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An Investigation into Learners' Speaking Performance through an Evaluation of
their Speaking Assessment Practices:

The Case of Second Year Students of English at Biskra University

Dissertation submitted to the Department of Foreign Languages as a partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Degree of **Master in Sciences of Languages**

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Declaration

I, **Roufayda** Redjeb, do hereby declare solemnly that the work I will present in this dissertation is my own, and has not previously been submitted to any other institution or university for a degree.

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Dedication

In the Name of ALLAH, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

I dedicate this dissertation to:

The soul of my beloved father **Ali**, my superhero, my king and my biggest life blessing, to that person who taught me to withstand the waves of the rebellious sea, who raised my head high and proud of it, who held my hand when I needed and watched over me. Though the ink of my pen cannot express my feelings towards you, my feelings are bigger than lining it on paper. 'I love you Daddy'

It is not easy for a man to become a great father and a great human being. But you were both. Till we meet again, in heaven 'Insha'Allah'.

"May Allah have mercy on your soul"

To my beloved mother **Laila**, the light that shines my life and the apple of my eye, may Allah prolonge your life and protect you my dear Mom.

To my shining diamonds, my sisters and my brothers.

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I also wish to extend my thanks and respect to the Oral Expression teachers at the section of English in Biskra University, with whom I carried out the interviews and got valuable data.

Abstract

English as foreign Language (EFL) oral expression teachers face difficulties in teaching the speaking skill; in turn, such a fact leads to students' failure to learn the target language effectively. Inside this reality, it is argued that poor assessment may be a reason to this failure. Indeed, the inappropriate assessment practices implied by EFL teachers are among the principal sources of this decline. Accordingly, the aim of this study is to evaluate the practices used by oral expression teachers in assessing the speaking skill. In this respect, in this investigation, we hypothesised that the appropriate use of assessment practices, mainly formative assessment, can lead to more outcomes that are valid. Meanwhile, EFL learners' speaking performance will be improved. Methodologically, a qualitative approach was selected. In relevance, a case study as a research strategy was thought to be suitable. In the same vein, two data collection methods were used: a questionnaire for the students and an interview for the oral expression teachers. Besides, the population of this study was second year students of English at Biskra University. As for the sampling technique, we opted for a convenience sampling. Ultimately, the results of the study showed that most oral expression teachers use traditional methods to assess speaking. That is why we think that the appropriate use of formative assessment can enhance the teaching/learning process. Additionally, it can help in improving the students' speaking performance. Thus, the results of the study confirmed the hypotheses set out at an early stage in this study.

Keywords: Assessment, EFL, English language, formative assessment, speaking

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ARG: the Assessment Reform Group.

CLT: Communicative Language Teaching.

Dr.: Doctor.

EFL: English as a Foreign Language.

Et al.,: Et alii (And Others)

H: Hypothesis

S/he: she or he

i.e.,: Id est

Ibid: Ibidem (latin) (the same previous source)

LMD: Licence, Master, Doctorate.

MSG: Message

NCTM: National Council of Teachers of Mathematics

(n.d): No Date

p.: Page

Q: Question

RH: research Hypothesis

SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.

UK: United Kingdom

X₁: Result of the first test

X₂: Result of the second test

&: and

%: Percent

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المخلص

General Introduction

In recent years, English has become the forefront in all areas of life. In fact, it is one of the 21st century human's achievements. Noticeably, with the wide spread of English, the need to learn this language has become a major concern among people. However, since communication is the backbone of English, the turnout in learning the speaking skill has dramatically increased latterly. Therefore, attention has been paid to teaching and assessing this skill.

It is widely known in the context of English Foreign Language (EFL) education that there are many obstacles and difficulties in teaching and learning the speaking skill. On the one hand, the teacher finds teaching and assessing this skill as a complicated mission. On the other hand, the student will certainly face a troublesome in learning the latter. Supposedly, this is due to the inappropriate assessment techniques and practices used by the teacher in his/her oral expression session.

However, adopting effective assessment techniques may be the solution to all these difficulties. In particular, formative assessment can fill in the gap of all these flaws. The latter is known as an ongoing assessment process used to monitor the development of the learners' speaking performance. As it encourages the teacher to vary the assessment practices s/he uses through the continuous checking of his/her students, and this fosters usefulness in assessing the speaking skill. Broadly speaking, it is the guide for the teacher. Consequently, and inside the sphere of the above assumptions, this research will be conducted to evaluate the methods used by oral expression teachers to assess the speaking skill. Likewise, it will attempt to find out the possible remedies to the difficulties faced either by the researcher or by the students through the remedy of formative assessment.

1. Statement of the Problem

The widespread use of English has made it the 'Global Language', and the most important means of communication. Therefore, the need for teaching EFL has increased significantly. Hence, teaching this foreign language involves teaching the four skills, where speaking is at the foreground. As it is the most essential skill for communication. In order to know the outcome of the student's performance in speaking, teachers referred to the assessment process, by which they can keep pace with the academic achievements of their students.

However, regarding the complex nature of speaking, most of EFL teachers often complain that it is difficult to assess their students' speaking performance properly. For that reason, efforts have been intensified to seek effective assessment practices that would yield a 'valid' and a 'reliable' assessment for the actual performance of the students' oral production.

In the context of this study, we have observed that there are many obstacles and difficulties in learning the speaking skill among second year students of English at Biskra University. Likewise, the teachers of Oral Expression in the same context often face difficulties to teach and assess speaking. Part of these difficulties are due to the inappropriate ways to assess their students' speaking performance. Therefore, we believe that there is a need to check how speaking is assessed in order to make it well taught and easy to be learnt.

Therefore, we believe that the appropriate implementation of formative assessment in the oral expression session is one of the most appropriate ways that can facilitate the assessment of speaking for teachers, and contribute effectively to improve the students' speaking performance.

2. Research Questions

This research seeks to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the most important methods used by oral expression teachers to assess their students' speaking performance?

RQ2: Does formative assessment have an impact on the validity of the learner's speaking assessment practices?

RQ3: How can formative assessment influence the learner's speaking performance?

3. The Research Hypothesis

Based on the above research questions, we propose the following research hypotheses:

RH1: Teachers tend to use traditional assessment methods to assess their students' speaking performance rather than alternative ones.

RH2: We hypothesise that the use of appropriate formative assessment leads to more valid assessment practices.

RH3: If formative assessment were applied appropriately, learners' speaking proficiency would be improved.

4. Research Aims

The general aim of this study is to embrace the issue of speaking assessment and attempt to find out the possible remedies to the obstacles and difficulties faced either by teachers or by students.

The specific aims of this research work are summarised in the following points:

- to check the speaking assessment practices used by oral expression teachers;
- to identify the difficulties oral expression teachers face in assessing and teaching speaking;
- to see the impact of formative assessment on learners' speaking proficiency;

- to raise the effectiveness of formative assessment on teachers' instructional methods; and
- to check the validity of formative assessment as a practice for assessing the speaking performance.

5. Research Methodology for this Study

5.1 The Research Approach. Based on the nature of the present research, the researcher will opt for a Qualitative approach since the major aim of this study is to evaluate and describe how Oral Expression teachers at the Section of English in Biskra University assess their learners' speaking skill.

5.2 The Research Design. In relevance to the qualitative research approach, a Case Study design is considered the most suitable for this kind of study since its role is to collect information on specific, limited number of participants, through a variety of data collection procedures over a sustainable period.

5.3 The Data Collection Methods. To collect data, the researcher will utilize two data collection methods: An open-ended questionnaire for students and an unstructured interview with teachers. The choice of these tools goes in parallel with the nature of this study, which is purely qualitative.

5.4 The Data Analysis Methods. To analyse the data collected, the researcher is going to adopt two methods: For the questionnaire, a descriptive method is the most appropriate. On the other side, a Content-based Approach is seen to be suitable with the interview.

5.5 Population/Sample/Sampling Technique. In this study, the targeted population will be EFL students at Biskra University. As for a sample, the researcher intends to choose a group of students from the second year level. In terms of the

sampling technique, a convenience sampling technique is considered as the adequate one in the present research work.

6. Significance of the Study

The significance of this research study is, first to pursuit teachers' perception of the speaking skill as an essential skill in language learning and the effectiveness of the methods they use to assess their students' speaking performance. Besides, the other significance is to shed light on the importance of formative assessment as an ongoing process during the oral expression course, with the intentions to allow students to discover their weaknesses and strengths, and therefore, give them other opportunities to overcome such diagnosed anomalies before the final tests.

7. The Selection of the Writing Style

In this study, we opted for the American Psychological Association (APA 6th edition) writing style. This choice was nurtured by the nature of the study, besides to the field of research that is educational research. However, some practices such as not numbering the cover and not following the "justify" function to align the paragraphs were not followed as recommended by the APA writing style. Rather, they were used after the agreement between the candidate and her supervisor.

8. Structure of the Dissertation

The present dissertation will be organised into three main chapters. The first and second chapters will review the related literature. The third chapter will be concerned with the practical part of the study.

Chapter One. It is about major relevant assessment issues, its definitions, and types. It will also highlight the interconnection between evaluation, assessment, and testing. Besides, it will elicit the principles of assessment, and the current approaches to assessment. On the other side, this chapter will tackle the issue of formative

assessment as a practice used to assess the speaking skill, its history, practices and application and we shall deal with the difficulties that face teachers when applying formative assessment.

Chapter Two. It will provide a better understanding of the speaking skill, methods of teaching speaking, and the psychological reasons that enable EFL learners to speak fluently. In addition, it will deal with the techniques used to teach the speaking skill during the oral expression course.

Chapter Three. It will be about the detailed analysis of the data collection methods, findings and conclusions.

Chapter One: Language Assessment: Revisiting the Related Review of Literature.

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Introduction

This chapter is devoted to language assessment in general and allocated for the ongoing assessment practices in EFL classes. Initially, it tackles the differences between the three basic terms, which are evaluation, assessment and testing. It also addresses the most important types of assessment. Then, it reviews the concept of assessment triangle in conjunction with its usage in EFL classrooms. Likewise, it sheds the light on the differences between traditional and alternative assessment followed by some alternative assessment tools. In addition, this chapter presents the concept of formative assessment as a continuous assessment tool, its main characteristics, and its effectiveness. Additionally, it deals with the ongoing assessment practices within EFL oral expression sessions. At the end. It will highlight the challenges of implementing formative assessment in EFL classes, and the attitudes and perceptions of EFL teachers towards formative assessment.

1. 1 Evaluation, Assessment, and Testing

It is most known that each educational system is characterised by the prevailing of three basic concepts, which are evaluation, assessment, and testing. They are an inseparable part of foreign language teaching and learning, and almost indistinguishable from each other because of their overlapping. Bachman and Palmer (1996) stress the relationship between them by saying that they are used “interchangeably”. Although each concept has its distinctive features, there is a common goal between them. Over and above, Jabbarifar (2009) argues that “A major concern of teaching English language for teachers has been assessing and evaluating learner's progress during their courses of study as well as their classroom achievements at the end of it.” (p. 1). That is, teachers use them to provide a continuous monitoring of the learner’s level and to measure their educational output.

Now, it is not possible to give a precise comparison of these terms or to assign the specific mission to each term. On this, Kizlik (2014) argues that we measure distance, we

assess learning, and we evaluate results based on a set of criteria. It can be said that these three terms certainly share some common characteristics, but it is useful to consider them as separate ideas and processes, but at the same time, they are tightly connected.

1.1.1 Evaluation. If we consider the evaluation from a generalised side, we can say that it is a systematic process to judge the quality of a product or achievement. On the other hand, if we are devoted to the educational aspect, we can define it as a collection of decisions and judgments that the teacher gives to his/her learners based on the information he/she collects accurately and reliably about their educational development without giving a feedback. Bachman (1990) emphasises that evaluation is only the decision made by the teacher to his/her learners depending on a collection of pedagogical information (observations, test scores) about them throughout the school year.

According to Kizlik (2014), “Evaluation means procedures used to determine whether the subject (i.e., the learner) meets pre-set criteria, such as qualifying for special education services. This uses assessment (remember that an assessment may be a test) to make a determination of qualification in accordance with a predetermined criteria.” (p. 3). Thus, evaluation is a set of procedures used to qualify a learner for a particular privilege such as retention at the end of the year, which is often based on different criteria.

1.1.2 Assessment. One of the fundamentals of EFL environment is the assessment process, which is considered as the right hand of teaching and the leading incentive for learning. Indeed, it is an interesting issue, through which the teacher collects information about his/her learners’ performance and monitors their level of learning development. On the other hand, s/he elucidates the strengths and the weaknesses in his/her teaching methods to ensure a better teaching process.

Considering the prospective of learning and teaching, Pretorius (1998) defines it as “A comprehensive term which comprises of assessment practices starting with the planning

of assessment and the implementation of such plans in teaching and learning as a means of gauging the level or pace of learner progress"(as cited in Raof, 2013, p. 6). Furthermore, Brown (2003) adopts the idea that assessment and teaching are two complementary terms that cannot be separated from each other, or in other words, they are used interchangeably.

Besides, some researchers consider assessment as a set of proofs, which demonstrate the continuity and the development of learning by following a set of teaching strategies. Ruland (2011) supports this idea by saying that, "Assessment is a collection of evidence about student learning through a variety of ways, such as portfolios, journals, dialogue, questioning, interviewing, work samples, formal testing, and projects" (p. 54).

1.1.3 Testing. Tests are considered as one of the most effective means of measurement, since they determine the level of the learner's achievement, and identify the extent to which the curriculum achieves the goals set for it. Sah (2012) provides a comprehensive and simplified definition of it by saying that, "A test is a process that is administered to measure a learner's ability to perform in a particular field in a certain time limit with some specific goal" (p. 29). In other words, it is an educational tool that measures the learner's ability to learn in a limited time and in a specific field.

In the same vein, Brown (2003) insists that a test is a tool to measure the performance, ability, and knowledge of the individuals in a particular discipline, and he draws his attention to the difficulty that can face the test when it is formed because of the accuracy it requires. Likewise, Desheng and Varghese (2013) state that, "Tests are useful in diagnosis, prediction, selection, grading, guidance, self- correction, etc." (p. 32). That is, it can be said that with the effective role the test plays in determining the learners' level of study and obtains a final grade, it is also characterised by other functions, which make it efficient.

In fact, it can be drawn that the test is a necessary tool to measure what can be learnt by the learner at a certain time since it is the dividing line between success and failure in a particular material. Additionally, it makes the teacher aware of the reasons for that failure, and initiates a solution to avoid them in the future.

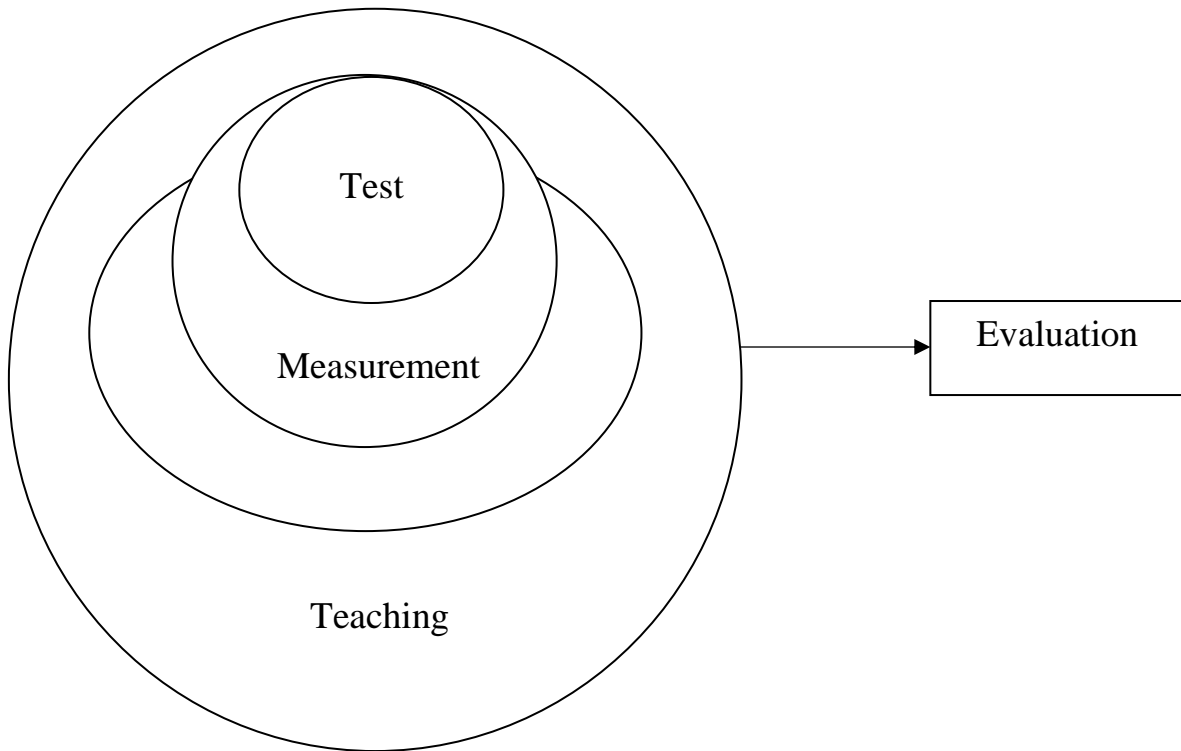


Figure 1.1. The Venn diagramme explains the relationship between teaching, assessment, measurement, test and evaluation. (Source: Brown and Abeywickrama, 2010, as cited in Sah, 2012, p. 31).

Figure 1.1 shows the interrelationship between teaching, measurement, testing and evaluation. Through it, we find that the large oval shape represents the teaching, which is the basis of education, and inside it, there is the measurement, which is the main engine of the latter because of its contribution in guiding and directing the teacher. It is in turn includes the test, which is the most prominent form of measurement and its second face. From this, we can say that teaching, measurement, and testing all constitute the assessment, which is considered as the main factor in the learning process. As shown, all these concepts are

oriented towards evaluation, which plays an active role in keeping pace with the process of learning and teaching.

1.2 Types of Assessment

Brown (2003) highlights four basic types of assessment namely: Summative, formative, formal, and informal. However, he declares that summative assessment positioned at the end of units and exams to determine the sum of what the student has learnt during a given period. Unlike, formative assessment is a continuous process of observing the learners' learning during the lesson, exploring their errors and correcting them. On the other hand, formal assessment is a systematic and organised way to discover the achievements of the student, and ends with giving grades. In contrast to that, informal assessment is that practices in which the teacher gives notes on the learners' learning at the end of the lesson.

1.2.1 Summative assessment. This type of assessment is known as 'assessment of learning', which is often carried out in final exams or at the end of a course to demonstrate the "sum" of what students have learnt. Surgenor (2010) defines it as, "The type with which most people are familiar. It is usually conducted in the last few weeks of term to see how well students have learned what they were supposed to have learned" (p. 2). That is, teachers implement summative assessment for evaluating how the learners have taught the material tested.

In another study, McAlister (2013) considers summative assessment as a measuring tool for determining the learner's achievements in a particular unit or programme, where it takes place at the end of the processes of teaching and learning. It is similar to the process of calculation (i.e., measuring the results obtained by the learner and, judging them by referencing to these results). In the same vein, Bloom (1969, as cited in Bennett, 2011) looks at summative assessment as similar to the above, where he sees that the latter is used to

judge what the learner has achieved at the end of a course. However, this definition takes another interpretation where he states that, in this type, assessment is not final (i.e., implements in one time and takes the decision at the same time), but implements in periods of time, and the decision comes with the final period of it.

Finally, the results of this assessment are usually grouped and used to determine whether the learner has met the specified learning outcomes and perhaps achieve a kind of academic achievement.

1.2.2 Formative assessment. Formative assessment is an integral part of the educational process, where it stands with the processes of learning and teaching side by side. Ultimately, Ruland (2011) posits that Michael Scriven introduced the term at first in 1967 as a means of collecting information to assess the effectiveness of the curriculum and guiding the school system. On the other hand, Black and William (1998) consider the previous definition restricted to some extent by defining formative assessment as "all those activities undertaken by teachers and by their students in assessing themselves that provide information to be used as feedback to modify teaching and learning activities" (as cited in Ruland, 2011, p. 46). That is, this type of assessment was designed to cover both teaching and learning by monitoring and modifying the methods used by teachers in teaching, and the strategies adopted by learners in learning.

On the same point, the Assessment Reform Group (ARG) considers formative assessment as a guide to the educational process that gives the assessment an educational dimension in line with the modern vision of the role of the teacher. The latter often moves from his/her role as a communicator of information and observer of the learner's learning ability to the role of a former and facilitator of the learning process. It also identifies the learner with the correct paths of learning. In spite of that, Byrd (2010) argues that the role of formative assessments is to evaluate the information gained from the test and to use it to

change the teaching methods to increase the learners' learning, such as trying alternative ideas for teaching, re-teaching concepts, and providing additional opportunities for practice.

1.2.3 Formal assessment. Weaver (2019) believes that formal assessments are those that contain data that support the results obtained from the test. This type of assessment is usually referred to as standardised, pre-planned, and structured measures. Hence, results such as percentages or standard scores are mostly given for this type of assessment. Yet, Gomez and Cortés (2013) define formal assessment as “A systematic, planned, sampling techniques constructed to give the teacher and student an appraisal of student achievement” (p. 26). In this way, formal assessment takes place at the end of the learning and teaching process, where the teacher measures the results obtained by the learner and makes judgments by reference to these results.

Nevertheless, other studies have shown that this type of assessments have many types, and each one has its own criteria for scoring and interpretation (Yolanda, 2019). In other words, it is applied under a special condition in the class, and often aims to verify the learners' performance, and to identify their educational level in the form of grades.

1.2.4 Informal Assessment. Informal assessment is an unorganised and an unplanned way of assessment. It usually refers to, “Those activities which are used to evaluate a student's own performance and progress individually. In the classroom, these take numerous forms and are simply the teacher's, student's, and parent's way of measuring that student's progress” (Greaver, 2019).

At another level, Brown's definition (2003) comes to highlight the uses of informal assessment, where he sees that the latter includes a number of models, ranging from unannounced comments and responses, along with training and other learner feedback. Furthermore, this type of assessment includes monitoring learners during their learning using the results collected. Finally, it can be said that informal assessments are not restricted

by a specific protocols, and not specified by a fixed time, where teachers have the freedom to design these assessments such as providing notes and comments in the middle of the course.

1.3 Principles of Assessment

According to Brown and Abeywickrama (2010), “Teachers need to consider five principles of language assessment when they create assessments” (as cited in Yoneda, 2012, p. 44). That is to say, assessment is based on five principles that the teacher must take into consideration; they are respectively: validity, reliability, practicality, authenticity, washback. A short account of these test qualities will be present in what is coming:

1.3.1 Validity. We usually come across the word ‘validity’, as we say a test should be valid. Alternatively, a research must be valid, so what do we mean by this concept? To answer this question, Robson (2011) points out that, “Validity of a research instrument assesses the extent to which the instrument measures what it is designed to measure.” (as cited in Mohajan, 2017, p. 14). In another meaning, validity refers to the correspondence between the measuring instrument, what we want to measure, and the relevance of questions to the standards and the educational endeavour. Hence, Gomez and Cortés adopted this idea argued that validation realises when a test or a task measures what teachers want to measure. They also add an important trend. That is, the teacher should try to remove the external difficulties, such as language difficulties, or question difficulties that must be clear, and far from ambiguity and complexity.

In similar studies, Messick (1989, as cited in Thompson, 2013) argues that validity can be defined as an integrated evaluation judgment, so that empirical evidence and theoretical justifications demonstrate the adequacy and appropriateness of inferences and procedures based on test scores or other measurement methods. Moreover,” Validity means the assessment should measure the language skill being assessed. To test speaking, test

takers should be given speaking test, not writing test” (Rahmawati & Ertin, 2014, p. 207). In other words, the teacher should direct his/her learners towards the pure destination of the nature of the test, and its requirements, as an example; assessing their speaking abilities using a written test. Hence, this makes him/her exceeding the criteria of credibility and validity.

1.3.2 Reliability. According to Bachman and Palmer (1996) reliability refers to, "Consistency of measurement" (p. 25). Hence, to demystify the above, we can create an illustrative example from our understanding; we assume that the learner conducted a test in one of the language skills and gets the result (X_1). If this test is repeated again with the same learner (X_2), there are two possibilities:

- The result of the first test is not equivalent to the result of the second test; ($X_1 \neq X_2$); we say that there is no reliability.
- The result of the first test is equivalent to the result of the second test; ($X_1 = X_2$), here it attains reliability.

Therefore, we can say that a test that gives similar scores to the same learner who repeats the test to measure his/her learning ability is considered as a reliable test. Likewise, Weiner (2007) holds the same idea by defining reliability, as the degree to which the measurement is used to ensure consistent results when repeated application and the reliability factor is the basis of each test. However, as an important observation, this principle falls only when the learner is affected by the psychological and physical factors (tension, anxiety, illness...), and external factors (the light, the noise...).

