

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages
Department of Foreign Languages
English Division



**INVESTIGATING SOME EFFECTIVE METHODS OF ASSESSING
EFL STUDENTS' PERFORMANCES IN ORAL SESSIONS**

The Case study of second Year Students of English at Mohamed Khider
Univeristy Of Biskra

**A Dissertation Submitted to Mohamed Khider Univeristy Of Biskra in Partial
Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Master's Degree in Sciences of the languages.**

Submitted by:

Makhloufi Mostafa

Supervised by:

Ms. Zerigui Naima

Broad of Examiners

MR. TURKI DJAMEL.....HEAD OF JURY

Ms. ZERIGUI NAIMA.....SUPERVISOR

Ms. HEBIRAT SARA..... EXAMINER

MRS. LADJALI DJAMILA.....EXAMINER

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In the Name of Allah. Most gracious. Most Merciful

Dedication

I dedicate this work

To my parents

To my brothers

To my supervisor

To all my teachers

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Firstly and above all, I would like to thank “ALLAH”.

Then, to my supervisor Ms. Zerigui I would like to say thank you for your guidance and
help.

As I would like to thank the jury members for their valuable pieces of advice and recommendations

Finally, to all students and teachers who participate in this research.

Abstract

The present work investigates some methods of assessing students' performance in oral sessions. During this investigation we tried to study some assessment methods which, we assume, fit EFL students of second year LMD of Biskra University. To achieve such goal, we focused on comprehending assessment and students' oral performance, as they represent the variables of our research. The main focus in the theoretical part of our work was on investigating the students' performance and participation, the oral activities and the teachers' assessment. In this work we followed the descriptive method. Furthermore, we distributed questionnaires to include teachers' experience and students' point of view. Moreover, and in order to strengthen the findings of our research, a classroom observation took place during oral sessions. Discussing the results of students' and teachers' questionnaires, reveals some significant facts about the assessment of students' in oral sessions. based on these facts, and in the light of theoretical part, we listed some methods of assessment as an academic recommendation of this work.

Key words

Formative assessment , summative assessment , diagnostic assessment , students' performance ,students' participation , oral activities .

List of Abbreviations

EFL: English as Foreign Language

FL: Foreign Language

LMD: License Master Doctorate

OE: Oral Expression

STT: Student's Talking Time

TL: Target Language

TTT: Teacher's Talking Time

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General Introduction

Teachers may find themselves lost between an encouraging assessment that may be over optimistic, or a serious assessment that may disappoint the learner. Such problem is faded in written activities, where plenty of time is given for the assessor to analyze each sentence and word. However; it raises a difficult challenge when it is about oral expression activities. According to Littlewood (1981) “There is currently little in the literature that might help a balanced assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of oral versus written assessments” (p.13) . Since oral sessions are based on the immediate and direct communication between students and teachers, every student’s participation should be considered as an achievement to be assessed. Therefore, Joughin (2010) asserted that many theories of learning emphasize the importance of students’ articulating their ideas, exposing their thinking to peers and teachers through speaking

In order to give an accurate assessment to his/her learners, teacher should be aware about students’ needs and weaknesses in oral skill. Moreover, he/she must be updated with every altering in his class. According to (Brookhart, 1999) in her work, *The Art And Science Of Classroom Assessment* “To assess the quality of your students’ work, you need to know what assessment options are available to you, how to construct or select an appropriate assessment from these options, how to get these assessments to yield good-quality information, how to interpret the information and help students to interpret it” (p.56).

Our research follows a descriptive method, in which questionnaires are distributed to EFL students of second year .through this work we aimed to make it clearer and easier to decide which method of assessment the teacher should use and how it should be employed during the oral sessions.

1. Statement of the Problem

The challenge for even expert teachers is the choice of the assessment method. Indeed, finding the most effective method of assessing the learners' oral performance was always the hardest part for the teacher. Moreover, it is crucial for the course's progress, and for the learner's advancement to decide what type of assessment should be followed and to master how it should be implemented. Hence, this work attempts to investigate some effective methods of assessment, with a consideration of all the factors that may affect students' performance.

2. Research Questions

In order to answer the main question which investigates the most effective method of assessing students' performance in oral sessions, we will pass through the answers of the following questions:

- 1- What affects students' performance in oral session?
- 2- Why students' participation is very important in oral classes?
- 3- Do we need needs analysis of the learner to improve the teachers' assessment?

3. Research hypotheses

We assume that:

- 1- psychological and grammatical barriers in addition to the type/topic of the activity affect on students' performance.
- 2- Students' participations reflect their performance and considered as a reliable factor for teachers' assessment.
- 3- The choice of the assessment method and its application will be easier, if the teacher knows more about his/her students

4. Aims of the study

This research aims to:

- Investigate some effective methods of assessing students' performance in oral session.
- Provide the teacher with a guide of selecting the appropriate method of assessment and how it should be conducted.

5. Purpose of the Study

The objective behind this research is to provide the teacher with the most effective methods of assessing learners' performance in oral class. This work will list some useful and adapted methods of assessment and guide the reader to know how such methods should be applied.

