

**Researcher**

Reza Neiriznaghadehi  
Iowa State University  
[rneiriz@iastate.edu](mailto:rneiriz@iastate.edu)

**Title of Project**

Automated Scoring of Oral Communication with a Focus  
on Interactional Competence in Oral Communication  
Tasks with a Spoken Dialogue System

**Research Supervisor**

Prof. Gary Ockey  
Iowa State University

**TIRF Research Topic Investigated**

Language Assessment

---

**Project Summary**

Every year, many language learners leave private and state-funded language schools with accreditation based on language tests. A considerable number also gain or lose professional and educational opportunities based on such tests. However, many of these tests either lack a speaking component or one that truly reflects the oral communication ability of the test takers. The solution can be creating a test that both addresses the issue of delivery and promises a reliable rating. The delivery of a speaking test must entail actual dialogic oral communication as it is in most real-world communication instances, be practical, and ensure a reliable elicitation of speech sample to be tested. At the same time, the rating must not be affected by poor rater performance. However, achieving these requires hiring and training both examiners and raters, which can be expensive and may not produce the desired results. Many entities lack resources to implement such an evaluation, and this project explores how this need can be addressed through a computer-delivered dialogic oral communication test using spoken dialogue systems, and to what extent a reliable rating of such oral communication can be achieved through automated rating. Specifically, the study implements a recent definition of oral communication with the ability to interact orally at the heart of it. The results of this study can contribute to our understanding of the possibility of obtaining reliable and affordable evaluation of oral communication, the results of which can affect teaching oral communication positively.