1.3.3 Practicality. One of the most important requirements of a test is to be simple and free from any complications that can cause fatigue and boredom to both teacher and learner. Therefore, this principle takes into account possible efforts and facilitates all difficulties that will strain them. Hence, Brown (2003) clarifies, “A test that is prohibitively

expensive is impractical, a test of language proficiency that takes a student five hours to complete is impractical” (p. 19). That is, the economy of time, effort, and financial cost must be considered during the development of the test. For instance, economic assessment in time requires taking into account the time of the teacher and the learners and ease of rating, ease of interpretation of test results, financial cost within available resources.

1.3.4 Authenticity. Real, trustworthy, pure, original, are words that inherently involved in the conceptual field of the term authenticity. For McNamara (1999), “Authenticity in testing is when both 'the content and skills' mirror one another.” (as cited in Alkubaidi, 2009, p. 3). That is, the content of the test must match the skill assigned to it. If we assume that the test about the speaking skill, the content must revolve around techniques that have been used in the classroom, such as using role-play with statements and phrases taught previously.

Additionally, Eder (2010) states that authenticity is a key factor in language testing since it describes the close relationship between testing and the real world, but the idea is usually associated only with the use of original materials. In this context, it is clear that the concept of authenticity is in fact more comprehensive. It already includes the characteristics of the input of the test functions, the interaction between the inputs, the expected response, the setup, and the test form.

1.3.5 Washback. According to Green (2013), the term washback refers to “The impact that a test has on the teaching and learning done in preparation for it” (p. 40). That is, the effect of the test on both the teacher and the learner, which is likely to be positive (advantageous) or negative (disadvantageous). This is related to the nature, effectiveness, and credibility of that test. On the other hand, Tsagari (2007) claims that washback is similar to the concept ‘impact’ since once we have obtained a preliminary result of the impact on the learner and the teacher, we can expect the overall impact on the whole society.

In the same vein, Bachman and Palmer (1996) take a parallel explanation by saying that washback and impact are two faces for the same coin. The first face refers to the micro level (i.e., the effect of the test on learners and teachers), and the second face refers to the macro level (i.e., the impact on society and its educational systems).

Finally, these principles are integrated in terms of the role they play. We cannot separate one from the other because they are equally important.

1.4 Assessment Triangle

The term “triangulation” is the source of the word “triangle”, which is a concept derived from mathematics, symbolises a three-sided geometric shape. Thus, the point of adopting this term in the process of assessment reflects in Thomas (2005) who claims that, “Triangulating methods of analysis is commonly recommended to overcome validity problems” (as cited in Nelson, 2010, p. 9). That is, triangulation refers to a teaching process in which the teacher gathers evidence about learner’s learning to validate the assessment, and sometimes when multiple obstacles to the validity of measures arise, the teacher uses a different data source for the data generated by multiple analysis methods to address them (Nelson, 2010).

From another angle, Byrd (2010) illustrates that triangulation is a teaching process in which the teacher gathers evidence about learners’ learning. Hence, the latter are collected from various sources or what we call ‘the integrated features’ which work in a coordinated and integrated manner, namely: cognition, observation, interpretation. Chiefly, cognition refers to the state of the learner’s knowledge and skills who are supposed to be assessed. Observation refers to the tasks that are appropriate to use for generating evidence about the learner’s learning. Moreover, interpretation refers to the strategies used to make conclusions that resulted by observing performance about the learner’s cognitive state.

Overall, it can be said that triangulation provides teachers with the ability to use different and varied sources of information to capture a clearer picture of the learner learning.

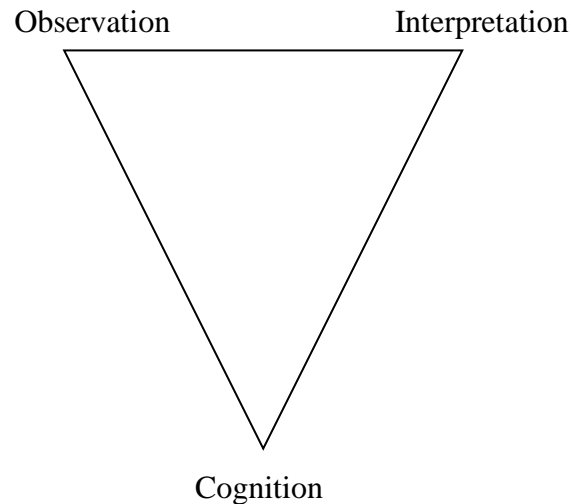


Figure 2.1. The Assessment Triangle (Source: Byrd, 2010, p. 2)

1.5 Alternative Vs. Traditional Assessment

Assessment refers to a standard educational process that gives a general or a comprehensive picture or judgment of what an individual has achieved. Some scholars like Rust (2002, as cited in Nasab, 2015) considers it as a bridge to teaching and learning since it is the final destination that the learner is going through during his/her study journey. However, the latter has known many changes in recent years, because of the demand for fundamental changes in assessment as a whole. In other words, its transition from simple traditional assessment to an alternative assessment. Here the question arises: What is the difference between the two? Which one is more appropriate for the educational process?

On this matter, Kwako (n.d) argues that traditional assessment is the other meaning of summative assessment, which seeks to identify what learners know at the end of a unit or series of lectures on a topic. The most prominent tool that represents this type of assessment is the test. Yet, this type of assessment receives many criticisms from researchers, such as Dikli (2003) who believes that, “Traditional assessments are indirect and inauthentic,

standardized, which reason they are one-shot, speed-based, and norm-referenced, single-occasion, tests since they measure what learners can do at a particular time” (as cited in Khalanyane & Hala-hala, 2014, p. 590). In another interpretation, one of the most important problems facing traditional assessment is that it often comes after the end of the teaching process and does not affect it, where learners are not provided with their level of study until after the end of the final exams.

In the same vein, “traditional assessment often focuses on the learner’s ability of memorization and recall, which are lower level of cognitive skills” (Simonson et al., as cited in Quansah, 2018, p. 22). That is, the learner performs only what s/he memorises, and does not use his/her own abilities and creations. However, this type of assessment is somewhat limited and does not encourage the learner to develop his/her creative skills in learning.

On the other hand, alternative assessment supporters like Kohonen (1997) claims that, “The term alternative and authentic assessment interchangeably to refer to the evaluations made which reflect student’s learning and achievement as well as their motivations and attitudes. These evaluations are claimed to finally result in an improved instruction” (as cited in Nasab, 2015, p. 171). That is, alternative assessment gives the learners the opportunity to obtain real feedback based on a realistic assessment of their performance, which will enable them to explore their learning path and correct their mistakes. Similarly, Smith (1999) describes alternative assessment as a, “Continuous techniques occurring inside or outside the classroom at different points in time when the subjects are asked to represent their knowledge in different ways” (as cited in Nasab, 2015, p. 171). That is, this type of assessment extends beyond the classroom walls using more diverse and relevant strategies for the learner, highlighting what the learners can perform in a realistic situation.

In summary, both traditional and alternative assessments have advantages and disadvantages, but it is certain and common that they contribute to the educational process significantly. Therefore, adopting a balanced approach between traditional and alternative assessment is needed. Once the instructional objectives are clearly defined, teachers can choose the appropriate strategy for evaluation based on issues such as content and context.

1.5.1 Alternative assessment tools in EFL contexts. Recent trends in alternative assessment in EFL classrooms call for reliance on the assumption that knowledge is created and built by the learner, where that knowledge differs from context to another. The idea of this type of assessment is the possibility of creating an integrated picture of the learner in the light of a set of alternatives. Schneller (2017, as cited in Nasab, 2015) sees that several alternative tools of assessing language have emerged in the educational field. The latter meets the special needs of language learning while most of them can be adapted to a variety of subjects, which are repeatedly reviewed in the contexts of language teaching and the most important ones are as follows: portfolios, self and peer-assessment, observations and rubrics, and performance assessment.

1.5.1.1 Portfolios. According to Davis and Ponnampuruma (2005), “Portfolio is a collection of various forms of evidence of achievement of learning outcomes. In practical terms, a student portfolio for assessment purposes is a compendium of reports, papers, and other material, together with the student’s reflection on his or her learning and on strengths and weaknesses” (p. 279). In other words, the latter is a meaningful collection of the learner’s self-evaluations that reflect their progress. Thus, it is an effective tool that allows learners to see their academic progress from level to level. The learner generally lists the work assignments to be placed in the portfolio, but the teacher may also interfere with the inclusion of specific work samples.

On this point, Birgin and Baki (2007) confirm that portfolio is a cumulative and continuous set of entries that are identified and commented upon by the learner or teacher, to assess the learner's progress in developing the competitor. It also provides concrete evidence of learners' achievement and development under a variety of entries (self-assessment, test scores, projects, audio tapes, video tapes, rubrics...).

1.5.1.2 Self and peer-assessment. Self-assessment is defined by Andrade and Du (2007) as, "A process of formative assessment during which students reflect on and evaluate the quality of their work and their learning, judge the degree to which they reflect explicitly stated goals or criteria, identify strengths and weaknesses in their work, and revise accordingly" (as cited in Spiller, 2012, p. 3). In other words, self-assessment is based on the principle of self-reliance without resorting to the teacher or the classmates. If a learner teaches himself in a unit of study or subject, s/he must know the extent to which s/he has progressed towards the objectives of that unit or subject, the validity of his/her plans and the search the committed mistakes.

Furthermore, peer-assessment is seen by Chin (2016) as a learning process in which each learner evaluates the work of his/her peers (i.e., classmates and different learners), where comments from different sources, such as mentors, teachers, or lecturers, can greatly enhance learner's learning. Hence, these comments can be formative or summative, and presented as a feedback. For example, learners may exchange appointments, tasks or works performed by each one of them, and then assess each other's quality, effectiveness, or suitability. However, this requires careful organisation and preparation, so that the peer assessment will be consistent, and the resulting judgments will be correct.

1.5.1.3 Observation and rubrics. As discussed previously in the topic of 'Assessment Triangle', observation is crucial in the educational assessment. Therefore, Maxwell (2001) states that observation means watching and monitoring a particular

behaviour or phenomenon in the context of certain environmental conditions and factors. Its goal is to obtain accurate information to diagnose this behaviour or phenomenon. Thus, the information collected using this tool is more profound than the use of other tools.

Besides, the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) states that, “Rubrics are descriptive scoring grids used for assessing and scoring student performance” (2010, p. 2). In other words, both the learner and the assessor use rubrics as an assessment tool by to give the parties a clear understanding of what is expected by doing the task or evaluating the assessment. This is in order to ensure that learning outcomes are achieved and that the educational process is moved forward.

1.5.1.4 Performance assessment. Aschbacher and Winters (1992) mention that, “Performance assessment involves the accomplishment of “complex and significant tasks, while bringing to bear prior knowledge, recent learning, and relevant skills to solve realistic or authentic problems” (as cited in Schneller, 2017, p. 45). That is to say, this strategy allows learners to employ their skills in real life situations, while demonstrating their mastery of what they have learnt in the educational achievements. In addition, it includes a number of events that can be an appropriate example of their application, such as presentation, simulation, demonstration... etc.

1.6 A Brief History of Formative Assessment

According to Ruland (2011), “Formative assessment is not a new term and can be defined in many ways... Formative assessment uses the information collected to determine where the gap of learning is for the student and then is used to determine how to close the gap” (p. 46). That is, we can describe this type of assessment as 'old-fashioned', used by teachers as a tool to explore, examine and correct learning errors. Yet, "the term formative assessment has the longest history in the field of education, usually been attributed to Scriven (1967) and was well-known before the recent rise to prominence of assessment for

learning" (McDowell et al., n.d). In other words, these researchers emphasise the primacy of this term in the field of education.

On the other side, some researchers take the opposite approach, believing that formative assessment is a modern term in the field of learning and teaching. This is clearly shown in Greenstein (2019) who asserts that although teachers have long used strategies, such as the Socratic Method and other forms of meaningful questions. The term formative assessment is relatively recent. Benjamin Bloom was the first to apply the formative concepts to the summary of the educational evaluation where he helped lay the foundations for the concept of mastery learning.

The discrepancy between researchers on the formative assessment's emergence indicates that this type of assessment has been common for a long time, and may have been used without even identifying its name. Therefore, we can conclude that the development of this concept was in line with the development of teaching over time.

1.6.1 Definition of formative assessment. According to Harvey (1998), "When the cook tastes the soup, it is formative evaluation, and when the dinner guest tastes the soup, it is summative evaluation" (as cited in Higgins et al., 2010, p. 5). Indeed, the most significant representation of the meaning of formative assessment is reflected in the above quote, which can be traced to another explanation that formative assessment allows the learner to discover and correct his/her mistakes in learning during the learning process. Similarly, The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) (2007) states that formative assessment refers to any assessment task designed to promote and develop learner learning. These tasks provide teachers and learners with observations, so that teaching and learning activities can be changed according to the results obtained.

In the same vein, formative assessment is the work done by learners while learning in order to improve their performance, whether noticeable or not. It can also contain a large

variety of formats that are divided into written or verbal, formal or informal and can be delivered by external collaborators or lecturers (Higgins et al., 2010). Perhaps Black and Wiliam (1998) provided the clearest definition of the latter, and they pointed out that formative assessment refers to “All those activities undertaken by teachers, and by their students in assessing themselves, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged.” (as cited in Clark, 2011, p. 165). In other words, it is a process used by both teachers and learners during learning and teaching, which in turn provides feedback to adjust the coordinates of the learning process and the teaching methods.

1.6.2 Key characteristics of formative assessment. A successful formative assessment must be a prerequisite for both teacher and learner to adjust their educational mission. On this basis, Bell and Cowie (2000) set out two key characteristics of a successful formative assessment, which are responsiveness, and the contextualised nature of the process.

1.6.2.1 Responsiveness. According to Bell and Cowie (2000), “Formative assessment is responsive in that it is ongoing and progressive” (p. 544). That is, assessment is continuous and repeated during the teaching/learning period to serve as a source of cognitive support that would raise the learner's desire to learn through the correction of learning mistakes. More importantly, it is not intended to classify the learner according to the results of the test or exam. Rather, it is important that the learner assesses his/her performance through the process of acquiring information.

In this regard, Brookhart (2019) states that formative assessment is an ongoing process for the learners and teachers involved in evaluating the current workplace for the goal. It is also known for its continuous, dynamic, and progressive nature and does not stop at a certain point or tied to a specific learning pathway.

1.6.2.2 *The contextualised nature of the process.* This characteristic indicates that formative assessment is determined by the context of the teachers. In other words, objectives, information, explanations and actions taken depend on many contextual factors, for instance, methods of developing, interpreting, and acting on the assessment of formative information through the learning attitudes used (whole class, small groups or individuals) by following selected learning activities (brainstorming, investigations, video viewing, library projects, the teacher's professional knowledge and skills. The subject of the lesson and the teacher's purposes for the lesson) can also be also adopted to show that formative assessment can be considered a social and written activity (Brookhart, 2019).

1.6.3 The effectiveness of formative assessment. Formative assessment goes hand in hand with the educational process and accompanies it in all its stages. Therefore, its effectiveness is not limited only to following the development of the learning process continuously, but it extends to other areas. In this regard, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) (2007) argues that one of the benefits of formative assessment is that it produces a greater increase in learner's achievement, and it is cheaper than other efforts to enhance achievement, including reduced classroom sizes and increased knowledge of teacher content. Similarly, Black and William (as cited in Bennett, 2011) regard formative assessment as an effective tool in promoting the learner's learning ability across a large variety of instructional settings (types of feedback, levels, disciplinary fields).

In addition, "effective formative assessment involves collecting evidence about how the learner's learning is progressing during the course of instruction so that necessary instructional adjustments can be made to close the gap between students' current understanding and the desired goals" (CCSSO, 2008, p. 3). That is, one of the most important features of formative assessment is that it helps the teachers to check the improvement of their learners in different fields, and provide them with feedback on their mistakes. It also

shows them what the learners have learnt, what they should learn then, strengths and weaknesses in their learning, and instructs the learner to undertake self-assessment.

1.7 The Assessment Practices within EFL Oral Expression Sessions

In short, the effectiveness of formative assessment is based on a set of strategies used to motivate learners to succeed, and to help teachers assess the achievements of their learners. Three strategies are believed to be essential for successful classroom assessment practice, which are strategic questioning, think-pair-share strategy, and 2/3/4 strategy.

1.7.1 Strategic questioning. As the name shows, questioning is considered the most crucial method in instruction where learners ask and inquire about every issue in the class. Peavey (1997) declares that, "Strategic questioning is the skill of asking the questions that will make a difference... It is a tool for giving service to any issue... as it helps people discover their own strategies and ideas for change" (p. 1). That is, the process of questioning is the nature of the work of human thought, and the way to acquire knowledge that can be imagined as the movement of the mind from the known to the unknown, and this movement calls for our ideas to shift and take into account new information and new possibilities. This requires special creativity that can develop new strategies for solving learning puzzles. Similarly, Brenson-Lazan (n.d) probates the ideas of Peavey and claims in the same context that this strategy is a tool for all categories to move beyond the immediate survival and security needs, towards fulfilling personal group autonomy and transcendence needs.

1.7.2 Think-pair-share strategy. Think-Pair-Share refers to a low-risk strategy to engage many students actively in classes of any size and encourage a spirit of partnership between them. The procedure is simple: After asking the question, the teacher tells his/her students to think silently in the answer. After that, s/he may make them write their own answers. They are then asked to work in pairs to compare or discuss their answers with each other. At the end, the teacher randomly communicates with a few students to summarize

their discussions or give their answers. Random calls are important to ensure that students are individually accountable for participation (Ledlow, 2001).

Similarly, McCandlish (2012) declares that, “Think-Pair-Share is a cooperative discussion that has 3 parts to the process – student think about a question or an issue, they talk with a partner about their thoughts, then some student’s share their discussion and thinking with the class” (as cited in Sapsuha & Bugis, 2013, p. 4). That is to say, this technique is a programmed strategy to enable the learners to produce their own ideas and share these ideas with the other classmates. In other words, it is an educational methodology that focuses on learner’ responsiveness and interaction with the learning environment, and urges the teacher to encourage the learner’s participation in the classroom, rather than using the basic presentation in which the teacher poses questions and offers his/her learners a response.

1.7.3 The 4/3/2 strategy. This technique is used in an attempt to provide fluent speaking training for EFL learners. Aijie (2006) argues that its method is based on giving the same speech to three different listeners one by one. First, with four minutes to give the first delivery to talk, and three minutes to deliver the same talk to the second listener, and then two minutes to the third. Hence, each speaker must give the same speech three times to three different listeners with a gradual decrease in the time available for each delivery and so the process will continue with all of them. On the same point, Indriani (2013) states that, “4/3/2 is the technique where the same information is told by the same person three times... it is conducted to improve student’s fluency” (p. 5). In other words, it is the short-term way to reach a high level of performance by providing the opportunity to repeat speech every specific period, and challenge by reducing the time needed to deliver this speech. As a result, this will help to hold speech data in memory and then link it to similar topics in order to speak fluently in the future.

1.8 Challenges of Implementing Formative Assessment in EFL Contexts

Between the theoretical background of formative assessment and its application, there are many challenges. In a recent study, Radford (2014) outlines some of these challenges by saying that formative assessment lacks a clear, practical methodology or plan with an organised design that takes into account the nature of the subjects under a unified curriculum, so that it is coordinated across the school grades, different materials, and different teachers in different schools. As well as, the experience of some teachers on how to implement formative assessment methods, and using traditional assessment practices, is another challenge.

Likewise, Wei (2010) argues that, “There are some limitations related to formative assessment such as time-consuming, labor extensive and low reliability” (as cited in Akhmedina, 2017, p. 32). That is, teachers see formative assessment as a method that requires a lot of time and effort, and it shows the level of learners’ learning progress in a particular lesson only. In addition, the data collected through this type of assessment are defined as not permanent and limited to a specific time.

1.9 Teacher’s Attitudes and Perceptions towards Formative Assessment

Teachers' perceptions and attitudes greatly affect any reform or change in the achievement of the goals and plans contained in the educational curriculum as a whole. Therefore, teachers must be aware of the features of formative assessment in order to shape their own teaching philosophy and apply it successfully. It is also important to involve teachers and take into account their correct attitudes towards formative assessment when applying the evaluation reform. This would create a balance between teachers' resistance to change and the successful implementation of the contemporary assessment trend (Hama, 2015).

Conclusion

At the end of this chapter, we can say that we tried to highlight most of the aspects we have seen fit with the nature of the study. We addressed the definition of assessment, which plays an integral role with the educational endeavour, as well as, its most important types and principles. Moreover, we discussed the transition from traditional assessment to alternative assessment as a change in the structure of assessment. On the other hand, we dealt with a historical overview of formative assessment, its definition, effectiveness, and challenges. We also tried to tackle the most important formative assessment practices used in EFL context.

In the next chapter, we will shift the attention to the speaking skill and the most important methods used to teach and assess it.

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Introduction

This chapter will deal with speaking as a key skill for communication, and the effective ways to teach and assess it. As a start, it will address the definition of speaking as a process, and the definition of the speaker as a person. Then, it will discuss the types and functions of speaking. Next, it will present the micro- and macro-skills of speaking. In addition, it will tackle the main barriers of speaking English in EFL classes. Additionally, this chapter will shed the light on three-phases of teaching speaking. It will also discuss speaking assessment, and the most important methods proposed for effective assessment, as well as, the main challenges and difficulties of speaking assessment.

2.1 Definition of Speaking

According to Safront (2002), “Speaking is the productive skill that refers to the ability of conversing a sequence of ideas fluently, and reporting acts in different contexts. In other words, it is taking thoughts, putting them into words, and saying them, with much of this process being done unconsciously” (p. 51). That is, speaking is an interactive process involving the production, reception, and processing of information by the speaker and the listener. Its form and meaning depends on the context in which it occurs, including the participants themselves, their collective experiences, the physical environment, and the purposes of speaking. It is often occurs in a spontaneous, and an unplanned manner.

Furthermore, speaking is a multidimensional concept where every researcher sees it from his/her own perspective. Thus, Cameron (2001, as cited in Meilyaningsih, 2015) argues that speaking is a clever process that begins and ends with the completion of an audio communication task with a speaker from the construction of the language in a social position. It includes; the speaker, the listener, and the content of the speech.

This generates the listener's understanding of the speaker's message while communicating using the language.

On the other hand, Tarigan (1985) points out that, “Speaking is regarded as of a phonological nature, since it requires one’s to have the ability to produce appropriate utterances, sounds or words to express, or to demonstrate and think about ideas, notions, thoughts and feelings”(as cited in Wijaya, 2014, p. 80). In other words, the speaker's voice expresses something meaningful in the mind of the hearer, or at least in the speaker's mind in practice at the beginning of the conversation, based primarily on the ability to listen, the ability to control the vocabulary, and the courage to express what is in his/her mind. This process can be interpreted as a message containing certain information sent by the sender, and received by the listener to produce a reaction (Figure 3.2)

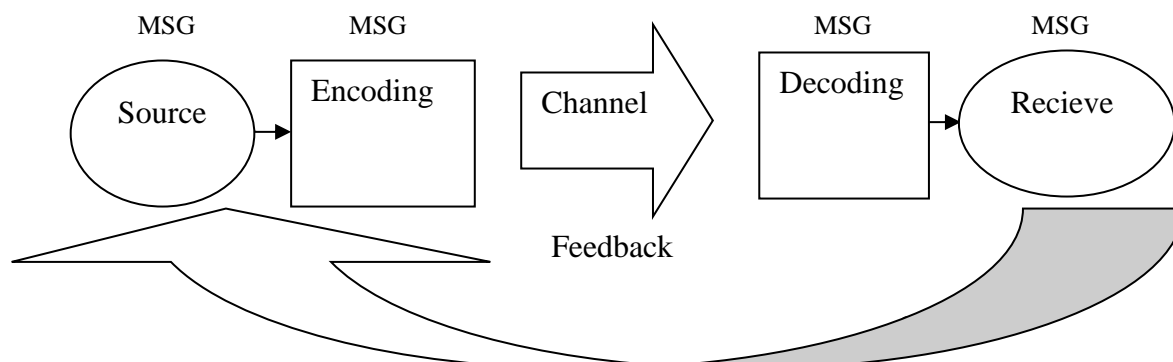


Figure 3.2. The Communication Process (Source: www.pinterest.com)

The success of the speaking process is based on the ability of the speaker to send the message that includes certain information in the form of codes to the ear of the listener, where it goes directly to the database to be decrypted, and therefore correctly understood by the listener, and s/he respond to it by providing a feedback.

From the above definitions, we can conclude that speaking is a language skill that enables people to express what is in their minds, what they feel, and what they want to send to any person for communicating.