6. Significance of the Research

Despite the huge literature about assessment, it is still ambiguous for many teachers to decide which type of assessment they should conduct. As an answer to this problematic, we went deep in investigating all factors linked to a successful assessment. The findings of our research will enlighten the reader with a number of ideas that guide him to find the most effective method of assessing oral performance of EFL learners. What make it worthy is that in this work the focus is on the following important points : the correct understanding of assessment and the differentiation between its types, the consideration of the learners' needs and level in oral sessions and finally, the way of implementation of these methods of assessment.

7. Methodology

7.1 The Choice of the Method

In order to reach this research's aims, the descriptive method is followed. We start with a questionnaire for teachers to have an image about the real situation of class participation of second year EFL in oral class. In the same time, another questionnaire is distributed to understand the students' opinion about teachers' assessment and to consider their points of view and expectations. Finally, and in order to observe the interaction between the learners and the teacher, a classroom observation will take place during some oral expression sessions at the division of English language at Mohamed Kheidar University of Biskra.

7.2 Population and Sample

The population of this study will consist of second year students of English at Mohamed Kheidar University of Biskra. Seventy five (75) learners will be randomly chosen; i.e., Gender is not considered as an effective factor in this research. We will also distribute a second questionnaire to seven (7) teachers, in which four of them are teaching oral expression module.

8. Limitations of the Research

Theories, investigations, and questionnaires were narrowed in time and population. On the other hand, our sample represent only 20% of the students, and 70% of the teachers. Moreover, due to time limitation and the number of students who work on oral skill in their dissertations, we could attend only one session for the classroom observation.

The results of this work are more suitable for:

- Teaching oral expression module of second year EFL learners
- Assessment of students' oral performance .

9. Literature review

The review of this work starts from the book of Nunan, David (1989), *Designing Tasks For The Communicative Classroom* which still considered as a practical guide for teachers of OE. It helps to understand all the learners' skills in order to provide them with the suitable activity. It also includes some details about the content of tasks and how they should be implemented. Nunan, David (ibid) has explained some tasks of oral course from both the summative and formative perspective. However the main concern of his book was on the function of the language, neglecting or at least with less interest on the structure of the language. The same Remark could be made about Hornby (1995), who saw oral class as giving the learner instructions in order to communicate. It means that the major role of the teacher in oral sessions is to show the student how to communicate. As in previous, the focus in this perspective is limited in the function of the language.

In this situation, oral activities are based on natural conversation to stimulate students to interact with each others. In other words, this kind of activities aims to simulate real life situations where language is used for different purposes. Therefore, assessment of the learner's performance during these activities should focus on how the learner uses the language, not what language he is using. Teachers should see language as an instrument and try to assess their students on how they use it. However, teaching oral skill, includes also teaching the structure of language; i.e., considering vocabularies, grammar, spelling and all language components.

According to the second perspective, some linguists dealt with assessing oral performance from the other angle. (Heidi, 1998) argued that the language proficiency interview is the most reliable means of assessing non-native speakers' speaking. In this case, Students participate in an interview with their teachers who focus on the student's language itself not on the purpose or the idea behind what the student says. In this view, the interest is narrowed to accuracy, which is not

enough to master oral skill. Therefore, the obvious solution is the method where both language structure and its functions are involved. Such method was presented by many linguists such as Littlewood (1981), and Patisson(1987) these linguists share the idea that oral activities should help the student to learn the language and to use it. This Means paying attention to accuracy and fluency at the same time.

Despite the huge number of works about assessing oral activities and students' performance, choosing the appropriate method still makes some teachers confused. Therefore, this work is conducted as an attempt to list some methods of assessment which include the structure and the function from one side, and the learner's needs from the other side.

First Chapter: Students' Performance in Oral Sessions

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Introduction

Most of linguists agreed that in order to master a language, learners need to master its four skills. Both productive and receptive skills are crucial in language use and learning. However, the purpose of which the student learns a language decides which skill is more important. Still, Oral skill is always required whatever the language learning objective is. For this reason it is quite possible that after all the works and researches about oral skill, any work about this subject can bring new and significant additions to such broad domain.

As it was asserted by (Lovett et al, 2008), “The ability to use language to communicate effectively is a key foundation for a student's academic success in formal education. It predicts for example literacy achievement”. (Cited in Munro, 2011, p.3). Therefore, using the target language (TL) in class in an attempt to ask a question or to answer another, is the basic concept of students’ participations. And since it is the mirror that reflects the real image of learners’ performance, the teacher sees any raised hand as a sign of understanding or a request for more knowledge.

Our first chapter deals mainly with students’ performance during the oral session. It aims to provide a clarification of learning oral skill, focusing on the student’s feedback and participation towards oral activities. Therefore, it is indispensable for the oral teacher to be aware of most activities and the way it should be implemented, as it is crucial to have a clear map in which the teacher can relate any participation with a specific level of performance, consequently an accurate assessment.

