clothing. The speakers also mention wearing glasses or carrying an accessory, such as a briefcase. Finally, some speakers mention a location — where they can be found at the airport.

Fragment #1 is a response to the question which includes all of the above mentioned categories, in addition to mentioning the darkness of skin (line 7).

> Fragment #1 7341263B
> 1 I'll be meeting you at the airport next <u>Tues</u>day, I
> 2 will be:: (.2) dressed in black hhh I'm approximately
> 3 six foot. I weigh a hundred and fifty five pou:nds,
> 4 (.2) uh I have <u>long</u> hair (.8) um (1.5) I'll probably
> 5 have a briefcase and (2.0) I'll be hhh standing hhh
> 6 meeting you right at the gate. hhh so as you get out
> 7 you'll probably see me immediately. (2.5) I wear
> 8 <u>glasses</u> and (.2) I'm fairly dark complected. (2.0) well
> 9 I hope I see ya the:re, and uh (.5) call me if you
> 10 have any questions.

It should be noted that with the exception of one other speaker, this speaker is the only one who personalizes his description to the interlocutor. He gives his response as if he is actually talking to someone, which is noted by the use of the pronoun *you* in lines 1, 6, and 9.

TASK #2: DESCRIBING A DAILY ROUTINE

The temporal description of the daily routine by the NSs is given in the simple present tense and usually begins with the speaker saying, "on Tuesdays I...." The remainder of the description is a chronological sequence in which the speakers mention the times at which they perform certain acts. This description is usually given in terms of hours of the day (e.g., "at six o'clock a.m., I....") or segments of the day (e.g., morning, afternoon, or evening). In addition, the discourse shows a use of temporal markers, such as *then* or *next,* in order to show shifts in time or action.

Fragment #2 illustrates all of the typical features of the NS responses. Throughout the fragment, the speaker uses the simple present. In addition, line 1 shows the consistent manner of beginning the response to this task: "on Tuesdays I [begin by doing x]." The speaker proceeds to give a chronological description of each part of her day, which is marked by the use of time segments, such as *seven o'clock* (line 1), *afternoon* (line 4), *the morning* (line 5), *one twenty-five* [pm] (line 7), *three twenty* [pm] (lines 7, 8), *forty-five minutes* (line 8), and *six o'clock* (line 10). The chronological sequence is also marked by the temporal marker *then* (lines 3, 5, 9, 10) and the additive marker *and* (lines 6, 9, 10, 12).

Fragment #2 7341265B
1 on Tuesdays I typically wake up about seven o'clock.
2 have breakfast uh:: take a shower, get dressed, go to
3 schoo:l .hhh uh then I spend time preparing for a
4 class that I teach Tuesday afternoo:n .hhh um (.) may do
5 some other: homework during the morning. then I have
6 <u>lunch</u> .hhh and (.2) uh then I go to the class that I
7 teach at one twenty fi:ve. teach that until three
8 twenty? .hhh I have about forty five minutes to spare
9 before going to: <u>another</u> class^, uh (.) and then I:: am
10 in that class until six o'clock, and then I go home^,
11 .hhh upon arriving home I have dinne::r do some
12 homework uh hhh socialize with my partner,=and go to
13 sleep.

TASK #3: SUGGESTING A GIFT AND SUPPORTING ONE'S CHOICE

This task requires the speaker to suggest a gift from wherever the speaker lives for the interlocutor to buy and take home, and to justify that choice. The NS responses begin with an identification of where they live and go on to suggest a present that is representative of that particular geographical location. For example, in Fragment #3, the speaker first mentions that she lives in New Mexico (line 1) and goes on to suggest the gift of chilies (lines 1 and 2), because they are "representative of New Mexico" (line 4). She also suggests a gift of any sort of memorabilia from the Balloon Fiesta (lines 9 and 10), which is also unique to the location, because it would "remind you of New Mexico" (line 9). Another distinguishing feature of the NS responses to this task is the use of modals, such as *should* (line 1) and *might* (line 5). Modal use is necessary for advice-giving, since the speaker is making suggestions to the interlocutor rather than giving commands.

Fragment #3 7341262B
1 I think if you come to visit me in New <u>Mexico</u>: you should buy a
2 (ristra), which is a (.8) um (.8) sort of chai:n of (.8) <u>chilies</u>.
3 strung together and hung up for decoration.=they're very (.5)
4 representative of New Mexico and the red chilies that are grow:n
5 here. .hhh you might also want to buy some bottled uh <u>green</u> chili
6 sauce.=cause green chili- .hhh is a specialty in New Mexico:=and
7 if you like hot <u>food</u> you could take that home. (.5) and also share
8 it with other people you know who like hot food. (1.2) other
9 things that would remind you of New Mexico are any memorabilia
10 that would have to do with the bal<u>loon</u> fiesta!