2.2 Who is the Speaker?

According to Maynard (2007), “The speaker is a person, a locutionary agent, who engages in a linguistic activity with an intention to communicate” (p. 8). That is, the speaker is the focal point of the communication process. The success of the conversation process is linked to the latter's ability to convey messages and information correctly, as well as, their spontaneity in controlling the characteristics of speech, such as changing the pitch and volume of sound, selecting the appropriate vocabulary for the context of the conversation, and making the listener understands the intended meaning of the speech.

Moreover, Nazara (2011) claims that the speaker is someone who produces the language correctly and uses it for a particular purpose, and in an appropriate context. Its success in the communication process is evaluated by the listener's understanding of the message and his/her response to it. In addition, s/he is restricted by the terms of the speech, from which we can mention honesty, clarity, good selection of vocabulary and sound tone.

Furthermore, Ashour (2014) assumes that one of the basics of speaking is that speakers should know how to produce language proficiency. For instance, grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. They also need to understand the social language proficiency (i.e., to know how to deal with people), using context-specific situations to produce a piece of language.

2.3 Types of Classroom Speaking Performance

The taxonomy of oral production contains six basic types of speaking: imitative, intensive, responsive, transactional (dialogue), interpersonal (dialogue), and extensive (monologue) (Brown, 2003). They are arranged as shown below:

2.3.1 Imitative. When we observe the concept above, the word repetition automatically comes to mind. However, what do we mean by repetition as a type of speaking? Thus, imitative is the ability to simply parrot back (imitate) a word, or phrase, or perhaps a sentence where the learner simply tries to repeat what his/her teacher says in an understandable way and with a specific pronunciation style. The goal here is to reproduce and rotate what is being said. For example, repeating what the teacher says at the end of each lesson. It is also not necessary for the learner to understand what is included in the speech or to have a conversation with his/her colleagues, but only to repeat it (Sugesti and Hum, n.d).

2.3.2 Intensive. This type is defined as the production of short periods of verbal passages designed to demonstrate proficiency in a specific range of language relationships. Intensive speaking is about producing a limited amount of language in a highly controlled context, and it is designed specifically to practise some vocal or grammatical aspects of the language. Such as, reading texts aloud, and answering directly without taking time for a simple question (Derakhshan et al., 2016).

2.3.3 Responsive. Responsive is slightly more difficult than intensive, but the difference is hazy. It contains short and simple words in content with someone as interlocutors. Examples are, short talks, simple requests, comments, and greetings that involve limited interaction. As a result, the teacher recognizes the learners' ability to share with other people around them (Brown, 2003).

2.3.4 Interactive. The Cambridge Dictionary (2019) defines interactive as an occasion when two or more people or things communicate with, or react to each other. However, interaction is the process that contains action and reaction, and it is divided into: transactional dialogue that executed for the purpose of transferring or exchanging

specific information, and interpersonal dialogue, which is done to focus on social relations rather than conveying facts and sharing ideas (Brown, 2003).

2.3.5 Extensive. This type is defined as a natural kind of monologue where there is no overall interaction between the speaker and the listener, but it is limited in a certain scope; for instance, presentations, speeches, and storytelling. This requires preparation in advance. However, in this type, learners must expand their general vocabulary, and from there they can increase their knowledge stock by listening from simple sentences to complex sentences (Chastain, 1988).

2.4 Micro-skills and Macro-skills of Speaking

To be able to communicate well, the speaker has to master two skills in speaking which are: Micro and macro-skills. Brown (2003) suggests a list of 16 points of micro and macro-skills of speaking where the most important points are mentioned:

Micro-skills:

- Produce differences among English phonemes and allophonic variants.
- Produce chunks of the language of different lengths.
- Produce English stress patterns, words in stressed and unstressed positions, rhythmic structure, and intonational contours.
- Produce reduced Forms of words and phrases.

Macro-skills:

- Appropriately accomplish communicative functions according to situations, participants and goals.
- Use appropriate styles, registers, implicature, redundancies, pragmatic conventions, and conversation rules, floor keeping and –yielding, interrupting, and other sociolinguistic features in face-to-face conversations.

- Convey links and connections between events and communicate such relations as focal and peripheral ideas, events and feelings, new information and given information, generalization and exemplification (Brown, 2003, pp. 142-143).

2.5 Functions of Speaking

Richards (2008) addresses with the most important functions of speaking. He states that in workshops with teachers, and in designing his/her own materials, s/he uses an expanded version of three parts of a framework, which are as follows: Talk as interaction, Talk as transaction, and Talk as performance. Each of these speech activities will be presented in what is coming:

2.5.1 Talk as interaction. Interaction is usually referred to in the field of language performance as "conversation", which primarily serves a social and a reciprocal function. For the purpose of communication, speakers exchange greetings, participate in small conversations, chat, and recount recent experiences... etc. because they want to be friendly and create a comfortable area to interact with others. Most attention is focused on the movement of the speakers and how they wish to present themselves to one another rather than focusing on the message (Richards, 2008).

In this sense, the Cambridge University Press (2019) summarised the main features of talk as interaction in the following:

- Has a primarily social function;
- Reflects role relationships;
- Reflects speaker's identity;
- May be formal or casual;
- Uses conversational conventions;
- Reflects degrees of politeness.

2.5.2 Talk as transaction. Richards (2008) states that, "Talk as transaction refers to situations where the focus is on what is said or done. The message is the central focus here and making oneself understood clearly and accurately, rather than the participants and how they interact socially with each other" (p. 3). That is, this type of functions is most concerned with situations that are centered on what the speaker wants to say or to achieve. The message here is the focus and the goal is to make one understands clearly and accurately, rather than the participants and how they interact socially with each other.

2.5.3 Talk as performance. Talk as performance refers to public discourse (i.e., a conversation that conveys information to the public, such as public announcements and speeches). It is closer to the written language than the conversational language, and similar to monologues rather than a dialogue, and follows a familiar format (such as a welcome letter). In most cases, it is evaluated according to its effectiveness or impact on the listener, which is unlikely to happen with talk as an interaction, or transaction (Richards, 2008).

2.6 The Importance of Speaking

Alfi (2015) argues that, "Communication takes place, where there is speech. Without speech, we cannot communicate with one another. The importance of speaking skills. Hence, is enormous for the learners of any language. Without speech, language is reduced to a mere script" (p. 34-35). That is, speaking is a set of expressions and effective performance to convey beliefs, thoughts, and feelings to others. Without speaking, the language is hampered of all its meanings and becomes mere symbols for reading no more.

In another view, Andrews (2011) emphasises the strong relationship between communication and speaking by saying that speaking is the forefront of

communication. In other words, speaking is considered as the most conspicuous aspect of communication. Indeed, It is a means of achieving one's own self through interaction with others, and it provides the individual with an opportunity to highlight his/her skills and clarify his/her ideas and gain self-confidence. Additionally, Ashour (2014) Sums up the importance of speaking in the form of key points. These points are presented below:

- Speaking is the communication tool to transform ideas, express feelings, explain about discoveries, research results and discussions and responding to others.
- Mastering speaking skills makes the speaker a well-rounded communicator who is a proficient in the four language skills. Such skillfulness provides the speaker with several distinct advantages that let them enjoy sharing idea with others and managing to understand and respect their own selves.
- Speaking opportunities facilitate a stronger sense of membership, respect and self-worth, learning management, agency and personalizing learning (p. 39-40).

As a result, it can be deduced that speaking is an intellectual activity that reflects the level of human culture, intellectual depth, and intellectual maturity, as well as the ability to present, explain, and coordinate conversation. It is a social activity used to influence listeners by responding to the speaker. This concerns what speaking conveys from ideas and opinions in the form of language messages.

2.7 Barriers of Speaking English in EFL Classes

Regardless of the learner's level in EFL, but s/he still faces many difficulties and barriers that prevent him/her from reaching the native speaker's fluency. Hence, Ashour (2004) declares that several studies indicate that the development of oral language faces many challenges. Researchers first need to know the true nature of those problems and

the circumstances in which barriers are built. Therefore, the following reasons can be established:

2.7.1 Cultural differences. Each culture dictates its own rules to speak, and these rules have a profound impact on the concerns of the speakers, their ability, and their level of professionalism to learn. It is known that our social status, gender, and age affect the level of language we use when we speak. Therefore, barriers arise when learners shift their cultural rules from their native language to the target language. To overcome this barrier, language learners must be aware of all cultural differences or what we call 'cross-cultural awareness' (Ashour, 2004).

2.7.2 Personal differences. Ashour (2004) states that there are two types of learners; those who are active highly motivated to learn new tasks, and have the ability to apply these tasks in real life, and those who are passive, hard learners, and have an unwillingness to speak. However, he argues that, "To overcome or at least reduce the amount of unwillingness to speak, teachers diagnose their learners and categorize them into different levels and then treat them all the appropriate ways which helps them all either improve or develop self-confidence" (p. 45). That is, the teacher plays the role of a motivator for his/her learners, encouraging them to think about the learning process, and linking their learning to the advantages they will receive in the present and future. The classification of the teacher of his/her learners into categories would make it easier for him/her to deal with his/her learners in the best way.

2.7.3 Dealing with lack of confidence. Ashour (2004) claims that in order to solve the problem of the lack of self-confidence, teachers must help their learners by preparing as many life-like situations as possible for presenting and practising them within the classroom. Thus, these new and predictable situations build their self-confidence and correct their mistakes effectively. They should also provide students

with a supportive learning environment, and give them enough time to practise before presentation and praise them. In addition, learners should feel free to ask questions, or comment or add extra information, or even provide jokes whenever they feel that they behave in this way and feel safe from making mistakes.

2.7.4 Dealing with a big challenge. In order to help learners to overcome this barrier, teachers should do much practice within the same lesson, and avoid asking embarrassing questions like; ‘have you understood?..’, and make revision for the previous lesson in every new lesson, and diagnose the learners own strategies of learning (Ashour, 2004).

2.7.5 Limits of the speaking time. Luoma (2004) asserts that, “Because speaking is done in real-time, learners’ abilities to plan, process and produce the foreign language are taxed greatly. For that reason, the structure of speech is quite different from that of the written language, where users have time to plan, edit and correct what they produce”(p. 1). Thus, the speaker does not have time to plan what s/he will say, but speaks spontaneously, and without prior preparation, unlike writing, where there is plenty of time for deep planning. In this context, Ashour (2004) claims that, as an easy solution, teachers can observe the progress of their learners' learning as they correct their written work. Regardless of how they deal with speaking as an isolated skill, it can be a good practice to implement new vocabulary and grammar by writing. In fact, being a good speaker will also help the learner to be a good writer.

2.7.6 Preparation for speaking. The teacher can adapt a preparatory stage to his/her learners before speaking. Giving them enough time to practise the words and rules they will need in speaking activity. They also need to programme silent moments to allow learners to think about what they have heard, and prepare themselves for what they will soon say. Mainly, this helps learners not to be nervous, hesitant, or reworked.

If they have enough time, this nonsense will not appear between meaningful sentences, such as "mmm" and "aaaa." This gives them an opportunity to think about what words will produce (Luoma, 2004).

2.7.7 Interest of the topic. Ashour (2004) states that, “Learners find it hard to have a conversation, chat, discussion, debate or any other figure of speaking activity on a topic that they know little about” (p. 46). In other words, the learner's background and familiarity with the speaking topics enhance his/her confidence in starting or engaging in a conversation. Hence, the learner's interesting with the topic of the conversation makes him/her motivated to share his/her ideas, producing a speech using his/her own style.

2.8 The Speaking Formats and Activities

The format of speaking is the way in which ideas and thoughts are presented to perform a speech (Ashour, 2004). Notably, speakers need to select the appropriate format to convey their messages, we can find:

2.8.1 Conversation. According to Brennan (2010), “Conversation is a joint activity in which two or more participants use linguistic forms and nonverbal signals to communicate interactively” (p. 1). In other words, a conversation is a verbal exchange between two persons or more, on a subject, using a certain type of vocabulary and structures in different situations. Similarly, Merriam Webster Dictionary (2019) states that a conversation is an oral exchange of sentiments, observations, opinions, or ideas in order to interact with people, and it is usually referred to as the verbal exchange skills, which are required in language teaching and learning.

2.8.2 Discussion. “By discussion is meant by any exchange of ideas and opinions either a basis, with you (teacher) the mediator and to some extend as the participator or within the context of group with the student talking among them” (Byrne,

1986, as cited in Brennan, 2010. p. 67). Thus, discussion is a dialogue style, and a method of teaching and learning used to put the learners in the position of exchange views with the teacher and classmates on a particular topic or to discuss a specific phenomenon.

2.8.3 Role play. Jarvis and Odell and Troiano (2002) declare that, “A typical role-playing activity would have students taking on a role of a character, learning, and acting as that individual would do in the typical setting” (p. 2). That is, a role-play is an effective teaching method for learners, where they embody in other roles simulated to reality, and this gives them self-confidence to express themselves without fear. Consequently, by taking different personalities, they escape from their real personalities, in which they feel tense and afraid to speak.

2.8.4 Stimulation. Simulation is a process of imitating a real thing, circumstance, or practical process. It places the person in a realistic, but a manageable negotiation mode that ensures that the newly acquired thresholds are tested in a significant period. Likewise, learners bring items to the classroom to film a realistic environment, and this simulation is a recreational way for them (Ashour, 2014).

2.8.5 Information gap. The information gap strategy is a form of active learning that relies on hiding part of the information and showing it to the other group. Indeed, this strategy is one of the most effective strategies that provide a space for positive and useful communication between learners. Mainly, the idea of the information gap as a concept of organising a recent activity is that, someone has information that the other lacks. Thus, this means that learners must use English to share this information in order to accomplish the task (Yuniarti, 2009).

2.8.6 Storytelling. Geisler (1997 as cited in Ashour, 2004) states that storytelling, “Is relating a tale to one or more listeners through voice and gesture. It is

not the same as reading a story aloud or reciting a piece from memory or acting out a drama. The storyteller looks into the eyes of the audience, and together they compose the tale” (p. 2). That is, storytelling is one of the methods of great importance in addressing the learner's conscience and mind together, where it creates a variety of knowledge to the learners using different mental processes.

2.8.7 Interviews. Easwaramoorthy and Fataneh (2006) asserts that, “An interview is a conversation for gathering information. The interview involves an interviewer, who coordinates the process of the conversation and asks questions, and an interviewee, who responds to those questions” (p. 6). In other words, the interview is a conversation that involves verbal interaction between two or more persons in order to gather some answers and information, where the interviewer tries to provoke some information or expressions from the interviewee. However, the objective of the interview is to enable the researcher to observe the behavior of individuals and groups, identify their opinions and beliefs, and enrich his/her research with the necessary information that is derived from some samples studied.

2.9 Teaching Speaking

Speaking is an integral part of learning a foreign language, regardless of its complex nature, the role of the teachers in teaching speaking is to enhance their learners' speaking performance by providing them with the necessary ways to express themselves in every communicative circumstance (Al-Sibai, 2004).

Furthermore, Indriani (2013) claims that, teachers' methods and techniques are greatly influence the teaching of English, especially in speaking, where there are four important aspects to be considered by teachers when teaching oral communication, which are:

1. Teaching pronunciation. As a speaker of language, we need to understand how words, phrases and sentences are pronounced.
2. Teaching fluency and accuracy. Fluency and accuracy are the goal of Teaching Communicative Learning (CLT).
3. Affective factors. Teachers' affective factors such as to correct what the students say is not good. Students will never talk because they will feel reluctant to speak. Our job as a teacher is to provide the kind of warm, and encourage the students to speak.
4. The interaction effect. To make the students' interaction naturally is very difficult. Interaction necessarily involves trying to understand and make yourself understood (pp. 12-13).

In the same vein, Richards (1990) states that teaching speaking involves activities that occur before, during, and after the practice of real speaking. For example, before real speaking activity occurs, the speaker needs to understand the main content of the message, how it will be presented, and the type of the listener. During speaking, the speaker should be able to attend such things as presenting an understandable message, determining the appropriate tone of voice, selecting appropriate words, possible answers, and gestures. Finally, the speaker concludes his/her activity in speaking through: expressing opinions, comments, explanation, answer questions, evaluation, registration, and express an opinion on the task of speaking.

2.9.1 Pre-speaking teaching phase. Ashour (2014) states that this stage occurs before the real talk, where learners' background and interactions inside and outside the classroom affect their desire to speak. One of the most important pre-talk activities is thought and reflection. Hence, this stage includes various activities that expose learners to the actual content, and the way this content is expressed to listeners. At this stage,

teachers use a variety of tools and strategies; structures and vocabulary needed, warm up, customize content, imitate, and employ audio and video reviews.

Skehan (1998) mentions that this phase is beneficial in “Pushing learners to interpret tasks in more demanding ways and use language to express more complex meanings” (as cited in Ashour, 2014, p. 56). Thus, the preparation phase aims to provide the learners with chances to plan for speaking, to increase the opportunities for retracting, and to reorganise learners' linguistic knowledge.

2.9.2 On-going speaking teaching phase. During this phase, learners work collaboratively and engage in different types of interaction, in a group, in peers, or with other audiences, and most importantly to select the purpose of their speaking and the method that will be used in different situations. In this sense, Ashour (2004) summarises the different purposes of speaking, according to the views of many scholars:

- To express personal emotions and feelings;
- To tell a story and to entertain or amuse the audience;
- To inform, explain, persuade and demonstrate;
- To request or offer help;
- To inquire for information or question;
- To clarify our meanings and messages;
- To explore and experiment with a variety of ideas and formats;
- To converse and discuss (p. 62).

2.9.3 Post-speaking teaching phase. Tuttle and Tuttle (2013) states that, “Students reflection, whether it is oral or written, should include the teacher, who can assess their progress and help them set their goals for improvement” (p. 66). In other words, it is the last stage where the teachers assess their learners after overcoming

several learning barriers to evaluate how far the previous stages were effective for them, and to verify the success of their teaching methods.

2.10 Assessing Speaking

Ginther (2013) states that, "Speaking is seen by language testers as the most difficult of the four language skills to assess. Assessing speaking requires that we either observe a "live" oral performance or that we capture the performance by some means for evaluation at a later time" (p. 1). That is, it is an impossible task to assess the speaking skill to someone who is absent from sight. The skill requires the direct presence of the speaker to pick up his /her speech and assess it on this basis.

In particular, Pawlak and Waniek-Klimczak (2015) argues that, "The difficulty of assessing speaking stems from the nature of this skill as being a momentary procedure and time-consuming since examinees are assessed one after one. Moreover, the assessment of speaking is often subjective and affected by many aspects" (as cited in Bouab, 2016, p. 32). In other words, the complex nature of speaking assessment falls under the issue of time consumption. Thus, this skill takes a long time to come up with a valid and reliable assessment for each individual learner.

Furthermore, Luoma (2004) states that the assessment of speaking concerned with learners' ability to interpret, analyze, and convey meaning in interaction. This is not easy because of the complex nature of speaking. On the other hand, Hughes (2003) claims that, the purpose of the speaking assessment is not to formally evaluate learners, but to give feedback such as; informal observation, or indirect evaluation is more preferred.

2.10.1 Methods of assessing the speaking skill. Assessing learners' oral performance could be a difficult activity for EFL teachers. Therefore, Metruk (2018) declares that the ways of assessing speaking have been limited to a specific set of ways, most importantly holistic and analytic scoring.

2.10.1.1 The holistic scoring approach. The holistic scoring gives learners an overall score of assessment taking into account the overall performance. Metruk (2018) claims that although the holistic model for the overall score will set specific criteria, just as the analytical model does which take into account more factors when assigning the grade, the speakers do not assign a score to each criterion in the overall score. Alternatively, the overall classification of class-based work assessment can also be used. Thus, instead of counting errors, one speaker is judged entirely and s/he is often compared to a certain amount of performance.

2.10.1.2 The analytical scoring approach. Unlike the holistic scoring, the analytical scoring takes each learner individually to measure his/her oral performance. Mainly, Richards and Schmidt (2013) states that, "Analytic approach in testing speaking examines the various features of the test separately, scoring each feature independently" (as cited in Metruk, 2018, p. 180). That is to say, the analytical approach aims at distinguishing the features of performance and assessing each of them individually and independently based on their requirements. It provides the teacher with diagnostic information about the learners' ability to speak, and examine their strengths and weaknesses. Hence, Metruk (2018) states that, it is usual to combine scores on separate sub-sections to obtain a total score for speaking, often reporting participants, as well as providing a richer level of source information, used to guide future learning/teaching objectives.

2.10.2 Challenges and difficulties of speaking assessment. As we mentioned before that speaking is a complex skill, teachers may face many difficulties in planning an effective assessment and presenting an appropriate test. In this sense, Luoma (2004) argues that, “Assessing speaking is challenging, however, because there are so many factors that influence our impression of how well someone can speak a language, and because we expect test scores to be accurate, just and appropriate for our purpose” (p.4). Thus, the difficulty of speaking assessment is associated with the existence of several effects that may prevent the teacher to assess his/her learners effectively. These effects may vary depending on the nature of the teacher, and the context of education, as well.

Likewise, Isaacs (2016) asserts that the majority of EFL teachers complain that they are unable to make learners proficient in communication. This has to do with how they behave about their learners' inability to employ their earnings in various contexts. Moreover, a widespread phenomenon inside classes is that teachers deal only with few learners, and fail in raising the others to speak. In addition, they insist on teaching subjects that alienate the learners with content that lacks the cultural dimension of the learner, and rely on traditional activities, as they adopt methods of assessment that are not consistent with the philosophy and objectives of the curriculum.

Moreover, Brown (2003) argues that there are two prominent challenges in assessing speaking. Firstly, the mutual work of listening and speaking skills can make it difficult to deal with speaking apart. Secondly, the speaker's style in preventing a particular form of conveyance may make it difficult for test makers to design a technical solid synthesis.

Conclusion

Through this chapter, we dealt with the definition of speaking, its types, and functions. We also discussed the different stages of teaching speaking. Likewise, we highlight the issue of assessing speaking, and its prominent methods. Furthermore, we addressed the most important barriers that prevent EFL learners from speaking fluently. Finally, we dealt with different challenges facing the teacher in assessing speaking.

The following chapter will be allocated for the research methodology for this study. In addition, it will contain an interpretation of the data that were collected using various research tools. There will be, then, a discussion and an analysis of the main findings.

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Introduction

After reviewing the various literature in previous chapters on the assessment and the speaking skills, this chapter comes to discuss the practical side of the study. However, this chapter contains several parts and each part explains a specific dimension of the fieldwork, where the first part highlights the review of the literature on the research methodology. Furthermore, the second part provides the methodology that will be used in the current study: The approach, the paradigm, the adopted design, data collection methods and the analysis of data. Finally, the results obtained will be discussed and synthesised.

3.1 Research Methodology: Theoretical Background

The research methodology is an integral part of the scientific research; it accompanies the researcher from the beginning of his/her research until the end. Hence, it is defined as, “A systematic way to solve a problem. It is a science of studying how research is to be carried out. Essentially, the procedures by which researchers go about their work of describing, explaining and predicting phenomena” (Rajasekar et al., 2013, p. 5). Thus, research methodology is one of the tools through which accurate and consistent information can be obtained in a particular problem. The aim behind this is to solve this problem by addressing all the factors surrounding it, using different scientific methods.

However, there are several conceptual frameworks for the research methodology. The researcher will be confused about which one is suited for his/her research. Therefore, we consider the conceptual framework suggested by Hoadjli (2016) as an interesting one to be followed. Hence, the major components of this framework are as follows:

1. Research paradigms in educational research.
2. Research approaches.
3. Research designs/strategies.
4. Data collection methods.
5. Data analysis procedures.
6. Sampling techniques.

3.1.1 Research paradigms in educational research. According to Willis (2007), “A paradigm is thus a comprehensive belief system, world view, or framework that guides research and practice in a field” (as cited in Taylor & Medina, 2013, p. 2). That is, a paradigm is a belief system. In its widest sense, it refers to a framework that contains all acceptable views on a subject. It is a structure of the direction that scientific research should take, and how it is to be carried out. In the same vein, Shah and Al-Bargi (2013) claim that a paradigm can be used in three ways in the humanities: Firstly, it can be used to institutionalise intellectual activity. Secondly, to the wide groupings of some approaches and perspectives to study any subject. Thirdly, to clarify the broad research methods.

Several paradigms were provided by many researchers. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) suggest that all these paradigms can be grouped together into four major taxonomies, namely: post-positivism/positivist, constructivism/interpretivist, transformative/ critical, and pragmatism.

3.1.1.1 Post-positivism paradigm. This approach tries to apply theory in the context of research to assess its applicability. In other words, to compare the ideal model often in theory to reality, which means that research must focus on what can be observed and measured, both in terms of absolute value and through the perceptions of individuals or groups of individuals involved. It also believes in the principle of

determinism, where this relationship with the evidence base tends to link the situation with quantitative research, where the measurement of variables and the formation of the concept have a central role, and the focus of research is focused on the nature of causality (Brundrett & Rhodes, 2013).

