

Georgetown University Language Research Projects  
Think-Aloud Script-High School Levels  
Interviewer Guide (20 minutes) Spring 1996

**I. Introduction** (1-2 minutes)

*Be sure to get this information on tape:*

INTERVIEWER

STUDENT

TEACHER

LANGUAGE

LEVEL

DATE (include year)

Language Research Projects at Georgetown University is trying to learn more about how what students are thinking while they learn and practice *language*.

Today I'm going to ask you to think aloud while doing activities in *language*.

Someone may have done a similar interview with you last year.

This is not a test, and I don't really care about how good you are at *language*.

What I do care about is finding out the kinds of things you're thinking.

If we can start to understand what you and other students are doing while actually learning or practicing, we can develop ways to help other students who are learning *language*.

**II. Think-aloud with Language Activities** (Reading and Speaking)

**Reading** (7 minutes)

Now I want you to think aloud while reading a text in *language*.

Try and say as much as you can about the thoughts you're having while you do the activities. It might help you to imagine it as talking to yourself.

Don't think silently, then edit what you thought before you speak.

I'm interested in knowing everything you do and think when reading.

*Give student reading task.*

*Read directions (if there are any), but don't give background information about the text.*

*Don't focus on content when asking questions.*

*We're interested in reading processes, not comprehension of details.*

*Remind the student that it's not a test and right or wrong doesn't matter.*

*Try not to help the student too much.*

*Don't volunteer information about content.*

*Be careful not to lead the student into responses(put words in their mouth.)*

*If the text seems too easy/difficult for the student, replace with more appropriate level text.*

**Speaking** (7 minutes)

*Give student speaking task.*

The next activity is speaking.

I'd like you to talk a little in *language* by introducing yourself to me and telling me a little bit about yourself. For example, you can tell me your name, age, where you live, etc.

You can also choose one of the topics on the sheet.

It's difficult to think aloud while speaking *language*, so you can think aloud however you wish.

You can think aloud in either English or *language*.

You can tell me what you're thinking as you go along, stopping after each sentence and thinking back on the thoughts you just had, and you can tell me before you start talking in *language* what you are thinking.

Or you can talk in *language*, finish what you have to say, and then tell me what went through your mind as you were speaking.

What I'm interested in is how you go about speaking in *language*, the thoughts you have, etc.

Tell me as much as you can. Remember to tell me what you're thinking.

You can begin. [*Turn to Speaking Task Interviewer Questions, then return to this page.*]

**Wrap-up**

Thanks for taking time from your day to do this. I appreciate it.

We're learning a lot about how students approach *language* tasks, and your contribution is important to us.

## Speaking Task Interviewer Questions

*Interviewer can ask questions to guide student if s/he is extremely quiet, having difficulty thinking of anything to say, or is talking easily in L2 and needs to be pushed to a higher level. On the other hand, don't ask too many questions. Allow the student moments of silence because s/he may be thinking about what to say.*

### 1. A day at school:

Where do you go to school?

What subjects are you studying?

What's a typical school day for you?

What's your favorite class? Why?

What do you plan to study next year?

Imagine you're talking to a potential exchange student. Describe your school.

What classes would you recommend? Why?

### 2. My family:

Who is in your family?

Tell me a little bit about them like where they work, how old are they, their names, etc? Describe what they look like (appearance) and their personalities.

Compare some of the people in your family--appearance & personality.

### 3. My favorite hobbies:

What are your favorite hobbies?

Tell me about one of them.

How long have you *played softball*? What's your best memory of *playing softball*?

How would you encourage someone else to take up this hobby?

### 4. Summer vacation:

When does your summer vacation start/end?

What do you like to do during summer vacation?

What do you will you do this year? What did you do last year?

Describe your best/worst vacation. What's your idea of a fun vacation?

### 5. My home:

Where do you live?

Can you describe your home for me? (e.g., How many rooms? Describe your room.)

Where do you want to live? Describe your dream house.

6. My favorite book, movie, actor, etc: What was it about? Why is it your favorite...

7. My best friend/ worst enemy; Why is this person your best/worst...?

**Higher level structures:** *narrating in past/future; supporting opinion; conditional; compare/contrast*

Student Worksheet  
Think Aloud  
Speaking

Instructions: How do you go about speaking a foreign language? We would like to know what sort of thoughts pass through your mind as you speak.

Because it is difficult to think aloud while you talk, you can say what's going through your mind however or whenever you wish. For example, you can stop after each sentence you say, and think aloud about how you came up with that sentence. Or you can think aloud before you speak. Pick whatever is most comfortable for you. You can think aloud in either English or the foreign language.

Topic: Introduce yourself in your foreign language and then talk about one of the topics below. You can choose another topic not on the list, if you want.

**Topics:**

**A day at school**

**My family**

**My favorite hobbies/interests**

**Summer vacation**

**My home**

**My favorite book, movie, actor, etc.**

**My best friend/worst enemy**

Remember to tell us what you're thinking as you go along. We're interested in knowing how you go about talking in your foreign language.

### Think-aloud Prompts

*[Prompts are in a hierarchy (broad to specific). Each time you prompt, try to start out broad, then ask more specific questions to get more information. Don't stick to asking questions in order. Be responsive to what the student is doing at the moment. (If the student does something specific, ask a specific question.)]*

#### ***Broad prompts (to get started/when student is silent):***

- What are you thinking about? What's going through your mind?
- How are you doing this? How are you figuring this out?
- What are you looking at? Why?
- What do you understand so far? How did you get/know that?

#### ***Prompts to get more information:***

- Is there anything else you are thinking?
- Can you tell me more?
- What were you thinking when you were silent a moment ago?

#### ***Prompts responding to what student has said or done:***

*[Restate what student has said.]*

- How did you figure that out?
- Why do you say that? How do you know? How does that help?
- Why did you change your mind?
- Why did you decide to speak about this?
- How did you come up with that? Why did you say that?
- Is that working for you?

#### ***If student mentions unknown words:***

- What are you going to do about that word?
- So, how will you figure it out?

*[If student asks for information ("What does \_\_\_ mean?" or "How do you spell \_\_\_?"),*

- How would you normally figure that out? *[If student is persistent, give the information]*

***If student gestures, stares into space, writes, underlines:*** *[State (for tape) what S is doing]*

- I notice that you're \_\_\_\_\_. *See if student explains. If not, prompt more.*
- Is there a reason you are \_\_\_\_\_.
- What are you underlining? What does that do for you?

#### ***At end of task:***

- Were you able to tell me out loud what was going through your mind?
- Is there anything you'd like to add about what was going through your mind as you worked?
- As you were doing this, what language were you thinking in?