TASK #4: RECOMMENDING A PLACE TO VISIT AND SUPPORTING ONE'S CHOICE

The NS responses to this task are consistent for all six speakers. They all follow the same basic format: suggest a place, then give a reason or reasons why the interlocutor should visit it — which is either

3

implicitly or explicitly marked with *because*. Three of the six speakers also mention the location of the place on the map and give informal directions to it. Fragment #4 is an example of this response:

> Fragment #4 7341267B
> 1 one of the places I would recommend that you visit is (.) the art
> 2 museum. .hhh the art museum has a number of (.5) uh (.8) v– very
> 3 good cultural displa:ys .hhh a::nd I think you would really enjoy
> 4 (.8) seeing the art museum. .hhh the ar– the art museum is on the
> 5 corner of frank– Franklin Roa:d!, and Third Avenue!, .hhh it's
> 6 about one block (1.0) north o:f (.) the train station .hhh but if
> 7 you take Main Street (.2) to–

The speaker in Fragment #4 names the location, the art museum, in lines 1 and 2. Next, she provides her reason to visit the art museum: it has a number of good cultural displays (lines 2 and 3). She ends the response by telling the interlocutor where to find the art museum.

TASK #5: GIVING DIRECTIONS

In giving directions from the bus station to the movie theater, the NS discourse shows several consistent strategies. First, the use of direction words is evident: *north, south, east, west, right, left, right, straight,* etc. The speakers also indicate distance in terms of the number of blocks or buildings. Another characteristic of the responses is the naming of certain landmarks, such as buildings, streets, or the river. This response always includes the use of prepositions and adverbs in order to show location (e.g., *on the corner of, next to,* etc.). Finally, temporal markers (*then, next*) are used to indicate the sequence of directions. Fragment #5 below typifies these characteristics.

> Fragment #5 7341266B
> 1 .hhh okay the bus station is on the corner of Sixth Avenue and
> 2 Main Street. .hhh and I spose the easiest way to get there (.5)
> 3 is just to walk (.) north along Main Street. (.8) fo::r three
> 4 blocks, (.5) then you'll get to: (.) Third Avenue. .hhh a:nd
> 5 take a left. um there's no other way for you to go on Third cause
> 6 (.) taking a right takes you into the (.) Tyson River. .hhh! and
> 7 go two blocks (.) west (.2) on Third Avenue?, and then–

The speaker in Fragment #5 uses direction words throughout the response: *north* (line 3), *take a left* (line 5), *taking a right* (line 6), and *west* (line 7). In addition, distance is indicated by *three blocks* (lines 3 and 4), and *two blocks* (line 7). The speaker also gives the directions in reference to certain landmarks, such as Sixth Avenue (line 1), Main Street (lines 2 and 3), Third Avenue (lines 4, 5, and 7), and the Tyson River (line 6). Further, there is evidence of preposition and adverb usage to indicate location. For example, the speaker says *on the corner of Sixth Avenue* (line 1,), *along Main Street* (line 3), *to Third Avenue* (line 4), *on Third* (line 5), *into the Tyson River* (line 6), and *on Third Avenue* (line 7). Fragment

#5 also shows a sequencing of steps, which are marked by *then* (lines 4 and 7) *and* (lines 4, 6, and 7).

TASK #6: DESCRIBING A FAVORITE MOVIE AND SUPPORTING ONE'S CHOICE

The favorite movie description by the NSs entails naming the movie, providing a reason for going to see it (often marked by *because*), assessing the film, and describing certain elements of the film. The elements described relate to the historical context, mood/tenor, how the film affects the viewer, the musical score, cinematography, costumes, acting, characters and the actors who portray them, and the plot. Aside from the strengths of the film, the speaker may also mention its weaknesses. However, most of the description is devoted to the strengths. Also present in the discourse is a recommendation to the viewer about how or when they should view the film. In terms of markers, additive markers, such as *and*, are frequently used, since the speakers basically list all the elements of the film. Fragment #6 is an example that includes the above-mentioned categories.

> Fragment #6 7341263B
> 1 at the <u>mo:</u>vie theater!,=I- I believe they're sho:wing (1.5) <u>*Gone*</u>
> 2 *with the Wind*, (.2) uh I think it's a spec<u>tac</u>ular movie (.8)
> 3 representing the: (.) latter part of the civil wa:r and (.5) it–
> 4 (.2) the <u>costumes</u> are (.5) grea::t, (.2) I think the: (.2) acting
> 5 is superb (.5) a:nd (1.8) it's:: (.2) kind of timeless it sets
> 6 you in a period and (.5) you're able to escape, (1.0) and you feel
> 7 like you're right the:re.=it's– (.5) extremely long period. lo:ng
> 8 movie!,=and I <u>think</u> you better (1.0) <u>not</u> go when you're too tired.
> 9 (3.5) ><u>my</u> favorite of course< is Scarlett O'Hara!,=who's the
> 10 <u>heroine</u> in the movie!, (.5) and um (.2) she's very indepe:<u>nd</u>ent,
> 11 strong-willed <u>woma:n</u>?, (1.0) a:nd yet she:: has the tendencies to
> 12 be a <<u>princess</u>>, uh in the American sense.