3.1.1.2 Constructivism/interpretivist paradigm. Guba and Lincoln (1989) state that, “The central endeavor of the Interpretivist paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience” (as cited in Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017, p. 33). Thus, this approach focuses on individuals’ knowledge and interpretation of the world around them, where they believe in the idea that reality is socially constructed. Hence, they base on the development of subjective meanings derived from their experiences, and they look at the specific context in depth by using case studies and other different tools, where the results obtained cannot be generalised.

3.1.1.3 Transformative/critical paradigm. The critical paradigm focuses on social justice issues and seeks to address political, social, and economic issues that lead to social oppression, conflict, struggle, and power structures at any levels. Its goal is to change policy to counter social oppression and to improve existing social justice. It is sometimes symbolised by the paradigm shift where the theory of knowledge (in which the researcher interacts with participants) is assumed (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

3.1.1.4 Pragmatic paradigm. There is a need for research methods that are more appropriate to study phenomena at hand. On the basis of this, thinkers sought ways of research that could be more practical and pluralistic, which would allow a mix of methods that simultaneously could shed light on the actual behaviour of participants, the beliefs behind those behaviours, and potential consequences. Leading to the emergence of a model that calls for the use of mixed-methods as a pragmatic means of understanding human behaviour (i.e., a pragmatic model). Therefore, this model calls

for the theory of associative knowledge, a science of non-unique reality (there is no one reality and all individuals have different interpretations of reality), calls for the methodology of mixed methods, that is a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

3.1.2 Research approaches. As for the research approaches, there exists a myriad of definitions. One of which is “A research approach is a plan of action that gives direction to conduct research systematically and efficiently” (Mohajan, 2017, p. 2). Hence, the latter has three main categories, namely: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods. Grover (2015) states that based on different world views of the research methodology, these methods are still intertwined to be called an independent approach. Thus, we can devise only three methods with reference to the research paradigms, which are:

- Quantitative (Positivism and Post positivism): approach of measurements and numbers;
- Qualitative (Constructivism & Transformative): approach of words and images;
- Mixed Methods (Pragmatism): approach of measurements, numbers, words and images (p. 55).

3.1.2.1 The qualitative approach. Ospina (2004) defines the qualitative approach as a form of systematic empirical research in meaning. Thus, the intention from systematic means; planned, arranged and public, following the rules and conditions agreed upon by members of the qualitative research community, and by empirical it means that this type of inquiry is based on the world of experience. Likewise, Crossman (2019) argues that, “Qualitative research is a type of social science research that collects and works with non-numerical data and that seeks to interpret

meaning from these data that help us understand social life through the study of targeted populations or places” (n.p).

In simple words, the qualitative approach is defined as a type of scientific research that based on qualitative data, where the researcher provides comprehensive explanations of the phenomena or a problem of scientific research. However, there is no room for statistical or numerical results. The results are in explanatory sentences or spoken language. Furthermore, a qualitative research depends on the study of human behavior and attitudes, where the information and data are collected through the adoption of a variety of means (interviews and observations...etc).

3.1.2.2 The quantitative approach. According to Muijs (2004), "A quantitative research is explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analyzed using mathematically based methods (in particular statistics)" (p. 1). That is, the quantitative research approach is numerical and the results are in the form of "data". These data are analysed using statistical analysis. Researchers often conduct data analysis using various analytical tools. That is why the quantitative research approach is linked closely to statistics.

On the other hand, Allwood (2011) argues that, “The distinction between qualitative and quantitative research has had a remarkable breakthrough in the social sciences, including psychology. The contrast with quantitative research usually comes as part and parcel of the notion of qualitative research” (p. 123). In other words, there is a difference between the two approaches. The qualitative approach aims to understand the phenomenon within its framework, and do not focus on generalising the results, unlike the quantitative research that measures the phenomenon and analyses its data to extract and generalise the results. However, the major differences between

qualitative and quantitative approach can be extracted in Table 3.1. It is displayed below:

Table 3.1

The Difference Between Qualitative And Quantitative Research. Retrieved From (<https://keydifferences.com/>).

BASIS FOR COMPARISON	QUALITATIVE RESEARCH	QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH
Meaning	Qualitative research is a method of inquiry that develops understanding on human and social sciences, to find the way people think and feel.	Quantitative research is a research method that is used to generate numerical data and hard facts, by employing statistical, logical and mathematical technique.
Nature	Holistic	Particularistic
Research Type	Exploratory	Conclusive
Sampling	Purposive	Random
Data	Verbal	Measurable
Objective	To explore and discover ideas used in the ongoing processes.	To examine cause and effect relationship between variables
Methods	Non-structured techniques like In-depth interviews, group discussions etc.	Structured techniques such as surveys, questionnaires and observations.
Hypothesis	Generated	Tested
Results	Develops initial understanding	Recommends final course of action

3.1.2.3 The mixed-methods approach. Glogowska (2011) reports that, “Mixing refers to the process whereby the qualitative and quantitative elements are interlinked to produce a fuller account of the research problem” (as cited in Halcomb, 2015, p. 3).

Thus, the mixed-methods approach is through which the researcher collects and analyses data, combines and mixes results from quantitative and qualitative methods and tools in the same study or research. Similarly, Almalki (2016) states that in this approach, the researcher combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research methods together in the form of a mixture. For example, the use of qualitative and quantitative views, data collection, analysis, and inference techniques for purely research purposes.

However, Hoadjli (2016) presents the main characteristics of a mixed-methods approach, as the following:

1. Expanding the understanding of a complex issue: A Mixed-methods approach would broaden the scope of the investigation and enrich the researchers' ability to draw conclusions about the problem under study;
2. Corroborating findings through 'triangulation': The use of different data sources, investigators, theories, or research methods generates multiple perspectives on a phenomenon. Such an effective strategy ensures research validity; and
3. Reaching multiple audiences: Because of the combination of the methods in mixed-methods research, the results can be more palatable for certain audiences than outcomes of a mono-method study (p. 35).

3.1.3 Research designs/strategies. "Research design can be considered as the structure of research. It is the "Glue" that holds all of the elements in a research project together. In short, it is a plan of the proposed research work" (Akhtar, n.d, p. 68). That is, a research design is considered as the blueprint through which the research is conducted. It is a plan to collect, measure, and analyse data. However, the

design requires an outline of what the researcher will do from writing the hypothesis in its practical form to the final analysis of data.

To corroborate this assumption, Akhtar (n.d) reports that the research design should be able to provide answers to the following questions:

1. What is the study about and, what type of data is required?
2. What is the purpose of study?
3. What are the sources of needed data?
4. What should be the place or area of the study?
5. What time, approximately, is required for the study?
6. What should be the amount of materials or number of cases for the study?
7. What type of sampling should be used?
8. What method of data collection would be appropriate?
9. How will data be analysed?
10. What should be the approximate expenditure?
11. What should be the specific nature of the study?

On the other hand, Creswell (2009) presents three types of research design, namely: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods designs.

3.1.3.1 Qualitative design. Astalin (2013) states that it can be argued that the qualitative research design is likely to be the most flexible among the various descriptive techniques, and it includes a variety of acceptable methods and structures. Four major types of qualitative research design are most commonly used, namely: phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, case study. Furthermore, Creswell (2009) adds narrative research as the fifth qualitative research design. A short description of these qualitative designs is present in what is coming:

Phenomenology. According to Australian (2013), “Literally, we know that phenomenology means the study of phenomena. Phenomena may be events, situations, experiences or concepts. Phenomenology is a way of describing something that exists as an integral part of the world in which we are living” (p. 119). Thus, phenomenology is a process of inquiry where the researcher dedicates his/her own experiences in order to acquaint with the participants in the study.

Ethnography. Ethnography is defined as a study of social interactions, behaviours, and perceptions that occur within groups, teams, organisations, and societies. It aims to provide rich and comprehensive insights into the people's views and actions, as well as the nature (i.e., sights, sounds) of the site they inhabit, through the use of a set of detailed observations and interviews (Reeves et al., 2008, p. 512).

Grounded Theory. Khan (2014) reports that, “Grounded means that the theory will be generated on the basis of data; the theory will therefore be grounded in data. ‘Theory’ means that the objective of collecting and analyzing the research data is to generate theory. The essential in grounded theory is that the theory will be developed inductively from data” (p. 227). Thus, it is an investigation strategy in which the researcher draws up a general summary of a process, action or interaction leans on the opinions of the participants. However, this strategy enables us to find logical solutions when facing difficulties in the middle of the study and making any changes during the research (Neuman, 2014).

Case Study. According to Yin (1994), “A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident... [and] relies on multiple sources of evidence” (as cited in Rhee, 2004, p. 72). In simple words, the case study involves collecting multiple and comprehensive data and information about

an event, activity, process, and individual, a single case or a limited number of cases in order to go deeper with the phenomenon studied and similar phenomena. The researcher collects data on the current state of the situation studied using a set of procedures restricted to a specific period.

Narrative. The narrative design is considered to what can be described as "real world measures" when investigating "real life problems." The researcher studies the lives of individuals and asks one or more individuals to provide stories about their lives. Consequently, the narratives combine views from the life of the participant with those of the researcher's life in a collaborative narrative. However, this approach usually focuses on the lives of individuals as told through their own stories (Creswell, 2009).

3.1.3.2 Quantitative design. Quantitative strategies have been involved in complex experiments with many variables and treatments. It also contains structural equation models that include causal paths and the collective strength of multiple variables. Therefore, the two most important strategies in quantitative research design are: surveys and experiments (Creswell, 2009).

Surveys. The survey is a systematic way of collecting information from (a sample) entities in order to construct a quantitative description of the characteristics of the whole populations of which the entities are members, where surveys are conducted with the aim of gathering information that reflects the attitudes, behaviors, opinions, and beliefs of the population that are not directly observed. Subsequently, the level of success of survey research depends on the accuracy of the answers that people provide (Avedian, 2014).

Experiments. Bhat (2019) defines experiments as a quantitative approach designed to detect the effects of assumed causes. The main feature of this approach is that there is one thing that is diverse to see what happens to something else, or to

discover the effects of the supposed causes. This is something that people do all the time. Furthermore, It tries to judge all the variables and the basic factors, except for one variable where the researcher adapts or changes it in order to determine and measure its effect in the process, and that the use of the experiment in proving the hypotheses by experimenting every scientific research changes and develops with the development of related studies. Likewise, Key (1997) claims that an experimental design is the procedure chart that authorises the researcher to test his/her hypothesis by reaching correct conclusions about the relationships between independent and dependent variables.

3.1.3.3 A Mixed-methods design. Sieber (1973) states that, “This prompted others to mix methods, and soon approaches associated with field methods, such as observations and interviews (qualitative data), were combined with traditional surveys (quantitative data)” (as cited in Creswell, 2009, n.p). Thus, the mixed-methods design adopts both strategies used in quantitative and qualitative designs.

3.1.4 Data collection methods. According to Kabir (2019), “Data collection is the process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest, in an established systematic fashion that enables one to answer stated research questions, test hypotheses, and evaluate outcomes” (p. 202). Thus, the significance of data collection is to ensure that the data required for analysis are collected, so that databased decisions can be made for research. Furthermore, a data collection methods is a process for collecting, measuring and analysing accurate insights into research using various standard validation techniques, where the researcher evaluates his/her hypothesis based on the data collected. Hence, a data collection method is the most fundamental and important step of research, regardless of the area of research (Bhat, 2019).

3.1.4.1 Qualitative data collection methods. Qualitative data collection methods are designed in a particular way, so that they can be used to collect various study data, and help to detect the behaviour and perception of the target audience by reference to a specific subject. However, there are different types of qualitative data collection methods such as observation, interviews, questionnaires and focus group.

Observation. It is a systematic description of events, behaviours and phenomena within the social environment chosen for the study, where the researcher describes the current positions using the five senses. However, it does not just mean observing the things, but trying to deepen the observation and understanding their nature (Kawulish, 2005).

Interviews. “An interview is a conversation for gathering information. A research interview involves an interviewer, who coordinates the process of the conversation and asks questions, and an interviewee, who responds to those questions” (Easwaramoorthy et al., 2006, p. 6). That is, the interview is a dialogue between the researcher on the one hand, and someone or other persons, on the other hand. It is carried out for the purpose of gathering information for research by asking a number of questions from the researcher, which requires the answer of the people involved in the interview using the various recording tools.

Questionnaire. Babbie (1990) defines a questionnaire as, “A document containing questions and other types of items designed to solicit information appropriate to analysis” (as cited in Acharya, 2010, p. 2). In simple words, the questionnaire in the research is about a written form, in which the researcher formulates questions related to the nature of his/her study in order to discover and derive data from a sample of individuals participating in the study.

Focus Group. The focus group tool is frequently used as a qualitative approach in order to gain an in-depth understanding of social issues, where it aims to obtain information from a group of individuals with specific characteristics that are deliberately concerned with a given subject rather than a statistically representative sample from a larger population group (Nyumba et al., 2018).

3.1.4.2 Quantitative data collection methods. The results obtained from quantitative research studies are known to be logical, statistical, and neutral. Yet, the researcher can resort to using two data collection methods in this approach, which are tests and structured questionnaire.

Tests. Tests are an effective means of producing several precise solutions, or several explanations, to collect numerical data. It helps individuals in the study sample develop problem solving skills, creative thinking and cross-thinking (Cohen et al., 2007).

Structured questionnaires. A structured questionnaire is a tool for data collection in quantitative research. It represents a document consisting of a set of standardised questions with a fixed scheme, which defines the formulation and order of questions accurately, used to collect information from the respondents. So far, it is very common in data collection on quality of life research at present. A typical example of a structured questionnaire is the census questionnaire, which collects demographic information from individuals (Cheung, 2014).

3.1.4.3 Mixed-methods data collection methods. As we discussed earlier, the Mixed-methods approach is the result of mixing the quantitative approach with the qualitative. Therefore, the tools used in both approaches are devoted to use in this approach, which are interviews, questionnaires, focus group, and tests.

3.1.5 Data Analysis Procedures

“Data analysis can refer to a variety of specific procedures and methods [...] By this, we mean that data analysis involves goals; relationships; decision making; and ideas, in addition to working with the actual data itself” (MSHS, 2006, p. 13). Broadly speaking, data analysis is an evaluation process of data using analytical and logical thinking, on one hand, and using software, on the other hand. It is used in order to study each component of research data to form types of conclusions.

3.1.5.1 Data analysis procedures in qualitative research. The data are extracted in qualitative research from questionnaires that can be analysed using graphs and curves in the Word programme. The data can also be recorded from interviews with participants, in the form of a video or audiotape, and can be copied in the form of written texts, and encoded using software programmes such as either NVIVO or manually encoded (MSHS, 2006).

3.1.5.2 Data analysis procedures in quantitative research. After the process of collecting quantitative information from research methods, such as surveys and experimental procedures, it is important when recording data to include detailed information such as dates, place of collection, measurement methods, and units of measurement. It is preferable to record these data on printed papers, stored in the form of a spreadsheet, such as Excel tables, and rely on specialized statistical programmes such as SPSS on data analysis (MSHS, 2006).

3.1.5.3 A mixed-methods data analysis procedures. According to Onwuegbuzie and Combs (2011), “A mixed analysis involves using quantitative and quantitative data analysis techniques within the same study” (p. 1). Thus, data analysis in the Mixed-methods is based mainly on the use of the methods used for analysing data in quantitative and qualitative approaches.

3.1.6 Sampling techniques. Sampling in research is defined as, “The process through which a sample is extracted from a population is called as sampling” (Alvi, 2016, p. 11). Hence, the aim of this technique is to obtain community-related information by selecting a number of people to study representing the community. However, the sampling techniques are classified into two main types: probability sampling methods and non-probability sampling methods.

In probability sampling methods, each sample has an equal probability of being selected. In other words, the probability sample is a sample for which each element has the probability of a known non-zero selection. Yet, this sampling method gives the possibility that our sample will be representative of a community (Showkat & Huma, 2017). In some details, some probability sampling methods presented in what follows:

- Simple random sampling;
- Stratified random sampling;
- Systematic random sampling;
- Cluster sampling; and
- Multi-stage systematic sampling (Showkat & Huma, 2017, p. 2).

Moreover, the non-probability sampling technique uses non-random methods to extract the sample, in contrast to the probability sampling technique. They are often based on governance, rather than random distribution, where participants are selected because they are easily accessible. For instance, your colleagues and friends have a better chance of being part of the sample, this technique is appropriate in some cases (Showkat & Huma, 2017).

In what is coming, the most prominent methods used in this type of sampling:

- Convenience sampling.
- Purposive sampling.

- Quota sampling.
- Snowball sampling (Showkat & Huma, 2017, p. 6).

3.2 Research Methodology for this Study: Choices and Rationale

The purpose of this part is to explore the methodology used in this study. This concern, research paradigm, research approach, data collection methods, and the data analysis procedures.

3.2.1 Research paradigm. The present study seeks to examine and understand the effect of formative assessment on the students' speaking performance, as well as to know the students' opinions about including this type of assessment in their oral expression classes. Besides, it targets to explore the most important ways teachers use to assess their students' speaking, and the difficulties they can encounter when applying formative assessment to their students. Thus, the study relies heavily on the views of students and teachers about the situation being studied, and look for different views instead of narrowing the meaning in a few ideas. Consequently, we believe that the constructivist paradigm is the most appropriate for this study since it conforms to the constructivists' standards.

3.2.2 Research approach. The research methodology behind the current study was chosen because it is thought that it could serve our research nature and provides the appropriate data collection methods that answer the research questions. Therefore, based on the main objective of this study, which is to evaluate the assessment practices used by oral expression teachers to assess their students' speaking skill, as well as, to examine the effects of formative assessment on the students' speaking performance, we believe that the qualitative approach is appropriate for such kind of issues. Besides, it is assumed that the selected approach is appropriate to describe the status of assessment within oral expression sessions.

3.2.3 Research design. In relevance to the qualitative research approach, a case study design is considered to be the most suitable since a case study is defined as, “A detailed examination of an event (or series of related events) which the analyst believes exhibits (or exhibit) the operation of some identified general theoretical principles” (Mitchell, 1983, as cited in Rhee, 2004, p. 72). Hence, a case study is a survey strategy that allows us to examine the group of participants in the work, and in a specific context, consequently, we also believe that it will be appropriate to produce results that will answer the research questions.

3.2.4 Data collection methods. To collect data, we believe that the use of two data collection methods: An open-ended questionnaire for the students and an unstructured interview with oral expression teachers can achieve the desired purpose. The choice of these tools goes in parallel with the nature of this study, which is purely qualitative.

3.2.4.1 Student's questionnaire.

3.2.4.1.1 Structure and aim. The purpose of the student's questionnaire is to explore second year students at Biskra university perceptions of the speaking skill as a means of communication, as well as, their views by including formative assessment as a way to improve their speaking skill, on one hand, and as an effective assessment method, on the other hand. Furthermore, this questionnaire was designed to identify the most important difficulties that prevent students from speaking fluently, as well as, whether they are receiving an assessment that reflects the real level of their ability to speak or not. More importantly, this data collection method was designed to look for the students' perceptions of whether a formative assessment can improve their speaking skill or not.

Therefore, the questionnaire consisted of 20 questions, 17 were close-ended questions, and three open-ended questions. Regarding to the nature of the questions, (yes / no) questions, choosing the most appropriate answers from a series of choices, and open questions asking students to explain their choices, were implemented. Yet, 17 copies were given hand to hand with a sample of second year students in a regular session, while 13 were sent electronically to them due to the circumstances experienced by the university in the recent period, where we faced the problem of non-availability of all the students.

In addition, the questions were classified into three sections. Each section was allocated for a specific data: A section for general information about the student, another section for the speaking skill, and a last section for formative assessment.

Section One: the student's interface. The purpose of this section was to obtain personal information on the students. In addition, we also tried to find out why students chose to study English language, as well as explore their current level of English. This section was intended to capture a valuable background about the students.

Section Two: the speaking skill. This section sought to understand students' perceptions about the speaking skill and its importance. In addition, it tackled the main difficulties that hinder them to speak better. In general, this section included some basic concepts of the speaking skill, and students' speaking performance.

Section Three: formative assessment. This section tried to investigate the assessment of speaking, and to verify the students' perceptions of formative assessment and its effectiveness in assessing and improving their speaking skill. Likewise, it attempted to check if the students are inclined to this type of assessment, or not.

3.2.4.1.2 The questionnaire: piloting and validation. In theory, this stage is important to increase the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. Hence, piloting is

considered as a strategy used to test the questionnaire by checking the comprehensiveness of the questions and eliminating any ambiguities or difficulties in drafting, where the researcher resorts to using a smaller sample compared to the size of the original sample. However, we administered the questionnaire to six students within our population (second year students at Biskra University) whom we chose randomly in order to explore whether the questions are clear and accessible to them. Yet, the time taken to answer all the questions was about 10 to 15 minutes.

Furthermore, our supervisor made some important remarks about the questionnaire that related to the content and structure of the questions. Therefore, we took the necessary modifications to avoid the shortcomings, where some questions were reworded; and some suggestions were made for age-specific question in which age groups were added to the selection. Some questions were deleted because of the repetition of their contents. Overall, this phase was done to avoid that the students get confused, and to give a reliable and authoritative character to the questionnaire.

3.2.4.2 Teacher's Interview.

3.2.4.2.1 Structure and aim. The interview is considered as a convenient tool to collect data by direct contact with the sample, which provides face-to-face contact. The purpose of using the interview was to obtain data related to the assessment methods used by oral expression teachers to assess their students' speaking performance. It also aimed to verify the implementation of formative assessment in their sessions, and the most important difficulties facing them when applying the latter.

In our case, the interview included seven questions. The first question was intended to know the teachers' experience in teaching speaking skill. The second and third questions were devoted to teaching the speaking skill, and its difficulties, in

general. As for the rest of the questions, they were about formative assessment, its effectiveness, and its impact on the speaking skill.

3.2.4.2.2 The interview: piloting and validation. The aim of piloting the interview was to verify its validity and relevance to the nature of the study. However, the content and structure of the questions were checked, first, by our supervisor as there were no observations. Therefore, there have been no changes in the nature or form of the interview questions.

3.2.5 Data collection procedures.

3.2.5.1 Data collection procedures for the questionnaire. After the piloting and validation of the final version of the questionnaire, it was administered to second year students. We selected a sample of 30 students from the whole population. Subsequently, we did not allocate a specific group due to the suspension of studies at that time. Therefore, we found only a small number of students (17). As for the rest, we put the questionnaire online in a special group. Specifically, the sample consisted of six males and 24 females. However, the underlying goal behind selecting the second year as a sample was that they are motivated to enhance their speaking skills more than the first year who are new in the field.

Over and above, the students were provided with the necessary instructions to help them answer the questionnaire. As we gave, a simplified definition of what formative assessment is at the beginning of the formative assessment section. Correspondingly, the questionnaire was given to the students on Wednesday, April 24 2019. It took about 15 minutes to be answered for each student. As for the online questionnaire, it took about two days to be responded.

3.2.5.2 Data collection procedures for the interview. For the interview, eight of oral expression were selected. The purpose of the interview was explained and

clarified at the beginning. In terms of structure, we previously designed seven questions that were graded according to its concepts. Hence, the first question sought to explore the extent of the teachers' experience in teaching speaking. Then, the remaining questions were given in order. Subsequently, we recorded the interviews using a phone recorder. As for the duration of the interview, it differed according to each teacher. Some of them were on haste since they had classes to teach, the interview took only 10 minutes. For five other teachers, it took longer to answer, and the questions were responded in detail. Finally, we transcribed voice interviews in the form of written texts.

3.2.6 Data Analysis Procedures.

3.2.6.1 Data analysis procedures for the questionnaire. Data analysis procedures for the questionnaire were based on the descriptive approach. It consisted description of what data appears. As for the closed-ended questions in the questionnaire, we calculated the percentages manually, as we relied on Microsoft® Word in creating the tables and the graphs. In addition, we used Google Drive offer to extract the electronic answers.

3.2.6.2 Data analysis procedures for the interview. The analysis procedures of the data obtained from the interview were based on the Content-based Approach. After recording audio interviews, we converted them into textual outputs on papers, and then we extracted the answers in order by the date of each interview. Then, we highlighted the necessary parts. Finally, we presented the results obtained in a descriptive manner.

3.2.7 Population/sampling technique. In this study, the targeted population was EFL students at Biskra University. For our sample, the researcher tended to choose a group of students from the second year level. Nevertheless, since there was no study in the university for a long time, we chose a convenient group (17 were in the university

+ 13 were online). In terms of the sampling technique, a convenience sampling technique was considered as the adequate one.

3.3 Study Description and Rationale

The rationale for this study is based on the assumption that formative assessment has an influence on the students' speaking performance and on the oral expression teachers' assessment practices. In view of the fact that speaking is the most prominent means of communication, it is, therefore, increasingly important to study the factors that promote improvement in the students' speaking performance. We may find that many studies have been conducted on the methods that enhance speaking skill. However, what has not been the case of many studies is how the speaking skill is assessed?