In lines 1 and 2, the speaker names the movie. He then goes on to give an assessment of the film, saying that it is *spectacular* (line 2). Next, the speaker describes various elements of the movie: historical context (line 3), costumes (line 4), quality of the acting (lines 4 and 5), affect on the viewer (lines 5-7), recommendation for the viewer (line 8), and the characters (lines 9-12).

TASK #7: TELLING A STORY FROM PICTURES

There seems to be some variability across the NS responses to this task. Five of the six speakers tell the story in a cohesive manner and do not give reference to the picture numbers; however, one speaker gives reference to the numbers of the pictures (e.g., *in picture number one*, etc.). Another interesting point is that all but one speaker tells the story as an uninterested party, but one speaker places himself in the story as a character (see 7341266B).

The most consistent strategy employed by the speakers is to tell a cohesive story without referring to what is happening in each numbered picture. Cohesive markers such as *when, then, and*, and *so* are

used frequently to mark shifts in time. Another feature of the discourse is to begin with a brief abstract or overview of the story. Finally, descriptive details are used to embellish the story. Fragment #7 illustrates these features.

Fragment #7 7341265B
1 this story is about a mishap in which .hhh uh painter painted (a)
2 bench puts a si:gn that says wet paint on the bench.=which gets
3 blown off the bench. .hhh along comes a businessma:n .hhh uh
4 happily sits on the bench to read his newspape:r.=without noticing
5 that it's wet! .hhh uh (.2) full of wet paint uh he then stands =
6 up notices that he has paint all over his (.) suit, .hhh and then
7 he proceeds to the dry cleaners to get the paint removed from his
8 suit. (.2) he looks a little bit upset, as he:'s (.) entering the
9 dry cleaners.

The speaker in Fragment #7 begins with a brief abstract of the story (lines 1-3). It acts as a type of overview of what happens in the story, and the speaker goes on to describe each part of the story in more detail. Note that this particular speaker does not give reference to the numbers of the pictures, but simply tells the story as if the pictures are not there. This example also shows the use of the cohesive markers *then* (line 5), and *and then* (line 6), and of descriptive details, such as "he looks a little bit upset" (line 8).

TASK #8: HYPOTHESIZING ABOUT FUTURE ACTION

The responses to this question were rather simplistic. Modals and conditionals are frequent in the responses since the question itself is hypothetical. The speakers first give a personal reaction and then offer a solution with conditionals. They also compare their solutions to that of the man in the original story. There are three different solutions offered by these NSs: 1) do the same thing as the man in the story and take the suit to the cleaner, 2) try to remove the stain themselves, and/or 3) prevent the situation from happening altogether. By offering the third solution, some of the speakers anticipated the next question on the test, so that task #9 was somewhat redundant. Fragment #8 below shows the features of the NS discourse which are characteristic of a response to the question.

Fragment #8 7341262B
1 if this happened to me I'd be really frustrated and angry,=(   )
2 and then I would (.8) uh probably (.5) uh try to wash the paint
3 stains out of the clothes myself, (.8) thinking that uh (.5) if
4 they're water soluble (.5) they would come out and I wouldn't have
5 to pay the dry cleaning bill, (.8) if that didn't work then I
6 would (.) take the clothing to the dry cleaners like the man in
7 picture six.

The speaker's reaction to the situation is given in line 1. Next, she offers her solutions in lines 2-3 and 5-7: either she would try to wash out the stains or take the clothes to the cleaner. She also compares her

6

action to what the man did in the original story (lines 6 and 7). Further, this response provides evidence of modal/conditional usage (e.g., *if this happened to me* (line 1), *I'd be* (line 1), *they would* (line 4), and *I would* (lines 2, 4, and 5-6).

TASK #9: HYPOTHESIZING ABOUT A PREVENTATIVE ACTION

In response to this question, the NSs suggest one or more solutions to how the problem could have been prevented. They employ the modals *could* or *might* + HAVE. Fragment #9 is an example.

> Fragment #9 7341263B
> 1 to prevent this the- (.5) <u>painters</u> hhh (.5) could have taken more
> 2 ca:re in securing this sig:n on the bench. uh labeled wet paint.
> 3 (.8) the sign is labelled wet paint. (1.0) they could have (2.0)
> 4 wai:ted until the paint had dried before they had left?, (3.0)
> 5 or they could have (1.0) merely not painted it and– and it would
> 6 not have happened

This example includes more than one preventative solution; the painters could have either attached the sign more securely (lines 1-2), waited until the paint had dried before leaving (lines 3-4), or simply not have painted the bench (line 5).

TASK #10: MAKING A TELEPHONE CALL TO THE DRY CLEANER

This task requires the speakers to role play a phone call in order to persuade the cleaner to rush their suit cleaning. The NSs usually begin by giving a greeting (e.g., *hi* or *hello*) and introducing themselves. Next, they explain their problem and ask the cleaner to have the suit ready early. The speakers also save face by claiming to realize that they are imposing on the interlocutor by asking for an exception to the rules. The NSs go on to give a specific reason or justification for why they need the special treatment. They also offer to pay extra money for the service. Fragment #10 is an illustration.