3.3.1 *The educational phenomenon description.* The phenomenon studied was assessing speaking as a crucial issue for many oral expression teachers, where the main theme was to check the influence of formative assessment on the students' speaking performance and on the teachers' assessment practices. However, formative assessment is an ongoing assessment of the student's achievement, which is considered as a companion to the teacher to assess his/her students and a guide for the students to control the deficiencies in their learning. In this study, we conducted two main areas: First, to explore the methods applied by teachers to assess speaking. Second, to ascertain the extent to which formative assessment has an influence on the students' speaking proficiency and on the teachers' assessment practices.

3.3.2 *The procedures.* The procedures followed for the completion of this study were based on the steps of the descriptive approach. We identified the problem, and formulated the hypotheses. Then, we verified these hypotheses using two data collection methods: the questionnaire and the interview with a sample of 30 students

and eight teachers of oral expression. In analysing these data, we relied on the descriptive method to derive the results.

3.4 Results of the Study

3.4.1 Results of the student’s questionnaire

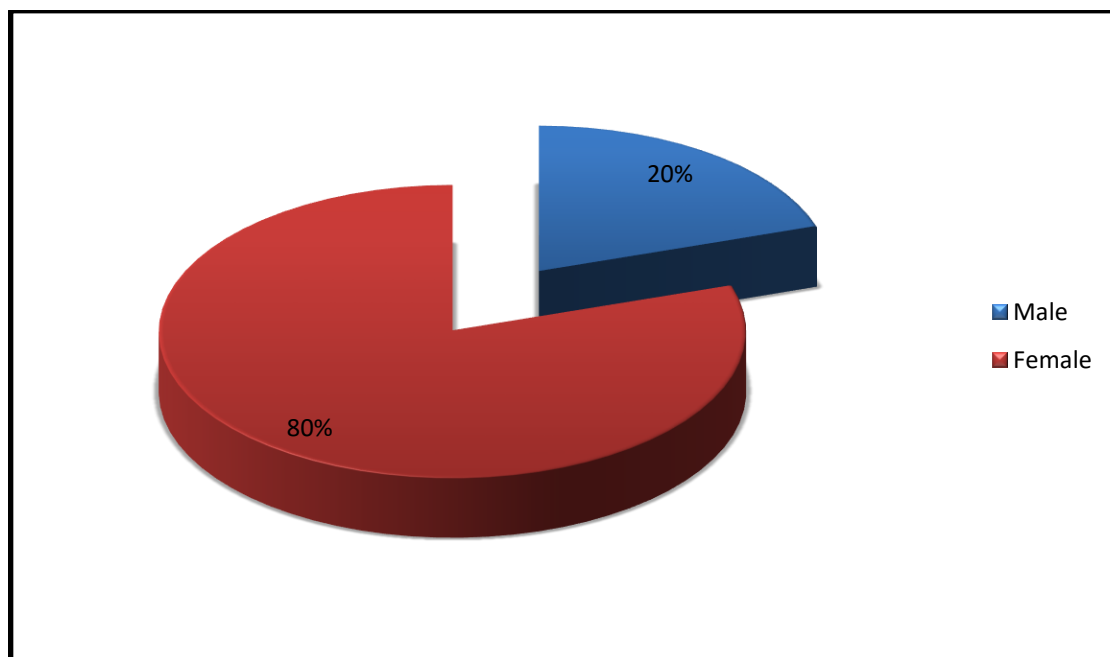
Section One: The Student’s Interface.

Q1: Please, select your target answer

Table 3.2

Student’s Gender

Option	Number of the students	Percentage
Male	06	20%
Female	24	80%
Total	29	100%



Graph 3.1. Student’s gender.

This question showed the gender of the respondents with reference to the number of males, and females and the percentage of them. Looking at the table above, we find

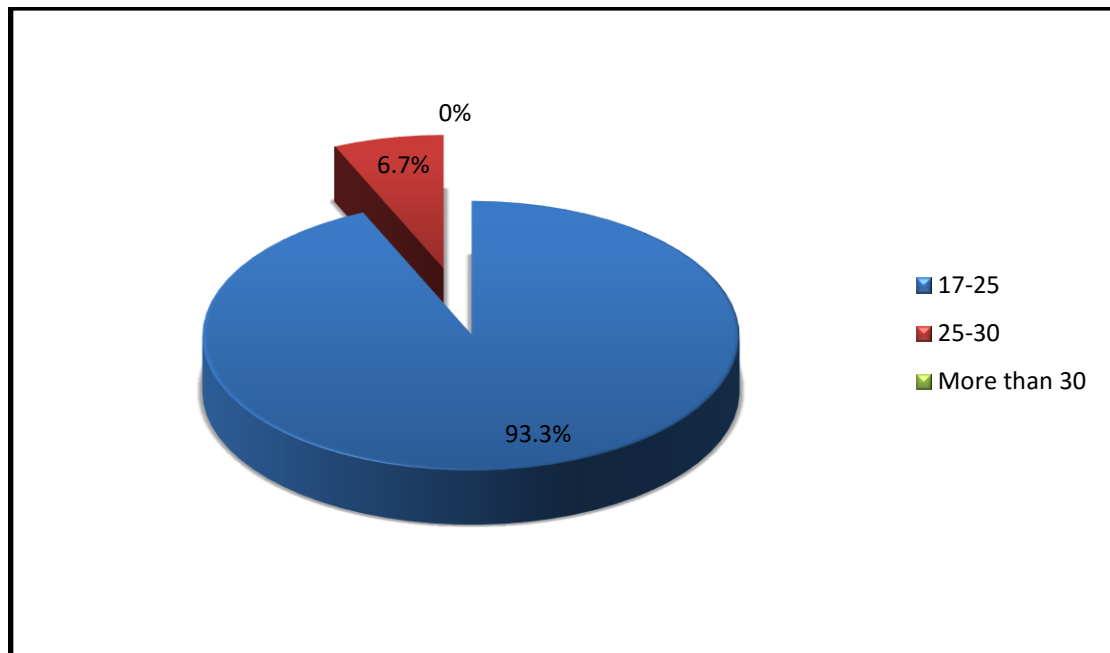
that the number of females exceeds the number of males where 80% represent them. It is clear that this result is different to the males whose percentage reached only 20% of the total respondents.

Q2: Please, select your age

Table 3.3

Student's Age

Option	Number of the students	Percentage
17-25	28	93.3%
25-30	02	6.7%
More than 30	00	00%
Total	30	100%



Graph 3.2. Student's age.

The significance of this question is to extract the average age of the respondents in order to know whether the respondents share the same age, and therefore to determine the extent of their learning experience. By observing the results obtained, the majority

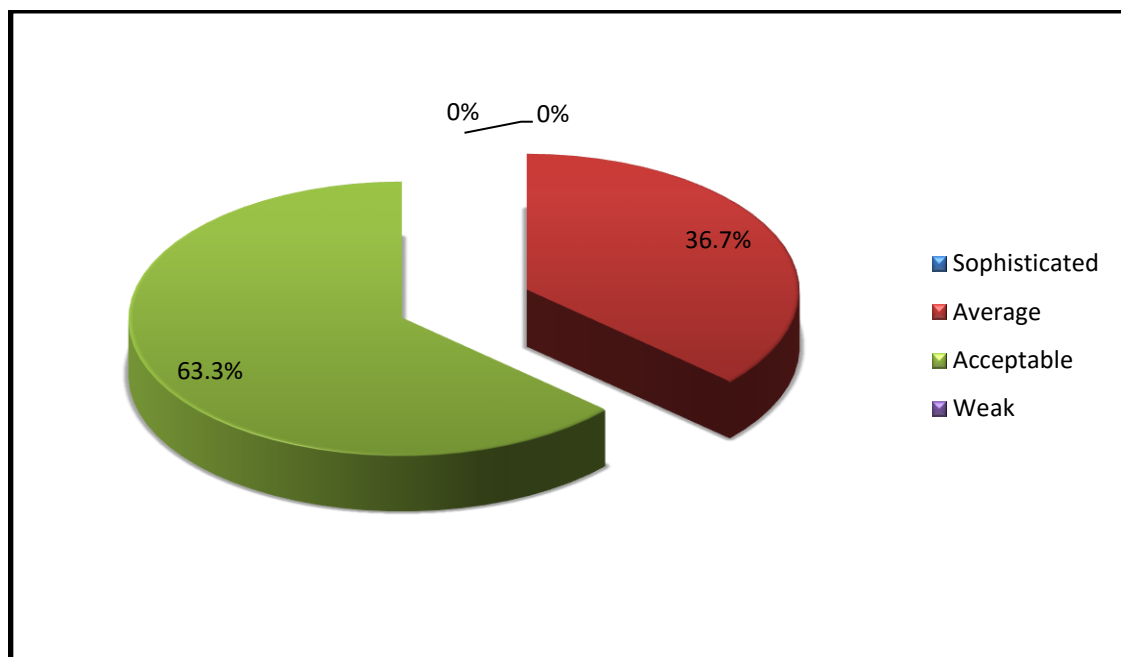
of the respondents are aged between 17-25 years. In contrast, to the category that ranges from 25-30 years, from which we harvested only 6.7%. For the category that is more than 30 years, it is absent among respondents. This indicates that most respondents have almost the same age.

Q3: From your own perspective, how do you see your level in English?

Table 3.4

Student’s English Level

Option	Number of the students	Percentage
Sophisticated	00	00%
Average	11	36.7%
Acceptable	19	63.3%
Weak	00	00%
Total	30	100%



Graph 3.3. Student’s English level

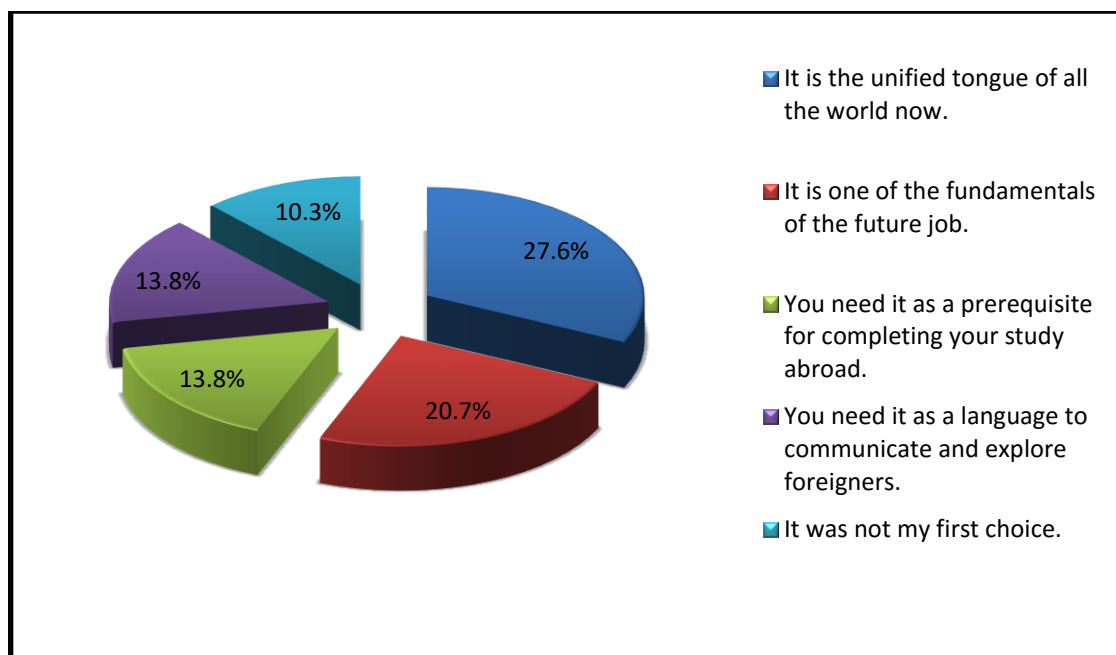
This question is designed to determine the respondents' level of English. Urging them to rank their ability to perform English language based on a classification index from sophisticated to weak. Hence, the statistical results showed that, the overwhelming majority of respondents see their level as acceptable by 63.3% of the total. The remaining percentage 36.7% represents the number of respondents who consider their level as average. Otherwise, we did not score any sophisticated or weak level. This indicates that setting the level is not easy for the respondents who have restricted their level from acceptable to average.

Q4: Why did you choose English as a field of study?

Table 3.5

Student's Perception Towards Choosing English As A Field Of Study

Option	Number of the students	Percentage
It is the unified tongue of all the world now.	08	27.6%
It is one of the fundamentals of the future job.	06	20.7%
You need it as a prerequisite for completing your study abroad.	04	13.8%
You need it as a language to communicate and explore foreigners.	04	13.8%
It was not my first choice.	03	10.3%
Total	25	86.2%



Graph 3.4.

Student's perception towards choosing English as a field of study

In this question, participants were asked to identify their reasons for choosing English as the language of study. Its purpose is to find out if English language has attracted them from the beginning or not. Based on the results of the table, the percentages are gradually waived by choice. We see that eight students (27.6%) chose English 'because it is the unified tongue of the entire world now', and the second option 'because it is one of the fundamentals of the future job' selected by six students (20.7%) who consider it as a requirement for their future job. We also found that the number of students who chose English because they need it as a prerequisite to complete their study abroad was equal to those who chose it because they need it as a language to communicate and explore foreigners (13.8%). Hence, three students (10.3%) said that English was not their first choice. They were obliged to study it. However, we recorded that one student did not state his/her answer to this question. Thus, s/he may have overlooked it. Alternatively, s/he did not find the right choice that reflects his/her answer.

Q4.1: This sub-question is intended to underline answers other than the options set out above.

Three students went on to say that, the reason behind their choice of English was their love for this language, and its ease of learning unlike other languages. One of them answered that it was a preference, but it was not the first one. He wanted to study another branch but his rate of achievement did not allow him. Another student answered that he had studied English at a private school, but he had not received a proper education; so, he chose to study it at the university.

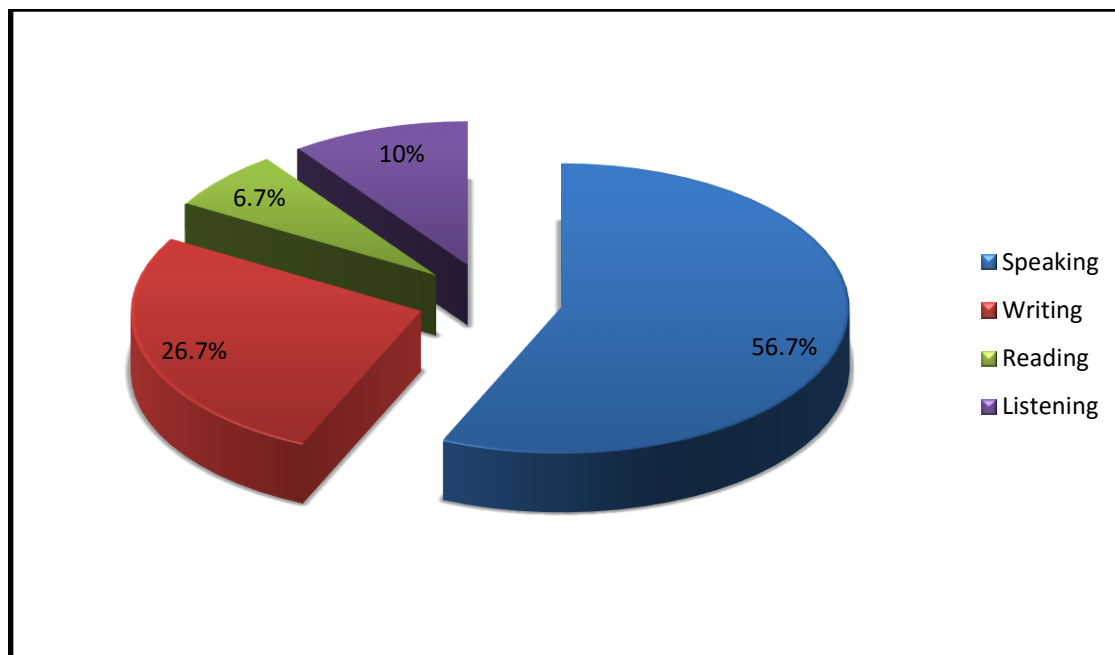
Section two: the speaking skill.

Q 5: If you were given a choice, what is the skill that your teachers should focus most?

Table 3.6

Student's perceptions towards the language skills

Option	Number of the students	Percentage
Speaking	17	56.7%
Writing	08	26.7%
Reading	02	6.7%
Listening	03	10%
Total	30	100%



Graph 3.5. perceptions towards the language skills

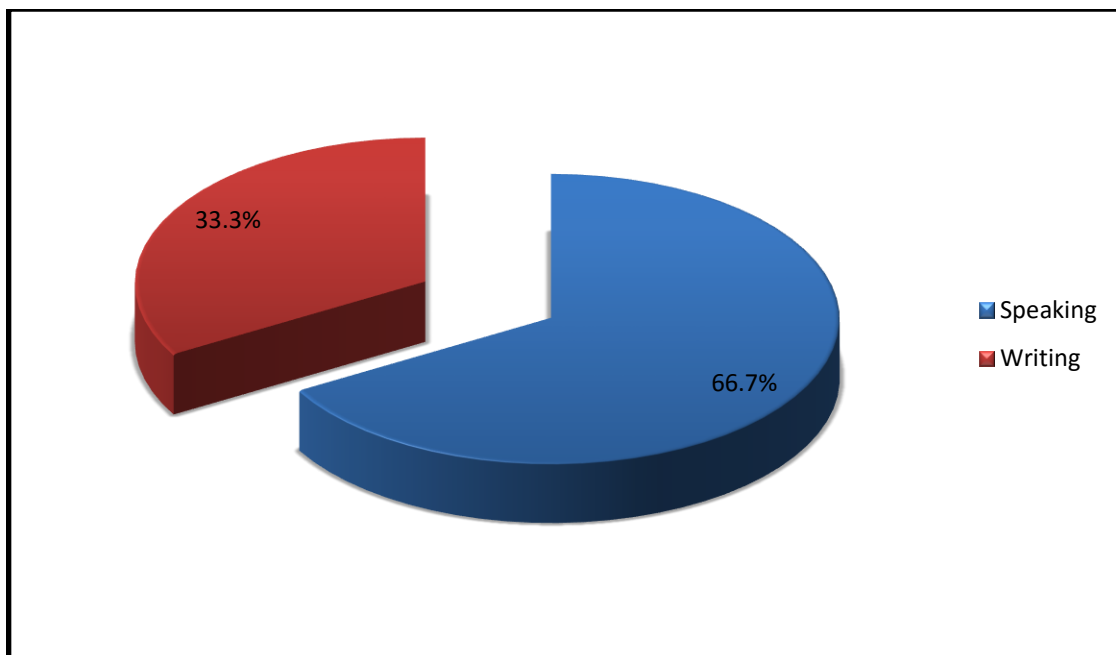
The purpose of this question is to understand students' perceptions of the language skills classifications. The results of the table show that the majority of participants (56.7%) consider the speaking skill has priority over other skills. Furthermore, 26.7% agree that the writing skill was the most important. In addition, a few (10%) consider the listening skill as a basic skill. The lowest percentage (6.7) was for the reading skill.

Q 6: Which productive skill you think is the most appropriate for you to reflect your thoughts?

Table 3.7

Student’s Perceptions Towards Choosing The Productive Skill

Option	Number of the students	Percentage
Speaking	20	66.7%
Writing	10	33.3%
Total	30	100%



Graph 3.6. Student’s perceptions towards choosing the productive skill

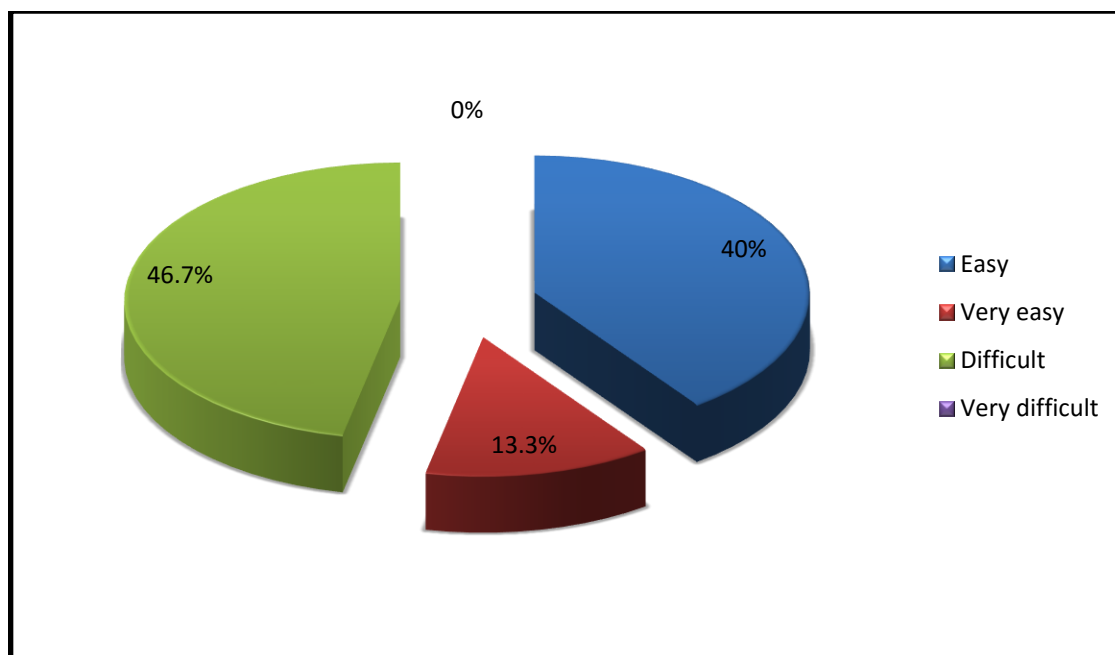
The underlying reason for this question is to determine which productive skill is most appropriate for the respondents to express their ideas. Thus, the statistical results in the table indicate that the vast majority (66.7%) consider speaking to be an effective means of expressing themselves, unlike other respondents (33.3%) who believe that writing is optimal for them.

Q 7: How do you find the speaking skill?

Table 3.8

Student’s Perceptions Towards The Speaking Skill

Option	Number of the students	Percentage
Easy	12	40%
Very easy	04	13.3%
Difficult	14	46.7%
Very difficult	00	00%
Total	30	100%



Graph 3.7. Perceptions towards the speaking skill

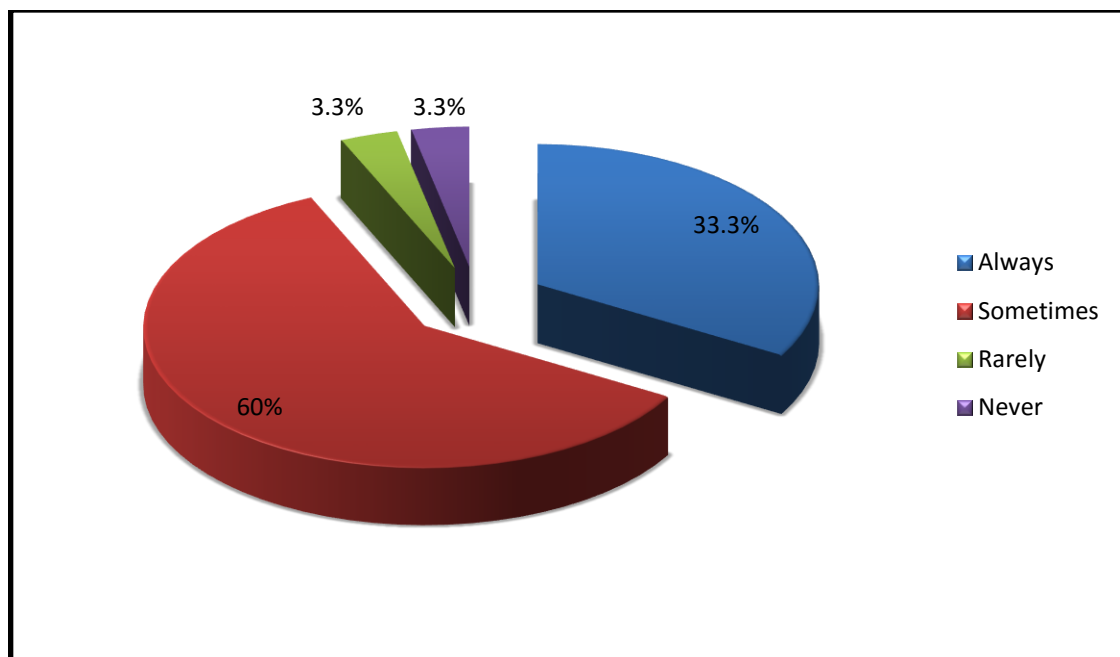
The purpose of this question is to find out how well participants are able to speak and how they view it in terms of ease and difficulty. The statistics in the table above show that most participants (46.7%) consider speaking as difficult, complex, and not easy to control. In contrast to a considerable number of them (40%) who thought, that speaking is easy and not characterised by any difficulty. Furthermore, few of them consider speaking very easy and manageable. However, none of the participants considers speaking very difficult.