> Fragment #10 7341265B
> 1 hi:. I'm calling about the suit that I brought in earlier today. I
> 2 understand that you usually take two days to clean (.) suits. but
> 3 .hhh <u>I</u>:: would like to know if there's <u>any</u> possibility that you
> 4 could have this ready for me:: .hhh uh tomorrow morning?, I <u>know</u>
> 5 that it's short notice but I would <u>really</u> appreciate it if you
> 6 could do this. .hhh (1.5) u::m (.2) I <u>certainly</u> wouldn't ask this
> 7 of you unless it was for a very important meeting. um (.) but I do
> 8 have a very important meeting tomorrow.=a:nd .hhh this is the
> 9 <u>only</u> suit that I can wear to this meeting. .hhh <u>is</u> it possible
> 10 for you to help me out? I would be willing to pay ^<u>extra</u> if you
> 11 <u>could</u> rush this through. (2.5) um

7

In line 1 of Fragment #10, the speaker gives a greeting (*hi*) and then goes on to explain who she is, in this case, the person who brought in a suit earlier in the day. (It should be noted that only two of the six NSs identify themselves in this way; the other four give their names.) The speaker next explains what she needs and notes that she realizes it's an imposition; however, she justifies asking for the service since she has a "very important meeting" (line 8), and can only wear this suit (lines 8-9). Next, she offers to pay extra for the service (line 10).

An interesting aspect of the NS responses to this task is that they simulate a real phone call in terms of the greeting; however, there is no formal closing, such as *good-bye*. In other words, the responses include a greeting, yet lack a closing. This is an indication that the authenticity of the task does not persist throughout the entire response.

TASK #11: DESCRIBING AN IMPORTANT NEWS EVENT

For this task, the NS discourse basically includes six characteristics: 1) naming the event, 2) mentioning the medium through which they heard about the event (e.g., television, radio, newspaper), 3) briefly describing the event, 4) providing reasons for its importance and/or why it is interesting, 5) marking the reasons for the event's importance or level of interest with *since* or *because*, and 6) explaining who was affected by the event and why (again, the reasons are marked). These characteristics are shown in Fragment #11.

Fragment #11 7341267B
```
 1  in the newspaper this morning I read tha::t .hhh (.5) Tonya
 2  Harding has resigned as (.8) a member of the United States (1.0)
 3  Skating Association. .hhh um she did this as part of a plea
 4  bargain .hhh in– wherein she:: (.8) pled guilty to (1.5) counts
 5  of trying to: (.) cover up or im– hamper the investigation. .hhh
 6  as to: (.) who was involved (.) in (.) the striking of Nancy
 7  Kerrigan. .hhh um (1.5) .hhh this is important because first off
 8  it means that there (.) need be no further investiga:tions into
 9  her role. .hhh (.2) in the attack!
```

The speaker in Fragment #11 first mentions the medium through which she heard about the event — the newspaper (line 1). Second, she names the event, which in this case is Tonya Harding's resignation and plea bargain (lines 1-4). Next, she describes the event in lines 4-7. She ends her response by discussing the issue's importance and uses the marker *because* to signal a reason (lines 7-9). With regard to who was affected by the news event, the speaker never directly answers the question; instead, she implies that Tonya Harding and Nancy Kerrigan were affected by it merely by mentioning their involvement. It was not necessary for the speaker to give this answer explicitly.

It should be noted that some speakers do not discuss the importance of the news event, but instead describe why it was interesting. That is, the definition of "importance" may not be clear, since there seems to be some confusion between what is "important" and what is "interesting."

8

TASK #12: GIVING AN OPINION ABOUT ANIMALS IN THE ZOO

This task seems problematic, because there is little consistency among the NS responses. Two speakers discuss both sides of the issue (2 and 6); two speakers argue for one side of the issue (5 and 7); one speaker discusses the distinction between the natural habitat and the zoo (4); and one speaker discusses the importance of zoos, but does not make an explicit argument for the justification of zoos (3). This inconsistency could be an indication that the question itself is not clear and the task ambiguous. There seems to be some confusion over whether or not the task is to debate both sides or to argue one side. In addition, it is possible that the topic itself is uninteresting or noncontroversial for these speakers; thus, they do not support a particular opinion. Please refer to each of the six transcripts to see how the speakers respond to this question.

TASK #13: DEFINING A TECHNICAL TERM

The NS definitions are very similar up to a point: they all identify their field of study (that is, if they had not done so in an earlier task), name the term, and then offer a formal definition. From that point on, the responses vary; some give an example of the term, discuss an application of the term, etc. Consider Fragment #12:

> Fragment #12 7341265B
> 1 countertransference is a term used in the field of psychology,
> 2 .hhh countertransference refers to .hhh uh process that may
> 3 happen during psychotherapy:. .hhh in which the: therapist uh
> 4 (.2) projects onto the client or transfe:rs .hhh um (1.0) uh
> 5 hhh! hhh! (.5) oh::: (.8) that– I should say the client becomes
> 6 a symbo:l for .hhh uh someone or something else in the
> 7 therapist's life. uh so for example uh if a therapist was working
> 8 with a client .hhh who:: had uh who was very similar to the
> 9 therapist's father and the ther– the therapist started reacting to
> 10 the client .hhh as sh– she or he would have to his or her
> 11 fathe:r.=this would be: a case of countertransference in which the
> 12 therapist is projecting onto the client.

The speaker in Fragment #12 begins (line 1) by naming the term she will define, *countertransference*, and then mentions her field of study, which is psychology. Next, she offers a formal definition: "countertransference refers to [the] process that may happen during psychotherapy in which the therapist projects onto the client or transfers...the client becomes a symbol for someone or something else in the therapist's life" (lines 2-7). The formal definition is followed by an example of countertransference (lines 7-12).

TASK #14: DESCRIBING INFORMATION IN A GRAPH AND SPECULATING ABOUT ITS IMPLICATIONS

Fifty percent of the data are missing for this response since three of the six NSs said they had no graph in their test booklets to describe. However, the three responses that were given to the question do share some basic components. They mention that the graph shows a slow, steady increase in the population of cities that is expected to continue. Second, the speakers make reference to specific percentages and dates. The responses also include some application of the information in the graph to world knowledge: they discuss what the trend might mean for the future. These components of the discourse are present in the following fragment:

Fragment #13 7341266B
```
 1  well (.) early o:n in nineteen fifty the: (      ) aren't too many
 2  people. (.) it's not a very big percentage. anyway. .hhh living
 3  in cities. (.2) a:nd most people are living out in the rural
 4  areas. .hhh uh and then later on the percentage just keeps
 5  increasing. .hhh so uh (.5) this sort of implies that
 6  eventually. if you sort of (.) extrapolate it. then a lot more
 7  people will be .hhh living in cities than (.) out in the
 8  country.  so: .hhh many people will be crowded into (.2) very
 9  little space. (.2) which (.) to me doesn't make a whole lot
10  sense. .hhh because I think that when people are (.) piled on top
11  of each other like that the: (.) crime rate goes up and (.) people
12  aren't very happy. .hhh under a lot of stress, living right
13  next to every one else. (.8) but (.) maybe that's just me because
14  I prefer .hhh living out in the country. (.2) but in the future
15  (.) that would mean you have (1) much more of a:: (.2) a city
16  influence (.2) so: (with that) in the pa:st where you had lots of
17  farm programs?, (.2) were important and farm failures were (.)
18  very important. (.5) very few people will be farming the land, in
19  the future so—
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Lines 1-5 of Fragment #13 include the speaker's description of the graph itself. In the following lines (6-9), the speaker gives an opinion on what he thinks this means for the future, at least in terms of what the graph anticipates. The remainder of the response includes how the speaker believes this trend will affect the world, and here he applies his world knowledge of what contributes to the *crime rate* (lines 10-11) and *farm programs* (lines 16-19).

TASK #15: GIVING DETAILS ABOUT A TRIP SCHEDULE

The responses to this task are very consistent, with five of the six speakers using the same strategies. The deviant response appears to have arisen out of a misunderstanding of the task; the speaker does not announce the changes in the itinerary, but simply describes it without reference to the previous one. The remainder of the speakers, however, are more consistent. Four of the six speakers begin with a

greeting (e.g., *hello, hi,* etc.), and all six speakers make an announcement of the purpose of the presentation, which is to go over the changes in the itinerary. The speakers continue by going over each aspect of the itinerary, usually in light of the old one. In doing so, they use the temporal marker *then* frequently to indicate the sequence of events, and the additive marker *and* to indicate additional aspects of the itinerary. The speakers also use contrastive markers, such as *still, rather, but, however,* etc., to show that there are changes in the original itinerary. The NS transcripts also show an emphasis on certain times and places — the speakers stress these in a manner that is consistent with one another. One other distinguishing feature of the discourse for this task is the use of imperatives; the speakers use imperatives to tell the audience how to prepare for the trip (e.g., "Remember to bring your own lunch."). Fragment #14 below provides a context in which to observe these features.

<u>Fragment #14</u> 7341264B
```
 1  okay people listen up.=we've go:t a few changes on our trip to
 2  Washington D.C. .hhh to start with the date's been changed from
 3  April fifth to April twelfth. (.2) so that's one week la:te:r.
 4  we're still goin by chartered bus but we're gonna leave at eight
 5  o'clock a m?=from the community (.) center parking lot. (1.0)
 6  ((coughs)) the itinerary's been changed in the following ways.
 7  .hhh ((coughs)) ten thirty we still start with a guided tour of
 8  The White Hou:se, (.8) twelve thirty we're gonna have lunch in
 9  Rock Creek Park, .hhh and don't forget to bring your ow:n, (.8)
10  three o'clock we're gonna go to the National Museum of History and
11  Technology,=and we'll have our lecture there at four. .hhh but
12  here's where the changes start to really come in=at six thirty
13  we're gonna have dinner but we're gonna have it at the Clinton
14  I:nn instead of the Embassy Restaurant? .hhh a::nd we'll be
15  returning about nine thirty instead of ten p m::. (.5) the cost of
16  this trip also has gone u:p, .hhh and is now twenty five
17  dollars. that doesn't include admissions or dinner.
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The speaker in this fragment is one of two who does not begin with a greeting but instead asks the audience for their attention ("okay people listen up," line 1). The next step is to announce the purpose of the presentation (lines 1-2). The remainder of the presentation is a step-by-step announcement of the schedule and its changes. Additional items/parts of the schedule are marked by *and* in some cases (lines 11 and 14); this example does not use *then* as a temporal marker. This fragment also shows the emphasis on words that are important to the audience: *bus* (line 4), *o'clock* (line 5), *twelve* as in *twelve thirty* (line 8), *three* as in *three o'clock* (line 10), *nine* as in *nine thirty* (line 15), and *five* as in *twenty five dollars* (line 16).