Q 8: How often do you interact with your teacher in the oral expression session?

Table 3.9

Student’s Interactions In The Oral Expression Session

Option	Number of the students	Percentage
Always	10	33.3%
Sometimes	18	60%
Rarely	01	3.3%
Never	01	3.3%
Total	30	100%



Graph 3.8. Student’s interactions in the oral expression session

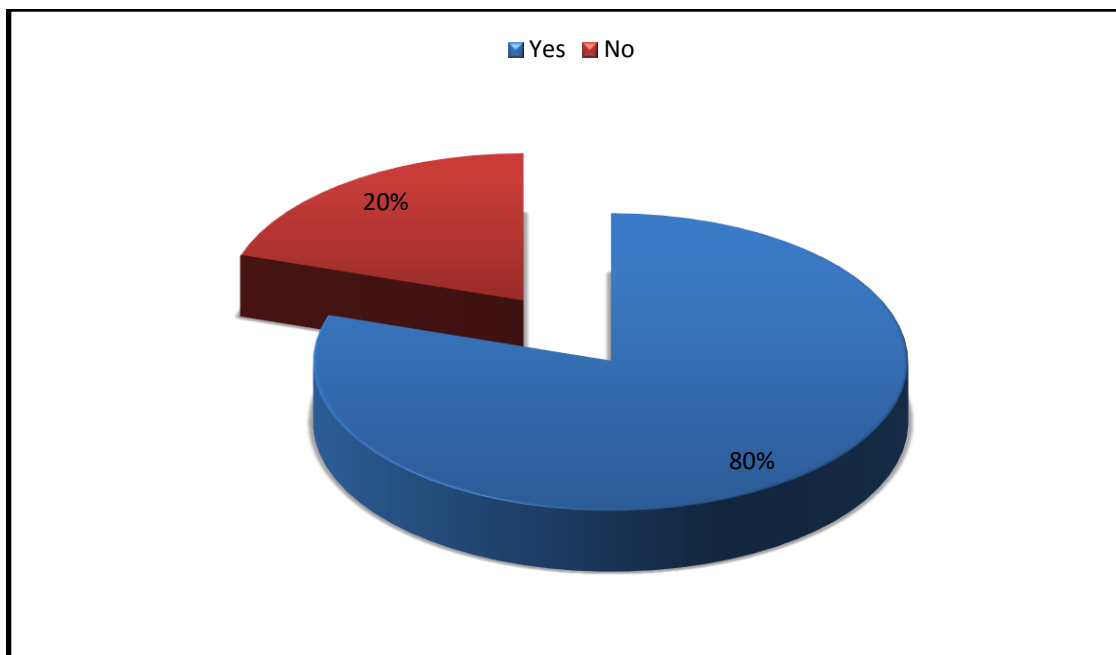
The purpose of this question is to find out how much students are reluctant to interact with their teacher in oral expression session. The results show that a significant number of respondents (60%) sometimes interact. While others (33.3%) say that, they always interact. We have also recorded that only one (3.3%) rarely interacts. Similarly, only one (3.3%) never interacts.

Q 9: Does your oral expression teacher encourage you to overcome your difficulties in speaking?

Table 3.10

Student’s Encouragement To Speak

Option	Number of the students	Percentage
Yes	24	80%
No	06	20%
Total	30	100%



Graph 3.9. Student’s Encouragement To Speak

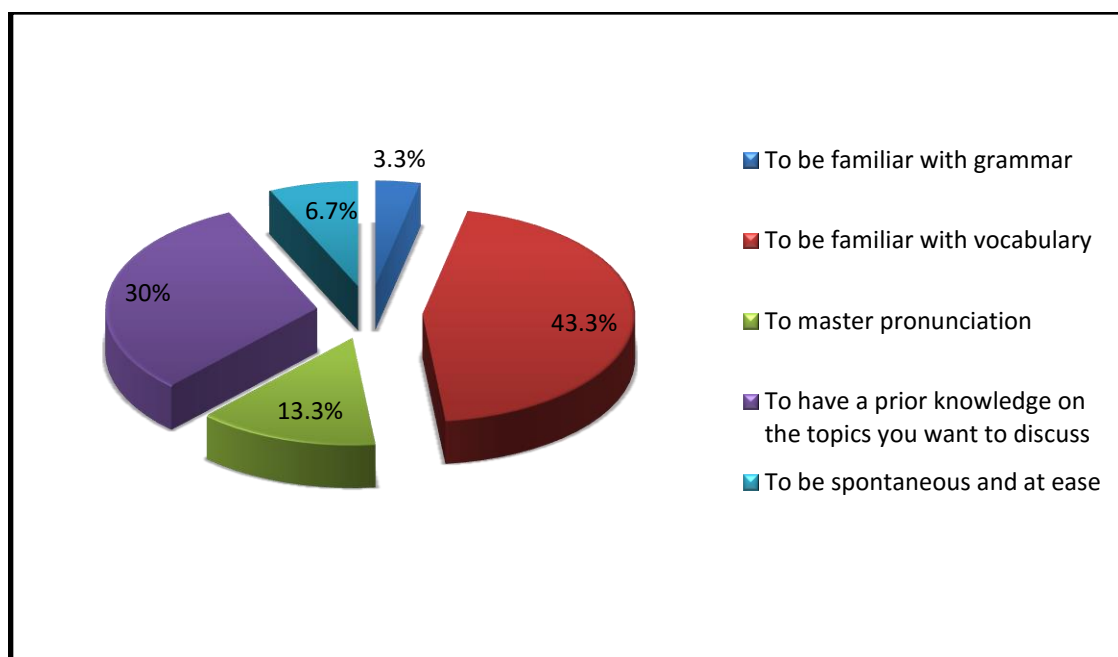
The implication of this question is to check whether the teacher plays his/her role as a motivator for his/her students or not. The statistical results show that the majority of the respondents (80%) answered positively and this indicates that the teacher played his/her role as a motivator to the fullest. While, only a few respondents (20%) answered with denial.

Q 10: For you, being a fluent speaker (speaking without problems) means:

Table 3.11

Student’s Perception Towards Fluency.

Option	Number of the students	Percentage
To be familiar with grammar	01	3.3%
To be familiar with vocabulary	13	43.3%
To master pronunciation	04	13.3%
To have a prior knowledge on the topics you want to discuss	09	30%
To be spontaneous and at ease	02	6.7%
Total	30	100%



Graph 3.10. Student's perception towards fluency

This question aimed at verifying students' perceptions of their understanding of the concept of fluency in speaking. Besides, it sought to know which condition they deem appropriate to be a fluent speaker. The results show that the large percentage (43.3%) believe that being a fluent speaker means to be familiar with vocabulary. While 30% of them claim that they should have a background on the topics that they want to discuss in order to speak without problems. Besides, some of them (13.3%) think that they should pronounce correctly to do so. Whereas, a few of them (6.7%) consider that they should be spontaneous and take things easy to speak without obstacles. Moreover, the lowest percentage (3.3%) answered that they should be familiar with grammar to speak fluently.

Q 10.1: If there are others, please mention them?

The current sub-question aims to explore views other than those that were placed in the list of options. This was done for a deep understanding of respondents' perceptions of being a fluent speaker. Unfortunately, this question did not receive much

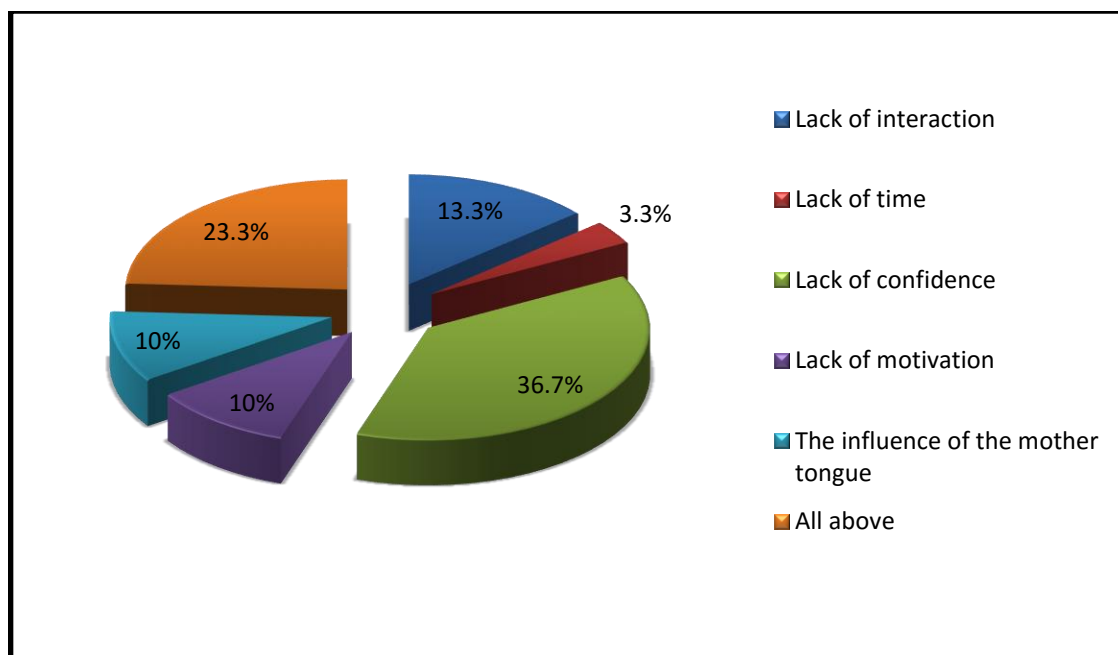
response from the respondents. The answer was by only one respondent (3.3%) who claim that it is necessary to have all these options. In addition, he adds that he should be familiar with the culture of native speakers in order to understand the indirect meanings implemented in their speech’.

Q 11: What are the main obstacles that may prevent you from being a fluent speaker?

Table 3.12

Student’s Speaking Fluency Difficulties

Option	Number of the students	Percentage
Lack of interaction	04	13.3%
Lack of time	01	3.3%
Lack of confidence	11	36.7%
Lack of motivation	03	10%
The influence of the mother tongue	03	10%
All above	07	23.3%
Total	29	96.6%



Graph 3.11. Student's speaking fluency difficulties

The purpose of this question is to explore the obstacles that stand against the respondents in order to be fluent speakers. The statistical results in the above table indicate that there are conflicting views, but the majority (36.7%) agree on the lack of confidence as a key factor that prevent them from being fluent speakers. Also 13.3% answered that the lack of interaction is the main cause. However, the influence of the mother language on the target language and the lack of motivation received similar responses by 10% for each of them from the respondents. While, only one respondent (3.3%) claims that the lack of time is the basic reason. In addition, a number of respondents replied that the reason was due to all the options mentioned.

Q 11.1: If there are others, please mention?

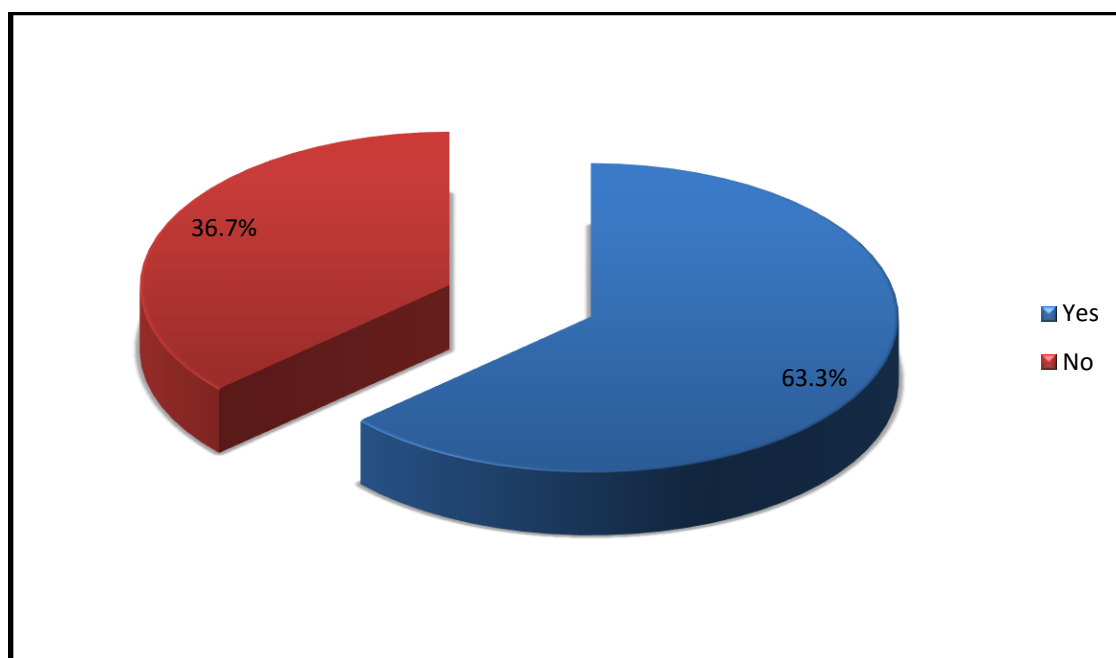
This question was designed to go deeper into the reasons that hinder the respondents to become fluent speakers. Unfortunately, as in the previous sub-question, only one respondent (3.3%) stated his answer, saying that "anxiety and fear of the negative reaction that his teacher and colleagues can show when he speaks prevents him to be a fluent speaker". However, this can be classified as a lack of self-confidence.

Q 12: Do you practise speaking outside the classroom walls?

Table 3.13

Student’s Usage Of The Speaking Skill Outside The Classroom

Option	Number of the students	Percentage
Yes	19	63.3%
No	11	36.7%
Total	30	100%



Graph 3.12. Student’s usage of the speaking skill outside the classroom

This question sought to find out if the respondents permanently speak, or just speak only in the classrooms. The results in the table show that the vast majority (63.3%) of respondents speak outside the classroom, and this indicates that they do not consider speaking only as part of the language where they are obliged to practise, but their desire to develop their communication skills is what drives them to do so. While others (36.7%) answered negatively. Hence, this can explain that they are not inclined

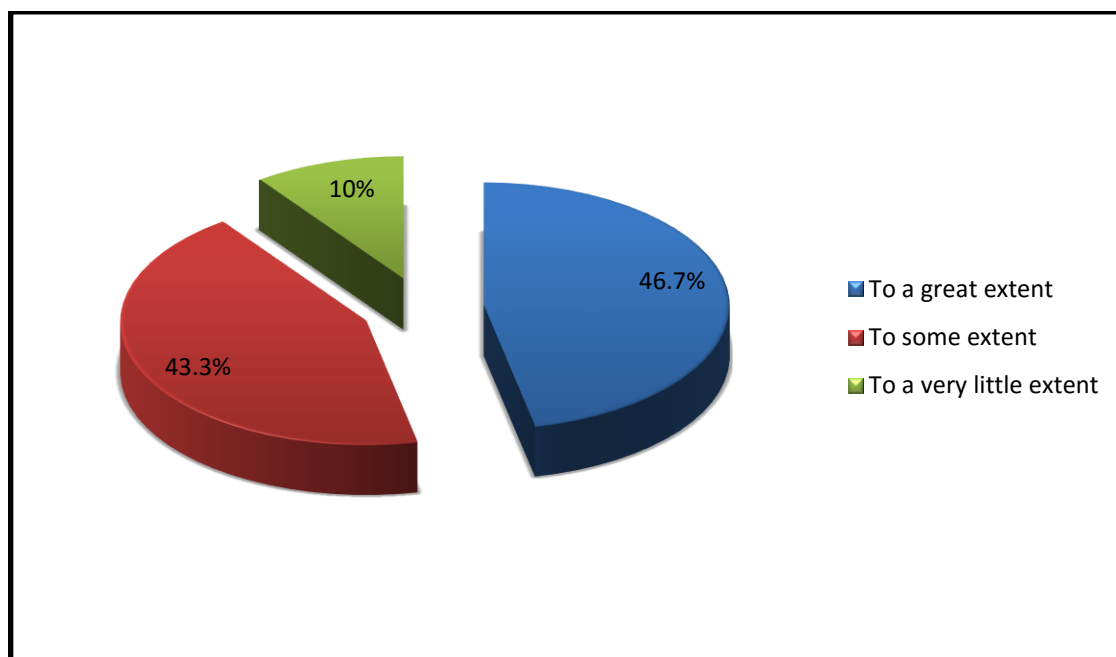
to speak and perhaps the language as a whole, or they have psychological factors that prevent them from doing so.

Q 13: In your opinion, to what extent can oral expression courses improve your speaking ability?

Table 3.14

Student’s Perception Towards The Effectiveness Of Oral Expression Sessions

Option	Number of the students	Percentage
To a great extent	14	46.7%
To some extent	13	43.3%
To a very little extent	03	10%
Total	30	100%



Graph 3.13. Student’s perception towards the effectiveness of oral expression sessions

The purpose of this question is to capture respondents' opinions about oral expression session, and to what extent it can enhance their ability to speak. Referring to the results of the above table, almost half of the respondents (46.7%) consider that

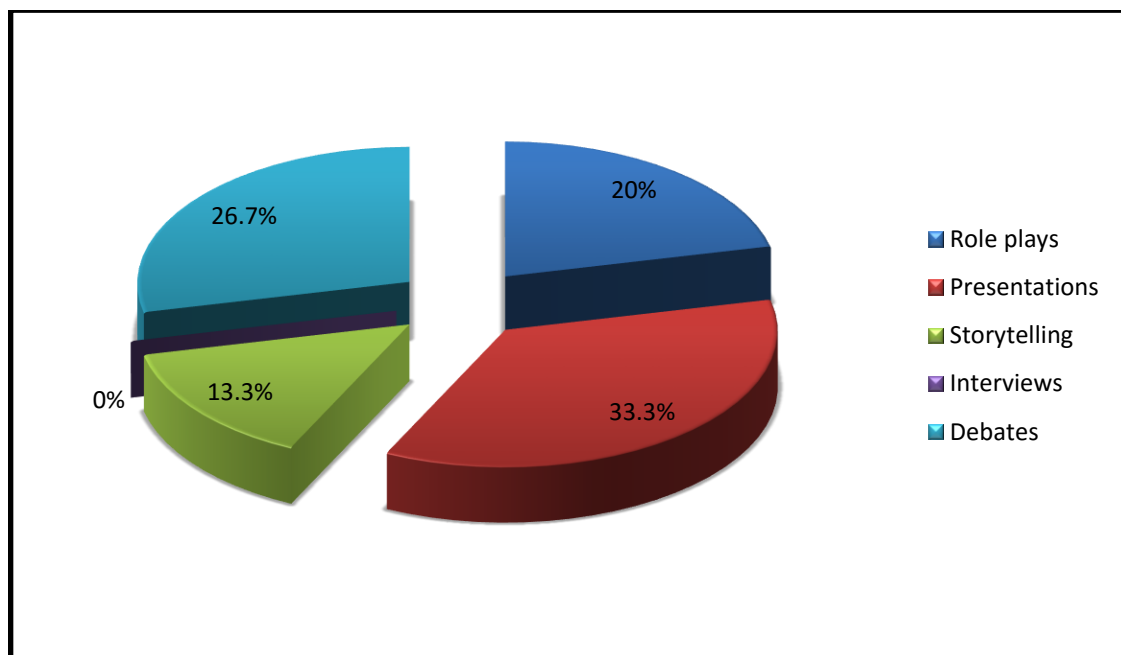
oral expression courses could improve their level of speaking by a great extent. While 43.3% of the respondents claim that this session could improve their speaking level by some extent. Moreover, a minority of the respondents (10%) consider that it could enhance their speaking ability by a very little extent.

Q 14: What are your favourite speaking activities?

Table 3.15

Student’s Favorite Speaking Activities

Option	Number of the students	Percentage
Role plays	06	20%
Presentations	10	33.3%
Storytelling	04	13.3%
Interviews	00	00%
Debates	08	26.7%
Total	28	93.3%



Graph 3.14. Student’s favourite speaking activities

The objective of this question is to identify the speaking activity that respondents prefer to practise in oral expression classes. The results of the table show that 33.3% of the respondents chose presentations as the best activity. Twenty six and half percent of them consider debates as the most preferred activity. Twenty percent declare that role play is their favourite one. In addition, 13.3% reported that storytelling is better than all of the other activities. While, we did not record any response to the choice 'interviews' which was ignored.

Q 14.1: If others, please specify?

This sub-question aimed at identifying other activities for speaking that respondents prefer. We recorded only two answers, where one was special. Thus, one of the respondents (3.3%) said that she prefers to create tales of the fabric of her imagination, and then face the mirror and speak in front of it as a narrator. Hence, this activity can be double-sided for her while performing speaking. On the one hand, it develops her imagination and enriches it with new vocabulary since when she finds no suitable word for her ideas; she searches for them in the dictionary. On the other hand, she can overcome the problem of anxiety and shyness and thus enhances her self-confidence. However, the second respondent replied that she preferred to give speeches with presentation, as she mimics as a political figure.

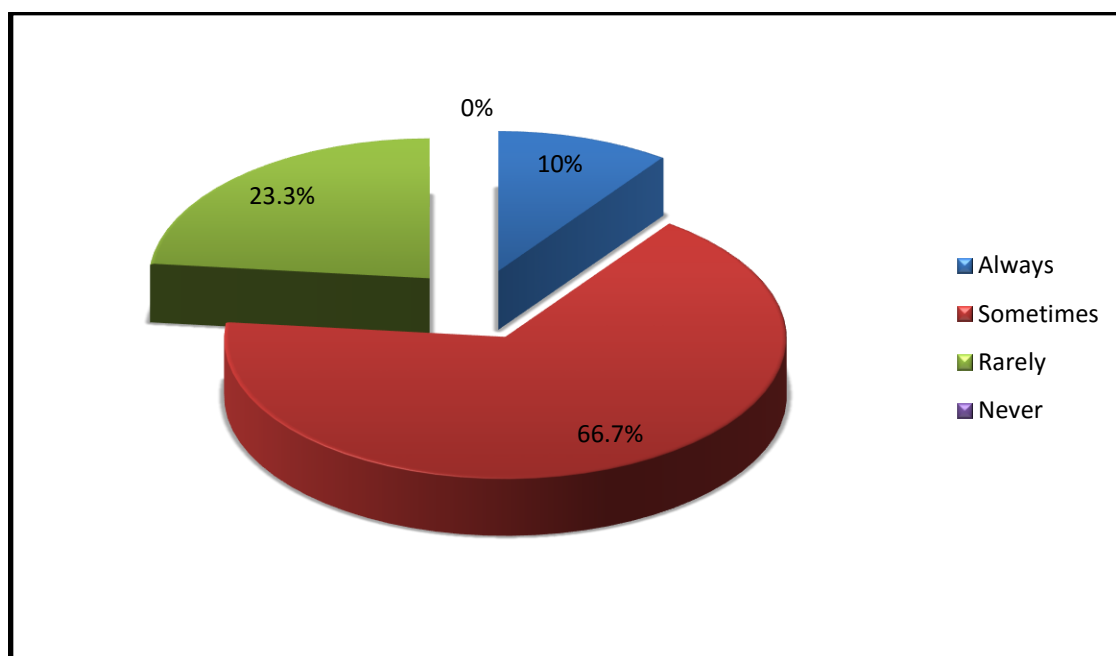
Section three: formative assessment

Q 15: How often does your teacher use formative assessment to assess and correct your learning mistakes?

Table 3.16

The Use Of Formative Assessment In Correcting Learning Mistakes.

Option	Number of the students	Percentage
Always	03	10%
Sometimes	20	66.7%
Rarely	07	23.3%
Never	00	00%
Total	30	100%



Graph 3.15. The use of formative assessment in correcting learning mistakes.