Notice that in one respect the discourse generated by this task is similar to that of the telephone call (Task #10). All of the speakers greet the audience, but none of them close their presentations by saying something to the effect of *good-bye*. They simply end by mentioning the cost of the trip or another fact provided in the test booklet.

II. Recommendations Based on Native Speaker Data

The analysis of the native speaker discourse generated by the revised TSE indicates that the speakers are generally consistent in the way they respond to the various tasks. However, as the analysis notes, there seem to be some inconsistencies. The following recommendations are meant to address those points:

1. Tasks 3 and 4 elicit the same type of discourse from the NSs, that is, they both require the speakers to suggest a certain action (e.g., buy a gift, go to location) to the interlocutor and provide a rationale. An alternative to this overlap would be to eliminate one of the tasks and replace it with another that requires the speakers to engage in a different task.

2. It was noted above that the NS responses to Tasks 4 and 5 often include giving directions. Task 4 does not ask the speaker to give directions, but they often do so as a part of their responses; however, Task 5 explicitly asks the speakers to give directions. One option here is to combine both tasks by asking the speaker to first suggest a location and then give directions to it. This would create a stronger link between the two tasks, as in the first set of tasks (1-3), and contextualize the task to a greater extent.

3. Tasks 8 and 9 also overlap in the sense that both require the speaker to discuss a hypothetical situation. Unless the purpose of these questions is to elicit different grammatical structures (verb tense), both questions may not be necessary.

4. Recall that some speakers do not discuss the importance of the news event (Task 11), but instead describe why it was interesting. Thus, the definition of "importance" may not be clear since there seems to be some confusion between what is "important" and what is "interesting." Perhaps the distinction could be clarified.

5. Since there is little consistency among the NS responses to Task 12, it is possible that the question is too ambiguous. The analysis indicates there may be some confusion over whether or not the task is to debate both sides or to argue one side. The committee should review the six NS responses to the questions and decide whether these answers justify not clarify the task. The question could simply be reworded to say, "take a side and argue it" or "discuss the advantages and disadvantages to each side of the controversy."

Also with respect to Task 12, our general impression is that the inconsistency amongst the NS responses could be due, not only to an unclear question, but also to a subject that fails to interest many people. It is possible that the subject of keeping animals in a zoo is simply not interesting or controversial enough. The problem could be that zoos do not elicit strong personal reactions, therefore test takers find it difficult to argue the controversy.

III. Communicative Functions: Native Speaker Data

The following table illustrates the discourse functions that each TSE task was intended to generate (according to the researchers' understanding of the questions/instructions) and actual functions that appeared in the NS data.

The numbers in the table correspond to the functions provided in the content specifications for the revised TSE:

1. Describe something physical.
2. Narrate from presented material.
3. Summarize information of the speaker's own choice.
4. Give directions based on visual materials.
5. Give instructions.
6. Give opinion.
7. Support opinion.
8. Compare/contrast.
9. Hypothesize.
10. "Interactive" function.
11. Definition. (This category was not provided as one of the original ten functions, but it was included in the list of functions given in Appendix A of the content specifications.)

Communicative Functions Intended and Elicited by TSE Tasks
for Six Native Speakers

TSE Tasks	Intended Functions	Actual Functions
1	1	1
2	1	1, 3
3	6, 7	1*, 6, 7
4	6, 7	1*, 4*, 6, 7
5	4	4
6	1, 6, 7	1, 3, 6, 7
7	2	2, 1
8	9	9
9	9	6, 9
10	10	10
11	1, 6, 7	1, 3, 6, 7
12	6, 7	—
13	11	11
14	1, 9	1, 6*, 9
15	1, 5, 10	1, 5, 8, 10

* Indicates a function which was "optional" for the NS, since it did not appear in the discourse of every speaker.

— Indicates that the function could not be identified from the speech produced.