The purpose of this item is to verify the extent to which the teacher uses formative assessment as a means of continuous assessment in oral expression session. By checking the table above, we find that the results indicate that the majority of respondents (66.7%) agreed that their teachers sometimes used formative assessment. While, 23.3% said that their teachers rarely used it. Moreover, only 10% of the

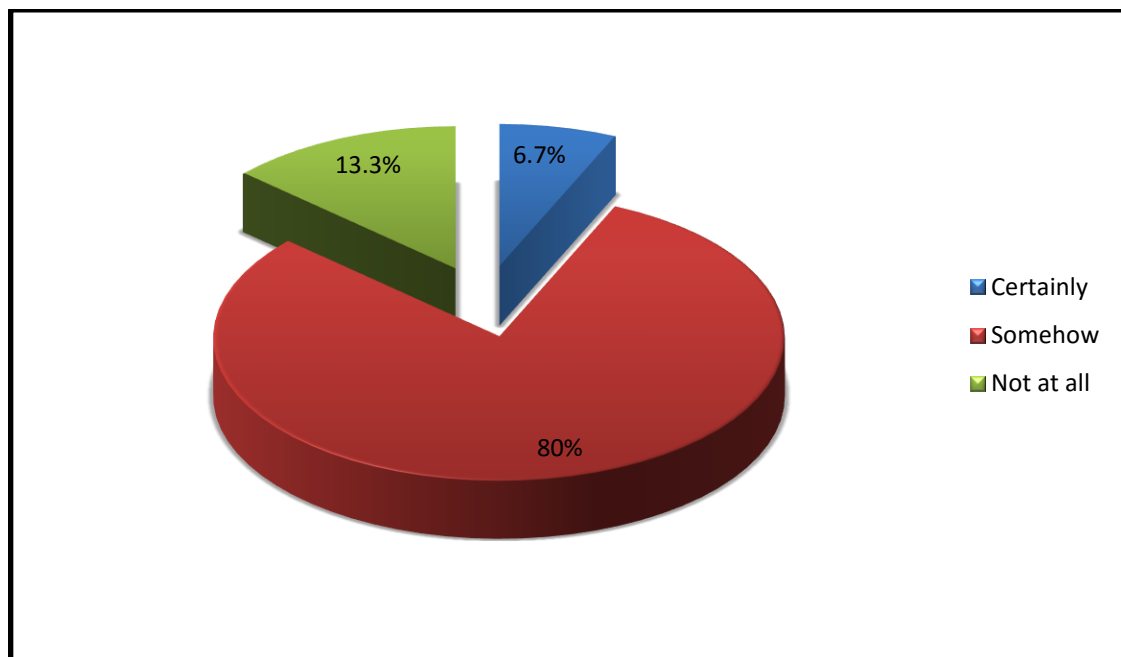
respondents declare that their teachers always assess them formatively. However, we did not record any answer for the choice ‘Never’.

Q 16: In your opinion, is the assessment of speaking as easy as assessing the rest of skills?

Table 3.17

Student’s Perception Towards The Assessment Of Speaking

Option	Number of the students	Percentage
Certainly	02	6.7%
Somehow	24	80%
Not at all	04	13.3%
Total	30	100%



Graph 3.16. Student’s perception towards the assessment of speaking

This question is aimed at verifying respondents' perceptions of the nature of the assessment of the speaking skill, and whether they see the assessment of speaking as the assessment of other skills. The results of the table above show that the vast majority

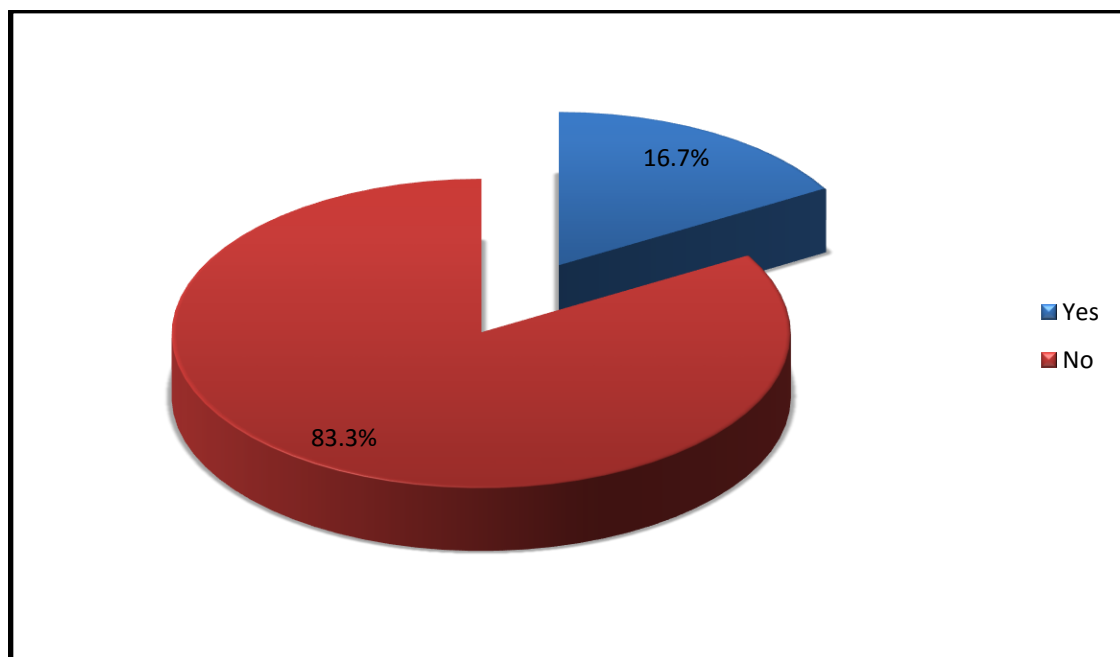
of respondents (80%) believed that the assessment of speaking skill is somehow easy, and this indicates that they are aware of the complex nature of the speaking skill. As for 13.3% of respondents, they reply that this skill is not as easy as other skills at all. While, the lowest percentage (6.7%) of respondents state that the assessment of speaking is certainly easy.

Q 17: When the lesson is over, does the teacher evaluate your ability in speaking?

Table 3.18

Student’ Speaking Ability Evaluation.

Option	Number of the students	Percentage
Yes	05	16.7%
No	25	83.3%
Total	30	100%



Graph 3.17. Student’ speaking ability evaluation.

The goal behind this question is to check whether the teacher of oral expression evaluates his/her students’ speaking skill on an ongoing basis, or evaluates them only

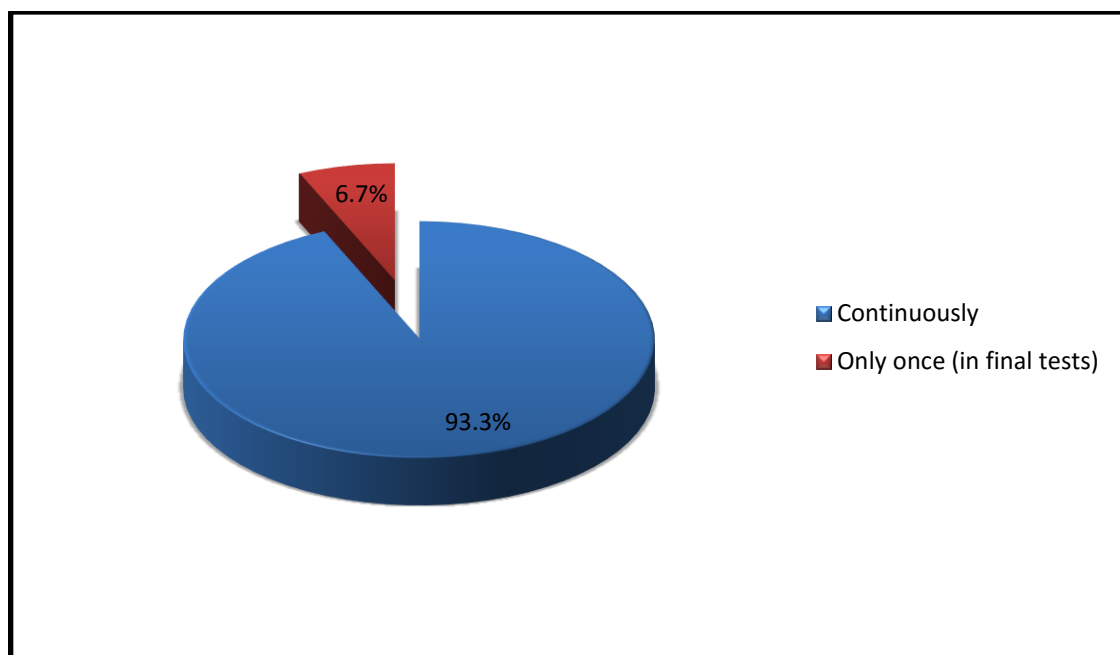
in the final tests. The results shown in the table above demonstrate that the vast majority of respondents (83.3%) answered with denial, and this indicates that most of teachers overlook this important learning practice, which help in enhancing the students' speaking skill through a continuous monitoring of their language performance, and correcting their learning mistakes. However, a low percentage (16.7%) of respondents, compared to the previous one, responded positively, and this is evidence that only a few teachers apply the continuous evaluation.

Q 18: How would you like your speaking ability to be assessed?

Table 3.19

Student's Preference Towards The Appropriate Way Of Assessment.

Option	Number of the students	Percentage
Continuously	28	93.3%
Only once (in final tests)	02	6.7%
Total	30	100%



Graph 3.18. Student's preference towards the appropriate way of assessment.

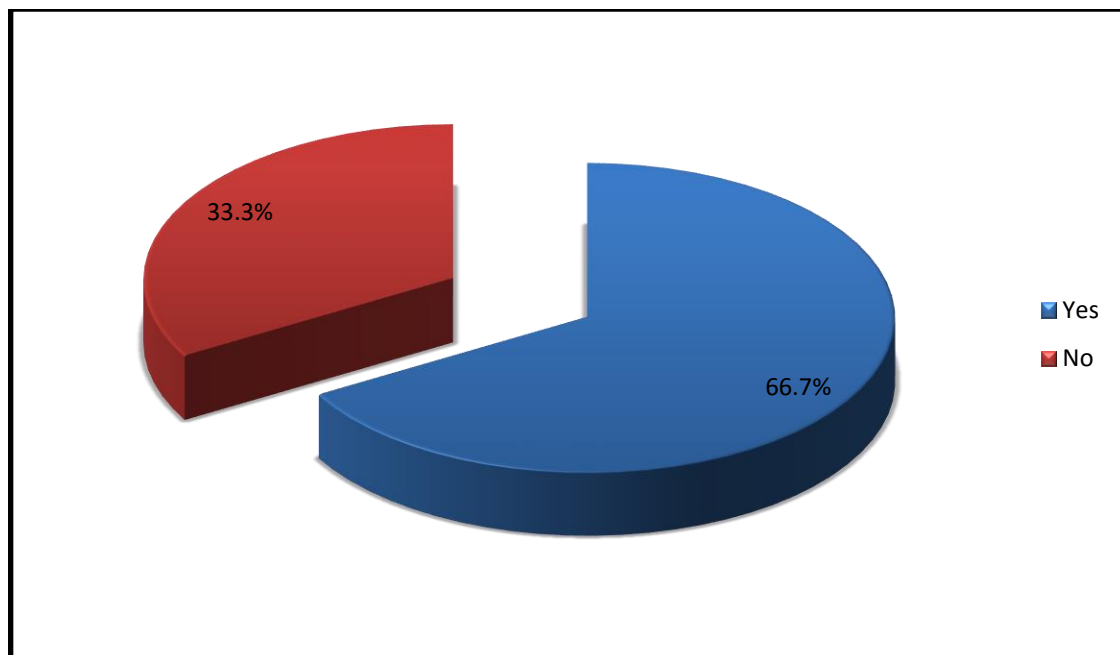
The purpose of this question is to determine respondents' desire for the way they see fit to assess their speaking performance by teachers. In view of the results of the table, we note that the overwhelming majority (93.3) of the respondents met to answer that they want to be assessed continuously. This indicates their desire to discover the developments in their speaking' performance all the time before the final exams. While we counted that there were two answers for 6.7% of respondents who are likely to be assessed only once in the final exam.

Q 19: Have you ever felt that your teacher did not assess your performance in speaking fairly?

Table 3.20

Student's Perception Towards The Validity Of Their Speaking Assessment.

Option	Number of the students	Percentage
Yes	20	66.7%
No	10	33.3%
Total	30	100%



Graph 3.19. Student’s perception towards the validity of their speaking assessment.

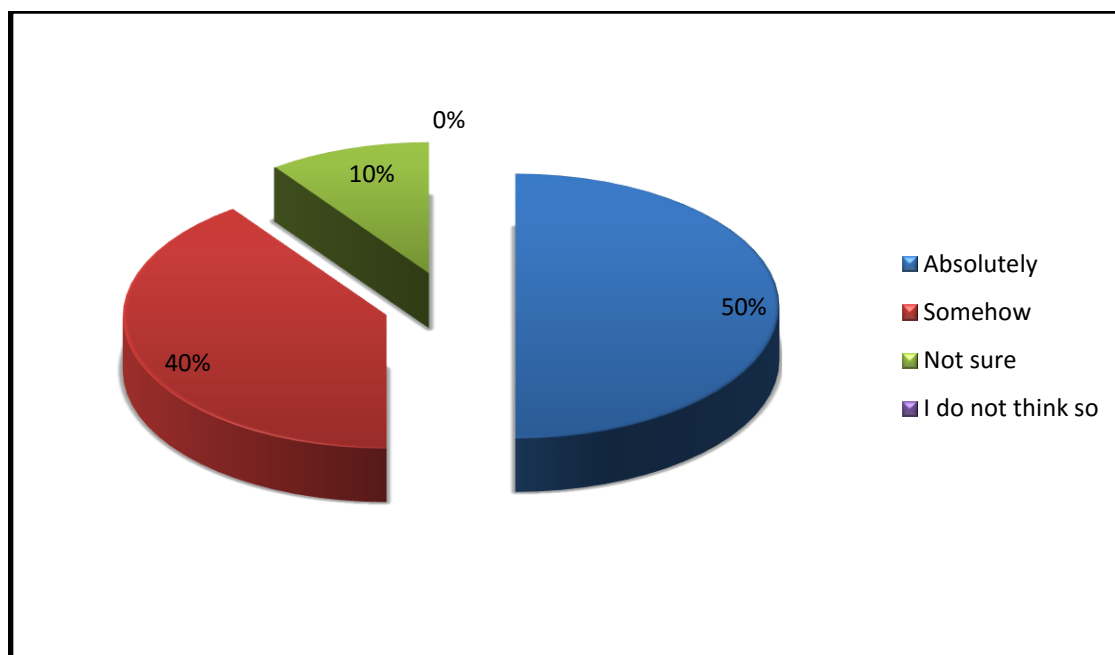
This question alludes to the discovery of the students' sense of the assessment of their speaking’ performance. Rather, this is to check whether the respondent received a fair assessment of his/her performance in speaking. The results show that a large majority (66.7%) of respondents feel that they do not receive a fair assessment that reflects their true level. While 33.3% of them answered negatively and this can be assumed that their teachers measure their true level of speaking performance and give them satisfactory results.

Q 20: Do you think that implementing formative assessment practices in the oral expression course can improve your speaking performance?

Table 3.21

Student’s Perception Towards The Implementation Of Formative Assessment.

Option	Number of the students	Percentage
Absolutely	15	50%
Somehow	12	40%
Not sure	03	10%
I do not think so	00	00%
Total	30	100%



Graph 3.20. Student's perception towards the implementation of formative assessment.

The objective of this question is to check the effectiveness of formative assessment in improving and enhancing student' speaking performance. The results of the above table show that half of the respondents (50%) agree that formative assessment would help them to improve their ability to speak because of its role as an observer and a reformer of the learning process. On the other hand, 40% of respondents answered that this assessment can improve their performance in some way. While only 10% reply that they are not sure of that. However, none of the respondents answered the choice 'I do not think so'.

3.4.2 Results of the teacher's interview. This part of the research reflects the results of the interview with the teachers of oral expression. Below are the teachers' responses:

Question 01. "How many years have you spent teaching oral expression?"

The goal behind the first question was to verify teachers' experience in the field of teaching oral expression course. The teachers' response uncovered that they do not have much experience in the field of teaching speaking. Hence, the older one among

them has only nine years of experience. The second has eight years teaching this course. Four others have between two and three years in this field and the two remaining have less than two years, that is, they are novice in this field.

Question 02. What are the most common activities that you usually design for a speaking lesson?

The second question concerned the most important practices that the teachers design to use in teaching speaking. Through their answers, we found that most teachers resorted to the use of individual and pair presentations. They consider that it is necessary to make a 'presentation' in each session to monitor the student's development in speaking performance, and to break the link of fear of speaking in front of classmates in order to enhance his/her self-confidence. They also agree on 'discussion' and 'debates' as effective activities, where five of them pointed out that the options should be diversified, usually through setting for their students specific subjects and other times giving them freedom of choice. The rest of the teachers said that they usually give their students the freedom to choose the topic they want to speak. To justify that, they claim that if you give a student the freedom to speak, s/he will certainly be more enthusiastic in speaking, and thus s/he becomes more persistent in his/her performance, and each time s/he comes up with a new topic rich with vocabularies that s/he has learnt recently.

However, **Teacher 8**, came with an activity that may be used by friends as a game between them which is 'truth and dare'. He said, "The method of truth and dare is very effective and entertaining at the same time to the students, where the students often choose one of them by election, and then allocate for him/her a seating area in which they sit around him/her in a circular manner and. The students, one by one, ask

questions, and s/he must answer them even if these questions are difficult, and of course these questions are written by students in a paper and I read them before they say it " .

Teacher 4 said that he uses the ‘criticism-imitation’ method that he explained it by saying, "I show them a short video about a particular subject, I repeat it twice; then, I make them write comments, and they should dictate them to me. We discuss these comments together, and then every student stands in front of his/her classmates, and returns the video in his/her own way ". In addition, **Teacher 1** declared that interaction between the teacher and the student in speaking classes is very important. Therefore, he uses an activity that strengthens the interaction between them. He sits next to his student and conducts an individual dialogue with him/her. After completion, he record notes containing the mistakes that this student has made while speaking, and give it to him/her to discover his/her mistakes, in order to avoid them in the future.

Question 03. What are the most common difficulties you face while teaching speaking?

This question aimed to extract the most important difficulties that teachers face in teaching speaking. However, almost all the teachers agreed that the most prominent problem facing them is the ‘overcrowded classrooms’. For them, it is difficult to teach a class that contains more than 30 students, as it is impossible to take every student individually and reveal his/her speaking problems. Moreover, the problem that ranks second for them is the lack of time. Thus, in view of the curriculum, only three hours per week are devoted to the oral expression session, and this period is considered insufficient because of the complex process of teaching. In addition, the teachers also complained about the lack of technical materials to teach speaking. Only a few laboratories that are equipped with the appropriate techniques exist, so they are not

enough due to the large number of students, where **Teacher 4** said that, "I am obliged to take my laptop with me in every oral expression session".

Furthermore, the third common difficulty among them is that some students lack self-confidence, and are afraid to make mistakes, so, you find them silent all the session, and prefer to listen only. Therefore, it is difficult to drive them to speak.

Likewise, **Teacher 8** responded that the disparity of teaching methods among teachers could be the most difficult problem. For example, the teacher of grammar course has to teach his/her students how to form sentences and connect them correctly. If this teacher did not fulfill this teaching duty, the oral expression teacher will face obstacles in making the students speak in coherent words in terms of grammar. However, this can be classified as 'heterogeneity' among teachers.

Question 04. What methods do you often use to assess your student's speaking performance?

This question was designed to examine the methods in which oral expression teachers use to assess their students' speaking performance. In the main, **Teacher 2, Teacher 5, and Teacher 6** responded that the most prominent method that they usually use is the 'presentation Quizzes' method. They inform their students before a certain period of the assessment. They must prepare a specific subject for oral presentation to present it in front their classmates. Also, they make a list of the total subjects to be prepared and the student should choose a topic from the list. On the other hand, **Teacher 3 and Teacher 8** agreed that the assessment of speaking is a difficult task for them. Therefore, they resort to prepare writing activities such as; filling the gaps, and express images in a writing form.

Teacher 1 replied that he uses 'analysing and discussing' method. He presents a topic to the students, and then asks them to make comments and discussions using the

vocabulary poured in the subject. Whereas, **Teacher 7** declared that he depends only on his 'observation' to assess his students. He said, "I give to my students the absolute freedom to choose the topics they want, and I do not restrict them to any method, but I only rely on my observation to assess them".

Question 05. What kind of assessment is most effective for you: summative or formative assessment?

The aim of this question is to find out what kind of assessment attracts the attention of teachers and which one they consider it more appropriate to discover their students' speaking abilities. Yet, most of the teachers agreed on both of assessments together because they stated that they are "complementary". Hence, formative assessment is not defined by time, but it is continuous and indirect. Through it, students' speaking abilities can be detected. While, summative assessment determines the student's final ability after passing through a series of formative stages. Otherwise, **Teacher 4 and Teacher 7** answered that they prefer formative assessment as a means of continuous assessment, as **Teacher 7** said, "Through formative assessment, I can guess the final score of the student's performance".

Question 06. Do you apply a continuous assessment methodology in your oral expression session?

This question seeks to ascertain whether oral expression teachers apply continuous assessment in their classes, which indicates that they are constantly interested in their students' speaking performance or vice versa.

Most of the teachers responded positively, saying that as they diversify the speaking activities, they see it as an ongoing assessment. While, **Teacher 5** said in a contradictory answer, that just the word of assessment can frighten students and

discourage their desire to speak; so, he sometimes avoids this kind of assessments, or does it indirectly.

Question 07. What are the most important difficulties you face in applying formative assessment in oral expression session?

The objective of this question is to explore the difficulties involved in applying formative assessment to oral expression sessions. Consequently, the teachers agreed on the problem of students' density in one class. As mentioned previously, the average number of students per class is 35 students. Furthermore, **Teacher 4** reported that the difficulties of applying formative assessment are due to the lack of time allocated for the one session. He said, "They are Pedagogical and organisational difficulties, including the lack of time". Otherwise, **Teacher 7** answered that the lack of teacher training in this field can be a handicap, where there is a lack of training courses for teachers that makes them aware of the methods of applying this type of assessment correctly.

Question 08. In your opinion, to what extent formative assessment can have an impact on students' speaking performance?

The objective of this question is to evaluate the effectiveness formative assessment practices of the students' speaking performance. Hence, most of teachers emphasised that formative assessment plays an important role in improving students' performance, and developing their ability to speak. In particular, it analyses the entire educational sequence into smaller units that are learnt at the appropriate rate for each student, ensures proficiency (i.e., these practices help students discover strengths and weaknesses, and provide them with an opportunity to correct their speaking performance through continuous practices in each oral expression session). However, **Teacher 6** responded that these practices help the student in his/her learning to speak

fluently and make continuous progress. Thus, learning is accomplished in a perfect way.

On the other hand, **Teacher 2** reported that formative assessment is like any other kind of assessment. That is, the goal is “to extract the students’ achievement level”.

3.5 Discussion of the Findings

To recapitulate, the objective behind this study is to examine the methods and practices the teachers of oral expression in the context of this study use to assess the speaking skill. Besides, this study tried to explore students' perceptions about the speaking skill, and its importance as a means of communication. Hence, it aimed to verify the students and teachers attitudes about the implementation of formative assessment in the oral expression session. In addition, we sought throughout this study to identify the difficulties oral expression teachers face while teaching and assessing the speaking skill. We depended on the analysis of the data collected by using two data collection methods: a questionnaire for students and an interview with teachers of oral expression. Consequently, the results were positive to some extent.

At the beginning. The results obtained from the analysis of the students' questionnaire showed that the females are present in English language classes rather than males. Hence, this is an indication that females are more inclined to learn this language compared to males. However, they were close in age where most of them are between 17 and 25 years old, and this hints that most of them have the same educational experience. Furthermore, both females and males showed a great interest in the speaking skill as the most prominent skill among other language skills: reading, writing and listening, and as the first skill to ensure communication with others, despite their understanding of the complex nature of it. Likewise, they also showed a response to other skills, notably the writing skill, But mostly they were not familiar with the close

connection between the two skills (i.e., Learning speaking will enhance learning writing).

In addition, it was found that most of the students interact with their teachers, which indicates that they do not have the barrier of fear, and lack of self-confidence. Hence, there is a kind of reciprocity and interaction in the classroom. Unlike some who were antagonistic, and their biggest problem is speaking. This is due to their tension towards negative feedback received from their teachers and classmates when they speak, believing that their classmates would laugh at them. In addition, it was shown that most students' perceptions about being a fluent speaker indicates that the speaker should be familiar with vocabulary. Additionally, the speaker should have background knowledge on the topics to be discussed in order to avoid difficult situations where s/he cannot find the appropriate words that reflect his/her ideas when speaking, or to have a discussion with his/her colleagues where they speak about a certain topic that he/she has no information about it.

Moreover, most of the students agreed that the most prominent problem standing in their way to be a fluent speaker was the lack of self-confidence. It hindered them from participating in the classroom, and made them afraid of the decline in their assessment, so, you may find that some students prefer to remain silent than speaking. Additionally, most students practise speaking outside the classroom, and this is proof that they do not rely only on the oral expression session to speak, but they look for other sources to develop their speaking skill, and communicate more with speakers of the same language. The majority of these students agreed that the oral expression session would improve their speaking performance as it is the session in which they were taught the conversational skills and its fundamentals. Besides, most of students emphasized

that they prefer to make presentations as a practise to speak, where they are given permission to speak on a certain subject under a limited time.