The following table depicts the discourse features that are present in each of the TSE tasks.

In other words, Task 1, the personal description, requires the speaker to give a physical description of a person without the aid of visual material included with the test. Task 7 requires both a physical description of the contents of a picture and a temporal description of the events it portrays, with the aid of a visual included with the test (the six pictures). Task 15 requires a temporal description of an event with a visual provided by the test (the actual schedule).

Varieties of Description Elicited by TSE Tasks: Native Speakers

TSE Task	Features		
1. Personal description	+physical	+person	–visual
2. Daily routine	+temporal	+event	–visual
3. Gift suggestion	+physical	+thing	–visual
4. Place to visit	+physical	+place	–visual
6. Favorite film	+physical	+experience +person +place etc.	–visual
7. Picture story	+temporal	+events	–visual
	+physical	+person +place etc.	+visual
11. News event	+temporal	+events	+visual
	+physical	+person +place	–visual
14. Graph	+temporal	+event	–visual
15. Schedule	+physical	+data	+visual
	+temporal	+event	+visual

IV. Communicative Functions: Nonnative Speaker Data

The following table summarizes responses given by nonnative speakers at five band levels to the following TSE tasks:

1 Describe something physical.
2 Narrate from presented material.
3 Summarize information of the speaker's own choice.
4 Give directions based on visual materials.
5 Give instructions.
6 Give opinion.
7 Support opinion.
8 Compare/contrast.
9 Hypothesize.
10 "Interactive" function.
11 Definition.

Communicative Functions Elicited by TSE Tasks
for 12 Nonnative Speakers at Five Band Levels

TSE Task	Band 20 (n=1)	Band 30 (n=3)	Band 40 (n=3)	Band 50 (n=2)	Band 60 (n=3)
1	1	1	1	1	1
2	1–	1, 3	1, 3	1, 3	1, 3
3	6, 7	6, 7–	6, 7–	1*, 6, 7	1*, 6, 7
4	6, 7–	4*, 6, 7–	1*, 6, 7–	1, 4*, 6, 7	1*, 4*, 6, 7
5	4–	4	4	4	4
6	7–	1*, 3*, 6, 7–	1*, 6, 7	1, 3*, 6, 7	1, 3*, 6, 7
7	2	2	2, 1*	2, 1	2, 1
8	9	9	9	9	9
9	—	9	9	9	9
10	10–	10	10	10	10
11	6, 7–	1*, 6, 7–	1*, 6, 7	1*, 6, 7–	1*, 3*, 6, 7–
12	—	6, 7	6, 7	—	—
13	—	11	11	11	11
14	1–	1, 9–	1, 6*, 9–	1, 6*, 9–	1, 6*, 9
15	1, 8–, 10	1, 5*, 8–, 10	1, 5*, 8–, 10	1, 5*, 8, 10	1, 5*, 8, 10

* Indicates a function was optional for the nonnative speakers, since it did not appear in the discourse of every speaker.

– A minus sign after a function means that the function was performed insufficiently or weakly by the nonnative speakers in that band.

— Indicates that the function could not be identified from the speech produced.

15

V. Recommendations Based on Nonnative Speaker Data

Our analysis indicates that the nonnative speakers in this study performed the same communicative functions as the native speakers did, especially at the higher band levels. The tables on pages 13 and 15 indicate that nonnative performance at Band 60 is almost indistinguishable from that of the native speakers. More specific observations include the following.

1. Five of the 12 NNSs, including one speaker at Band 60, were confused by Task 3. They interpreted the question to mean that they should recommend a gift for the interlocutor to buy and bring to them when visiting. Listening comprehension alone could be the explanation for this confusion; however, the problem may also lie in the wording of the question itself. The committee may consider rewording the question.

2. Five speakers failed to finish Task 5. This could be expected at the lower levels, but two of these speakers were at Bands 50 and 60, respectively. The committee may consider whether or not the task requires a response that is feasibly given in the allotted time and decide if any changes are necessary. (The NSs did not have difficulty finishing the task.)

3. Eight of the 12 NNSs failed to name the movie they go on to describe in Task 6. Two of these speakers were at Band 60, two at Band 40, three at Band 30, and one at Band 20. This is problematic since it often leaves the listener wondering exactly what it is that the speaker is describing whether it be a particular film, a type of film, or a group of films. Perhaps this task would be clearer if the instructions would more explicitly ask the speaker to name the film first before describing it. Note that all the NSs did name the film before giving a description.

4. Only three of the 12 NNSs offered to pay extra money in order to persuade the dry cleaner to have the suit ready early (Task 10). This observation is in contrast to the fact that all six NSs used this tactic to persuade the dry cleaner. Thus, it should be noted that this strategy is probably based on a cultural rather than linguistic knowledge.

   Futhermore, with regard to Task 10, five of the 12 NNSs managed to close the phone call by saying "good-bye" or "thank you." The interesting observation here is that no NSs closed the call as they would in an authentic situation.

5. Students at Bands 30 and 40 were able to clearly perform functions 6 (give an opinion) and 7 (support the opinion) in Task 12. However, at the higher levels (Bands 50 and 60), the speakers were less successful at performing functions 6 and 7, as were all the native speakers in this study, as noted earlier. The fact that the test item functions at the lower band levels but not at the higher bands deserves further exploration.

6. We recommend that the committee reconsider its definition of function 10, "interactive function." The definition is too narrow as it stands, since there are several tasks in which we observed the students engaged in a type of simulated interaction by tailoring their discourse to a specific audience. We would consider "interactive" to include this type of behavior in which an audience is acknowledged. In addition, we note that this behavior is part of the rating scale

16

for the revised TSE. Therefore, we recommend that the committee first reconsider the definition of "interactive function," and if it should decide to include audience awareness, there would need to be a re-evaluation of where the test elicits this type of behavior and how it is actually linked to the rating scale. The table below shows our interpretation of interactive responses found in the NS and NNS data on the 15 TSE tasks.

Frequency of "Interactive" Responses by TSE Task

TSE Task	Band 20 (n=1)	Band 30 (n=3)	Band 40 (n=3)	Band 50 (n=2)	Band 60 (n=3)	Native Speakers (n=6)
1	0	2	1	1	2	1
2	0	0	0	0	1	0
3	0	3	3	2	3	6
4	1	3	3	2	3	6
5*	0	0	0	0	0	0
6	0	1	1	1	1	2
7	0	0	0	0	0	0
8	0	0	0	0	0	0
9	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	0	3	3	2	3	6
11	0	0	0	0	0	0
12	0	0	0	0	0	0
13**	0	0	1	1***	0	0
14	0	0	0	0	0	0
15	1	3	3	2	3	6

* Although the second person singular pronoun "you" was present in the speech of all speakers on this task, its use is generic in descriptions and does not necessarily refer to the listener, in our opinion.

** The instructions for this task ask the respondent to tailor the response to an audience, namely an uninformed one.
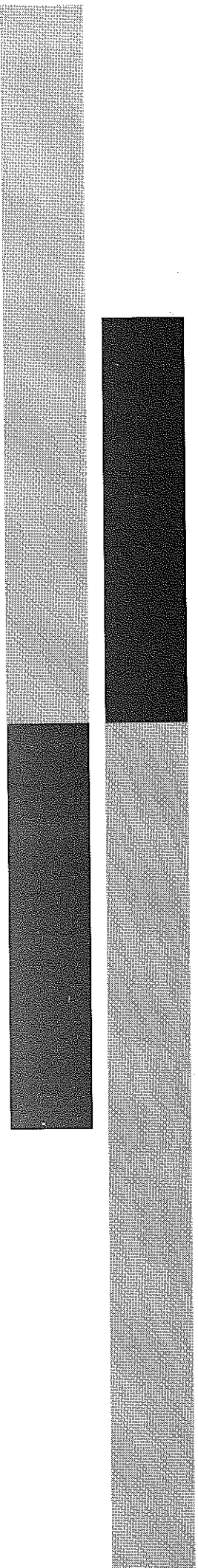
*** One speaker in this band did not give a response to this task.

Appendix

Transcription Notation
(Atkinson and Heritage, 1984)

1. *unfilled pauses or gaps:* periods of silence, timed in tenths of a second by counting "beats" of elapsed time. Micropauses, those of less than .2 seconds, are symbolized (.); longer pauses appear as a time within parentheses: (.5) is five tenths of a second.

2. *colon (:)*: a lengthened sound or syllable; more colons prolong the stretch.

3. *dash (-)*: a cut-off, usually a glottal stop.

4. *.hhh* an inbreath; *.hhh!* represents strong inhalation.

5. *hhh* exhalation; *hhh!* represents strong exhalation.

6. *hah, huh, heh, hnh* all represent laughter, depending on the sounds produced. All can be followed by an (!), signifying stronger laughter.

7. *(hhh)* breathiness within a word.

8. *punctuation:* intonation rather than clausal structure; a period (.) is falling intonation, a question mark (?) is rising intonation, a comma (,) is continuing intonation. A question mark followed by a comma (?,) represents rising intonation, but is weaker than a (?). An exclamation mark (!) is animated talk.

9. *equal sign (=)*: a latched utterance, no interval between utterances.

10. *brackets ([   ])*: overlapping talk, where utterances start and/or end simultaneously.

11. *arrow (--->)*: a feature of interest to the analyst.

12. *percent signs (%   %)*: represent quiet talk.

13. *empty parentheses (   )*: words within parentheses are doubtful or uncertain.

14. *double parentheses ((   ))*: non-vocal action, details of scene.

15. *asterisks (*   *)*: creaky voice.

16. *carat (^)*: a marked rising shift in pitch.

17. *arrows (>   <)*: the talk speeds up.

18. *arrows (<   >)*: the talk slows down.

19. *underlining* or *CAPS*: a <u>word</u> or SOund is emphasized.

18