Concerning the use of formative assessment, the analysis of the results showed that the students sometimes receive a formative assessment, not always. This indicates two things. On the one hand, the students are not sufficiently aware of this type of assessment although we provide a brief overview of this type of assessment before giving them the questionnaire. On the other hand, perhaps the teacher disregarded in using this type of assessment. Likewise, the students were sure of the difficult nature of the speaking skill compared to the other skills, and they preferred to be assessed in this skill on a continuous basis each session. Furthermore, it was shown that most of the students do not have a fair assessment of their speaking skill, and this can be attributed to the lack of formative assessment practices implemented in their oral expression session. They stated that they needed such assessment activities to be permanently used in order to help them enhance their speaking abilities. Consequently, this is a positive indicator of the effectiveness of this type of assessment in improving and developing students' speaking skills. Therefore, it is important for teachers to diversify the use of various formative assessment practices, and provide insights to create better assessment practices to improve their students' communicative skills.

Regarding teachers' interview, it can be supposed that most of the teachers we interviewed are not experienced in teaching speaking. Nevertheless, they were aware of the importance of the speaking skill, and its role in the communication process. Furthermore, most of the strategies used by teachers in oral expression sessions can be described as 'traditional' and not familiar with recent technologies. Hence, this can be attributed to the lack of places equipped with technical materials for teaching speaking, and the overcrowding of classes which prevented them from being able to show an

educational interest for each student. Likewise, the time devoted to the teaching of speaking is inadequate due to the difficulty of this skill. Mainly, this skill should be given more attention than the other skills. In addition, some teachers stated that their students were not motivated to speak English in the oral expression session, because they lack self-confidence, and the inability to construct coherent sentences. Thus, this is due to the negligence by grammar and written expression teachers, in addition to psychological shyness, anxiety...etc. All these difficulties hinder teaching speaking optimally.

Concerning the methods used by teachers in assessing their students' speaking performance, the resulted answers showed that the majority of teachers did not keep pace with recent methods of assessment. Instead, they used the usual traditional methods which are used with all other language skills, such as: Quizzes, direct answers, tests, and some of them even resort to the use of written quizzes to assess their students' speaking performance. Furthermore, with regard to the application of formative assessment in the oral expression sessions, most teachers emphasised that they often use this type of assessment but not all the time. They asserted that there is a difference when they use it and when they do not use it. When they use it, they feel that there is a gradual tracking of the student's speaking performance, which enables them to follow their students' achievements in a valid and reliable manner, and increases the need to seek for new assessment practices in order to encourage the diversification of speaking performance, and; thus, it promotes them with a valid assessment practices. On the other hand, they confirmed its effectiveness on the students' speaking performance, as it helps the students to adjust their speaking problems on a continuous basis, and contributes to raise their motivation to speak without fears. Therefore, we can conclude that formative assessment has a positive impact on the students' speaking performance.

However, they also reported that they faced several difficulties in implementing formative assessment in the oral expression session. Hence, they stressed again on the problem of the overcrowding of classes, and lack of time. In addition, some teachers have not received sufficient training courses to learn about this type of assessment, which can lead them to devise their teaching methods and practices that enable them to better assess their students.

Synthesis of the findings

The objective behind this section is to revisit the main findings that we have obtained by analysing the students' questionnaire, and the teachers' interview. The target purpose is trying to answer the research questions, and confirm or refute the hypotheses proposed for the present study.

First, the purpose of the current study is to explore students' perceptions about the speaking skill and its importance as a means of communication. The results show that the students are aware of the difficult nature of the speaking skill. Nevertheless, they classify speaking as the first skill they must master because of its importance in various areas of life, where every kind of communication requires speaking; for instance, in the written expression session, the teacher uses speaking to explain his/her lesson, and used by students to participate. Thus, even the other skills are not free from the existence of the speaking skill. Furthermore, they are also aware of the importance of the writing skill as a second productive skill after speaking.

Second, we tried to explore students' and teachers' attitudes and views about the implementation of formative assessment in the oral expression session, as a way to improve the students' speaking skill, in order to promote the teachers of oral expression with valid assessment practices. The results show that most of them believe that formative assessment is a good type of assessment that could benefit them a lot.

Likewise, the students expressed their desire to assess their performance in speaking on a continuous basis, as they reported that they often feel that the final assessment of their speaking performance does not reflect their true level. Therefore, they believe that the application of this type of assessment would provide them with opportunities to explore the imbalance in their performance, and enhance their speaking' abilities by gradual measurement. On the other hand, the teachers report that they often use formative assessment, but not all the time because of many factors, that may hinder them, such as: The time problem, but they stressed that when they use formative assessment, their motivation to search for new assessment practices increases. This can show them the actual picture, which reflects their students' speaking performance, and this can allow them to make a valid and a reliable assessment to their students.

In addition, we attempted through this study to check the methods and ways teachers use to assess their students' speaking skill. The results of the study showed that most of the teachers resort to practices that fall under the traditional assessment approach like tests, oral quizzes, and direct questions. Otherwise, regardless of the teachers' lack of experience in teaching speaking, but some of them use methods that fall under the alternative assessment, such as; introducing games and puzzles to create a fun atmosphere for learning.

Furthermore, this study sought to identify the difficulties oral expression teachers face in assessing and teaching speaking. The results obtained show that the teachers face three main types of difficulties. Firstly, the lack of time allotted for the oral expression session is a major problem. That is, the time allotted for the oral expression session is insufficient to assess the speaking performance of each student individually. Secondly, the high number of students in the one class is also a handicap. Hence, the density of students in one class with the lack of time prevents the application

of the assessment practices comfortably. Thirdly, the lack of the teacher's training in the field of assessment stands as an obstacle. Besides, teachers face obstacles with students who usually suffer from psychological factors (i.e., anxiety, fear, lack of self-confidence...) that prevent them from participating and interacting continuously.

Based on the results of the current study, it can be concluded that the use of formative assessment can lead to more valid assessment practices. As well as, it has a positive influence on students' speaking performance. Therefore, we can say that the results obtained have confirmed the hypotheses underlying the current study.

Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter discussed the fieldwork of the present study. First, in order to shed the light on the methodology underlying this study, a comprehensive theoretical background was provided. Mainly, the data were derived using two different methods and analysed using the descriptive approach. We obtained the results that answered the research questions. Consequently, we attempted to verify the methods used by the teachers of oral expression in assessing speaking, as well as, examining the influence of formative assessment on the students' speaking performance and on the teachers' assessment practices. Finally, we revealed positive results concerning the influence of formative assessment on the students' speaking performance and on teachers' assessment practices, and this has confirmed the suggested hypotheses.

General Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications

To restate, this study was based on the problem that both teacher and student have difficulties in learning and teaching the speaking skill and this is due to, the inappropriate methods used by the teachers of oral expression to assess their students' speaking performance. Therefore, the present study sought to explore the methods used by these teachers to assess the speaking skill. Besides, to find solutions to these obstacles, the incorporation of formative assessment as a continuous process to follow the students' performance and to adjust teaching and assessment practices used by oral expression teachers could be a good teaching/learning strategy.

The current study consisted of three chapters, where two chapters were dedicated to the theoretical part, and one chapter was allocated to the practical part. The first chapter focused on the assessment process, its types, principles, and methods. On the other hand, it presented formative assessment, its practices and application in the oral expression session. The second chapter highlighted the speaking skill as the most important means of communication where most students seek to improve and develop it. In addition, it provided the stages of teaching speaking and the most prominent methods used to assess it. As for the third chapter, it dealt with the practical part of the study, starting from a literature of the fieldwork to the analysis of data.

The present study dealt with three main hypotheses: the first assumed that oral expression teachers tend to use traditional methods rather than alternative methods to assess their students' speaking performance. The second hypothesised that the use of appropriate formative assessment leads to assessment practices that are more valid. The third supposed that if formative assessment were applied appropriately, the students' speaking performance would be improved. Mainly, in order to confirm these hypotheses, we went to the use of the qualitative research approach. We relied on two

data collection methods: A questionnaire for the students and an interview with the teachers of oral expression.

After analysing the data obtained, the results showed that oral expression teachers use traditional methods in assessing their students speaking performance. That is, there is no diversification or innovation in their assessment methods, but the same methods are circulated among teachers. They also face many difficulties in assessing speaking, which made them do not vary the methods of assessment they use in assessing speaking. Furthermore, the teachers and the students also showed that formative assessment has a significant impact on the assessment practices used by teachers, on the one hand, and on the students' speaking performance, on the other one. Consequently, the results obtained have confirmed the previous hypotheses.

Limitation of the Study

The present research attempts to evaluate the methods used by the teachers to assess the students' speaking performance. However, the limitations of this research may be represented in some pedagogical issues, such as the composition of the sample, especially after the study circumstances passed by the university, where we encountered an obstacle in finding the sample. Also, the problem of time, and the organisation of interviews with the teachers of oral expression, where some teachers expressed their unwillingness to be recorded using the phone recorder. In terms of reviewing the literature, there were some obstacles in obtaining some resources from libraries, so we used the Internet to get them.

Pedagogical Implications

In light of the results of the current study, some recommendations can be suggested. They are as follows:

For administration.

- Emphasise the need to reduce the number of students in each classroom, so that the teacher can accurately measure the students' learning skills, and the assessment process will not constitute a burden on the teacher, as it requires a careful focus on the students' performance in the classroom. As a suggestion, it should not exceed 20 students in each classroom to match the time allocated for the oral expression session.
- The administration should supply technological materials (e.g. Labs, audio tools, sound recording, video players, data shows...etc.) to help oral expression teachers to teach the speaking skills accurately.
- The administration should increase the time allocated for the teaching of the speaking skill. Only 3 hours per week to teach this skill are insufficient regarding to its importance as the first skill for communication.
- The administration should provide the university with specialists in assessment in order to ensure more effective assessment process, and promote the teachers with the different assessment practices needed for each language skill.

For teachers.

- The teacher should search for the most important methods and steps that lead to teaching of the speaking skill correctly.
- Teachers should be trained technically by holding more courses and seminars that define the issue of assessing speaking, and how to apply different assessment practices on speaking effectively. This will help them to become familiar with the different stages of assessment and to acquire the technical skills, which the assessment of speaking requires.

- The teacher should pay attention to the speaking performance of each student individually through mutual conversation, using the list of names and random selection.

For students.

- The students should not be satisfied with what the teacher gives them in the lesson only, but they must resort to the different authentic sources of learning, such as: Books, TV, the internet where there are very useful programmes ('ITalki', 'Cambly', and different YouTube channels like, 'English with Lucy').
- The students should take every opportunity to speak inside and outside the classroom, with the teacher, with the classmates, and use various means of social media to speak with the natives.

For researchers.

- The study suggests conducting further researches in the field of formative assessment and taking into consideration the models of developed countries in this field.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Student's Questionnaire: Piloting Stage

Dear students,

We put into your hands this questionnaire, which aims at obtaining data on the role of formative assessment on enhancing the proficiency of the speaking skill among EFL students. To this end, we sincerely ask you to answer the questions below to help us contribute in attaining the purpose of this research. Be sure of the confidentiality of your personal information. Please tick (✓) or specify your response when it is required.

Thank you in advance for your efforts and time spent with us.

Section One: The student's Interface

Q 1: Please, select your target answer:

a. Male.

b. Female.

Q 2: Please, select your age:

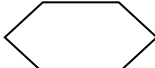


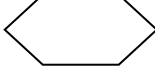
a. (17-25).

b. (25-30).

c. More than 30.

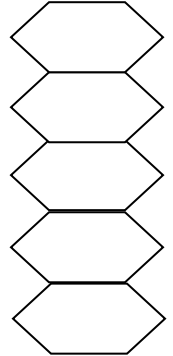
Q 3: From your own perspective, how do you see your level in English?

INVESTIGATION INTO LEARNERS SPEAKING PERFORMANCE

- a. Sophisticated. 
- b. Average. 
- c. Acceptable. 
- d. Weak. 

Q 4: Why did you choose English as a field of study?

- a. Because it is the unified tongue of all the world now.
- b. Because it is one of the fundamentals of the future job.
- c. Because you need it as a prerequisite for completing your studies abroad.
- d. Because you need it as a language to communicate and explore foreigners.
- e. It was not my first choice.



Q 4. 1: If there are other answers, please specify:

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Section Two: The Speaking Skill

Q 5: If you were given a choice, what is the skill that your teachers should focus most?

- a. Speaking. 
- b. Writing. 
- c. Reading. 
- d. Listening. 

INVESTIGATION INTO LEARNERS SPEAKING PERFORMANCE

Q 6: Which productive skill you think is most appropriate for you to reflect your thoughts:

a. Speaking.

b. Writing.

Q 7: How do you find the speaking skill?

a. Easy.

b. Very easy.

c. Difficult.

d. Very difficult.

Q 8: How often do you interact with your teacher in the oral expression session?

a. Always.

b. Sometimes.

c. Rarely.

d. Never.

Q 9: Does your oral expression teacher encourage you to overcome your difficulties in speaking?

a. Yes.

b. No.

Q 10: For you, being a fluent speaker (speaking without problems) means:

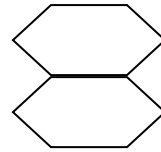
a. To be familiar with grammar.

b. To be familiar with vocabulary.

c. To master pronunciation.

INVESTIGATION INTO LEARNERS SPEAKING PERFORMANCE

- d. To have a prior knowledge on the topics you want to discuss.
- e. To be spontaneous and at ease.



Q 10. 1: If there are others, please mention them:

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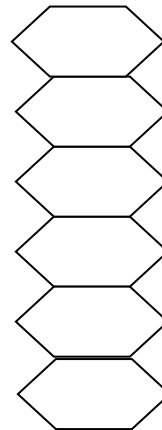
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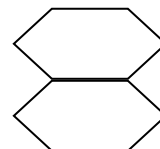
Q 11: What are the main obstacles that may prevent you from being a fluent speaker?

- a. Lack of interaction.
- b. Lack of time.
- c. Lack of confidence.
- d. Lack of motivation.
- e. The influence of the mother tongue.
- f. All above.
- g. Others:



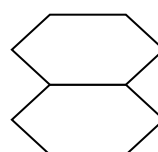
Q 12: Do you practice speaking outside the classroom walls?

- a. Yes.
- b. No.



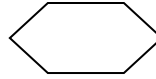
Q 13: In your opinion, to what extent can oral expression courses improve your speaking ability?

- a. To a great extent.
- b. To some extent.



INVESTIGATION INTO LEARNERS SPEAKING PERFORMANCE

c. To a very little extent.



Q 14: What are your favorite speaking activities?

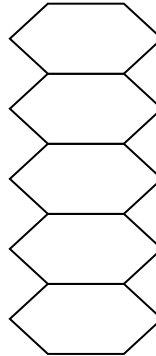
a. Role plays.

b. Presentations.

c. Storytelling.

d. Interviews.

e. Debates.



Q 14. 1: If others, please specify?

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Section Three: Formative Assessment

{This term refers to the teacher's ongoing assessment process which occurs at the end of each lesson or unit.}

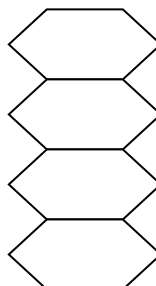
Q 15: How often does your teacher use formative assessment to assess and correct your learning mistakes?

a. Always.

b. Sometimes.

c. Rarely.

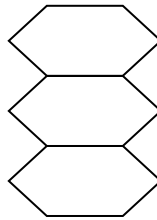
d. Never.



INVESTIGATION INTO LEARNERS SPEAKING PERFORMANCE

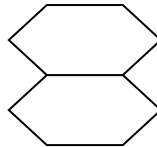
Q 16: In your opinion, is the assessment of speaking as easy as assessing the rest of the skills?

- a. Certainly.
- b. Somehow.
- c. Not at all.



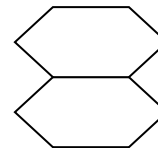
Q 17: When the lesson is over, does the teacher evaluate your ability in speaking?

- a. Yes.
- b. No.



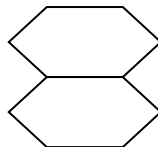
Q 18: How would you like your speaking ability to be assessed?:

- a. Continuously.
- b. Only once (in final tests).



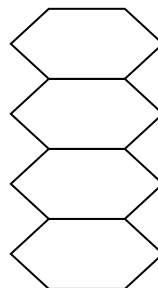
Q 19: Have you ever felt that your teacher did not assess your performance in speaking fairly?

- a. Yes.
- b. No.



Q 20: Do you think that using formative assessment in oral expression courses can improve your speaking performance?

- a. Absolutely.
- b. Somehow.
- c. Not sure.
- d. I don't think so.



Thank You.

Appendix 2

Student's Questionnaire

Dear students,

We put into your hands this questionnaire, which considered as an important tool to support the validity of our research to the Master degree. It focuses on obtaining data on the role that formative assessment can play as an effective means of enhancing the proficiency of the speaking skill among EFL learners. In this endeavor, we sincerely ask you to answer the questions below to help us complete this research. And be sure of the confidentiality of your personal information. Please tick (✓) or specify your response when it is required.

Thank you in advance for your efforts and time spent with us.

Section One: The student's Interface

Q 1: Please, select your target answer:

b. Male.

b. Female.

Q 2: Please, select your age:

Q 3: From your own perspective, how do you see your level in English?

e. Sophisticated.

f. Average.

g. Acceptable.

h. Weak.

Q 4: What motivated you to choose English as your preferred language of study?

f. Because it is the unified tongue of all the world now.

g. Because it is one of the fundamentals of the future job.

h. Because you need it as a prerequisite for completing your studies abroad.

i. Because you need it as a language to communicate and explore foreigners.

Q 4. 1: If there are other answers, please specify:

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Section Two: The Speaking Skill

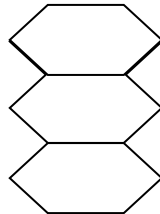
Q 5: If you were given a choice, what is the skill most worthy of attention by teachers:

e. Speaking.

f. Writing.

g. Reading.

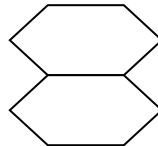
h. Listening.



Q 6: Based on your previous answer, does your teacher pay equal attention to all the skills above?

c. Yes.

d. No.

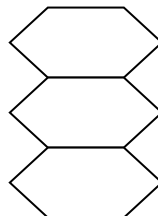


Q 7: It has been said that if you controlled the speaking skill, you have mastered the language as a whole, do you:

a. Agree.

b. Disagree.

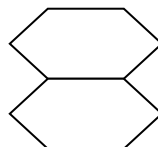
c. Agree to some extent.



Q 8: Depending on the answer above, how do you find speaking English?

e. An easy task to do.

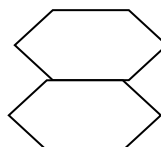
f. A difficult task to do.



Q 9: Have you ever experienced the difficulty of speaking?

a. Yes.

b. No.



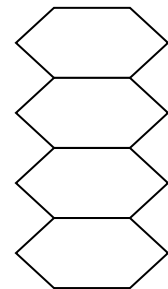
INVESTIGATION INTO LEARNERS SPEAKING PERFORMANCE

Q 9. 1: If yes, could you please specify why?

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Q 10: For you, being a fluent speaker (speaking without problems) means:

- f. To be familiar with grammar.
- g. To be familiar with vocabulary.
- h. To master pronunciation.
- i. To have a prior knowledge on the topics you want to discuss.

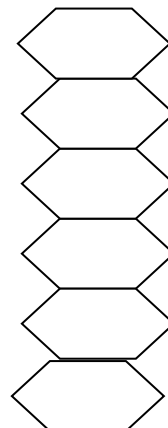


Q 10. 1: If there are others, please mentions them

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Q 11: What are the main obstacles that prevent you from being a fluent speaker?

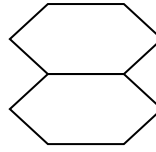
- h. Lack of interaction.
- i. Lack of time.
- j. Lack of confidence.
- k. Lack of motivation.
- l. The influence of the mother tongue.
- m. All above.



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Q 12: Do you practice speaking outside the classroom walls?

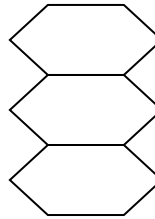
c. Yes.



d. No.

Q 13: In your opinion, to what extent oral expression courses can improve your speaking ability?

d. To a great extent.

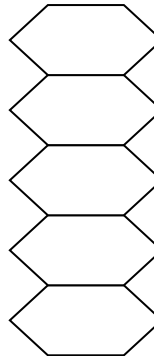


e. To some extent.

f. To a very little extent.

Q 14: What are your favorite speaking activities?

f. Role plays.



g. Presentations.

h. Storytelling.

i. Interviews.

j. Debates.

Q 14. 1: If others, please specify?

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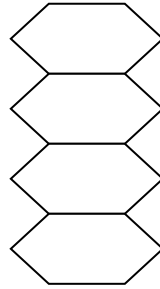
Section Three: Formative Assessment

This term refers to the teacher's ongoing assessment process which occurs at the end of each lesson or unit.

INVESTIGATION INTO LEARNERS SPEAKING PERFORMANCE

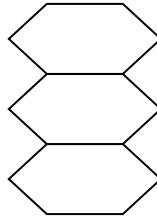
Q 15: How often does your teacher use the formative assessment to assess and correct your learning mistakes?

- e. Always.
- f. Sometimes.
- g. Rarely.
- h. Never.

Four vertically stacked, empty hexagonal bubbles for marking the answer to Q15.

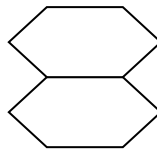
Q 16: From your point of view, is the assessment of speaking as easy as assessing the rest of the skills?

- d. Certainly.
- e. Somehow.
- f. Not at all.

Three vertically stacked, empty hexagonal bubbles for marking the answer to Q16.

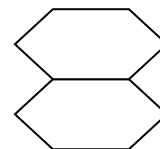
Q 17: When the lesson is over, does the teacher evaluate your ability in speaking?

- c. Yes.
- d. No.

Two vertically stacked, empty hexagonal bubbles for marking the answer to Q17.

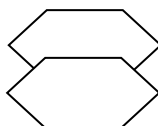
Q 18: Whichever you prefer in assessing your speaking ability:

- c. To be evaluated continuously.
- d. To be evaluated only once (in final tests).

Two vertically stacked, empty hexagonal bubbles for marking the answer to Q18.

Q 19: Have you ever felt that your teacher did not assess your performance in speaking fairly?

- c. Yes.
- d. No.

Two vertically stacked, empty hexagonal bubbles for marking the answer to Q19.

INVESTIGATION INTO LEARNERS SPEAKING PERFORMANCE

Q 20: Do you think that using formative assessment in oral expression courses can improve your speaking performance?

e. Absolutely.

f. Somehow.

g. Not sure.

h. I don't think so.

Thank You.

Appendix 3

Teacher's Interview

The current interview is a data gathering tool, aims at investigating the role played by formative assessment to enhance speaking performance among EFL students at Biskra University. We therefore sincerely invite you to answer the questions below:

1. How many years have you spent teaching oral expression?
2. What are the most common activities that you usually design for a speaking lesson?
3. What are the most difficulties you face while teaching speaking?
4. What methods do you often use to assess your students' speaking performance?
5. What kind of assessment is most effective for you: summative or formative assessment?
6. Do you apply a continuous assessment methodology in your oral expression session?
7. Do you think that formative assessment may be an effective way to enhance your students' ability to speak?

Thank You.

INVESTIGATION INTO LEARNERS SPEAKING PERFORMANCE

المخلص

جاءت هذه الدراسة لتسلط الضوء على أبرز الصعوبات والتحديات التي يعاني منها المتعلم والمعلم حتى حد سواء في تعلم وتعليم مهارة التحدث باللغة الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية. حيث أن السبب المرجح لهاته الصعوبات هو عدم ملائمة أساليب التقييم التي يستعملها معلمي التعبير الشفهي لقياس مهارة الكلام لطلبتهم. يعتبر الهدف العام من هذه الدراسة، هو احتضان مسألة تقييم التحدث وتحديد الظروف الممكنة للمعوقات والصعوبات التي يواجهها المعلمون أو الطلاب، بجانب فحص الأساليب التقييمية التي يطبقها أساتذة التعبير الشفهي في حصصهم. بالإضافة الى التحقق من فعالية الاستعمال الملائم للتقييم التكويني على أداء التحدث للطلبة وعلى الطرق التعليمية والتقييمية للأستاذ. وبناءا على ذلك فإن هذه الدراسة تنقسم الى جزأين: جزء نظري يتناول مختلف الأدبيات حول عملية التقييم ومهارة الكلام، وجزء تطبيقي يناقش الدراسة الميدانية للدراسة الحالية وتحليل المعطيات واستخلاص النتائج. وقد اعتمدنا في ذلك على أداتين لجمع البيانات: استبيان لطلبة السنة الثانية إنجليزية من طور الليسانس في جامعة بسكرة، ومقابلة شفوية لأساتذة التعبير الشفهي. قد توصلنا في الأخير الى أن النتائج كانت إيجابية حيث أن أغلبية الطلبة والأساتذة أكدوا فعالية الاستعمال الملائم للتقييم التكويني في تعزيز قدراتهم على التحدث من جهة، ومن جهة اخرى في صلاحية وفعالية أساليب تقييم مهارة الكلام المستعملة من طرف الأساتذة.