1-Definition of Student's Performance

Oral performance refers to how well a student accomplishes a given task following some standards in oral session. These standards include many features of the target language and its rules. According to Young and He (2001), "it is a mistake to clearly identify native speakers as a standard of language performance for second language learners"(p.167). Generally speaking, when talking about student's performance, teachers focus on accuracy and fluency of students' utterances. However, teacher's task to assess the performance of his/her students can be more complicated. Indeed, many factors can affect on students' talking and on their performance. Young and He (ibid) asserted, "One may only wonder if the candidate's performance (and thus the rating) might have been different had the topic been changed from the economy to nursing"(P.56). Therefore, we can say that the topic of the activity plays an important role in students' involvement which influences their performance.

On the other hand, Student's oral participation is often linked to their discussions, which involves a lengthy conversation, or short exchanges between teachers and students, or within small groups of students. Therefore, any participation during oral sessions should be included in teachers' assessment as a reflection of students' performance.

Accordingly, many researches were conducted in an attempt to reduce the teacher' talking time and increase the students' talking time. Despite teachers' efforts to provoke students' participation, results have shown that student's talking time is very short. Braddock (2015) asserted "If the teacher is constantly dominant and controlling, the learners take no responsibility for their own learning but learns what the teacher decides and when. Student autonomy is thus limited"(p.16).

2. Oral Skill

2.1 Definition of Oral Skill

Bygate(1987) saw oral skill from two perspectives. First, as “ motor-perspective skills involve perceiving, recalling, and articulating in the correct order sounds and structures of the language”(p.5). However, this perspective neglects the interaction factor, and focuses more on the speaker’s ability to produce words and sentences. In other words, it is not enough to produce a correct pattern, if it is not coherent and related to a real context.

As another view of oral skill, Littelwood(1981) asserted “the most efficient communicator in a foreign language is not always the person who is the best at manipulating its structure”(p.4). This leads us to Bygate’s second perspective about oral skill, which focuses on the interaction skill. “Interaction skills involves making decision about communications in accordance with one’s intention, while maintaining the desired relation with others” (Bygate, 1987,p.6). Clearly, in any conversation, the consideration of the interlocutor is a must. Thus, based on what have been said, we can define oral skill as the choice and the articulation of the correct structure to convey our thoughts to the listener.

2.2 Importance of Oral Skill

Nunan(1995,p.17) wrote, “Success is measured in terms of the ability to carry out a conversation in the (target) language.” For this reason, speaking the target language has been always seen as an indicator of the learner’s achievement. In addition Nunan (ibid) asserted that if students do not learn how to speak or do not get any opportunity to speak, they may soon get de-motivated and lose interest in learning. On the other hand, “if the right activities are taught in the right way, speaking in class can be a lot of fun, raising general learner

motivation and making the English language classroom a dynamic place to be” (p.18). Indeed, despite the contrast in our occupations and ways of life, most of us use speaking as the main means of communication. According to Halliday (1989) “the spoken language is, in fact, no less structured and highly organised than the written”(p.79). It is the most flexible and straight way to exchange our thoughts, which make it a vital skill in our communications. For this reason unlike the other skills, learning how to speak takes place at an early age.

Talking ability has been always considered as a sign of literacy; we are judged through the way we talk. Therefore, achieving a high level of fluency and accuracy in oral skill plays an important role in motivating the learners. As an English language learner, every student is expected to prove his ability to communicate in English. This expectation comes not only from the teacher, but also from outside the class. Whether by phone or in face to face conversation, most of us has experienced that moment when we are obliged to use English as the only means to communicate, such experience is considered as a real test of what we have learned in oral sessions.

3. Oral proficiency

In order to achieve language proficiency, the learner has to gain both fluency and accuracy. Omaggio (in Stein, 1999) supposed that Oral proficiency includes the ability to communicate verbally in a functional and accurate way through the target language. This means what language is used and how it is used. He added, “A high degree of oral proficiency implies having the ability to apply the linguistic knowledge to new contexts (topics) and situations” (p.1). In other words, both functional and structural awareness of the language should be included. Therefore, oral teachers’ role is to balance the interest of the student between those two axes.

3.1 Oral Fluency

Fluent learner is the one who can speak naturally and normally. Or simply, the speaker who makes no effort to talk. Fluency is characterised by the natural flow of utterances, and absence of long pauses. Jones (2007, p.18) also defined it as:

Fluency doesn't mean speaking really fast without hesitating. It's being able to express yourself despite the gaps in your knowledge, despite the mistakes you're making, despite not knowing all the vocabulary you might need. It means hesitating in such a way that others keep listening and wait for you to continue, rather than finishing your sentences for you...The opposite of fluency is being tongue-tied and embarrassed when speaking English – or not speaking at all. Fluency goes hand in hand with confidence, and it takes time to develop.

Such skill can be possessed mainly through practice of language, which occurs in an interactional situation. According to Munro (2011), “we have said that the primary function of the spoken language is interactional, to establish and maintain social relations”(p.23). The meaning, is that student cannot practice speaking in isolation, which is the main reason behind the difficulty of achieving a high level of fluency.

3.2 Oral Accuracy

Despite the progressive emphasis on fluency, EFL learners are still required to demonstrate a certain level of accuracy. Therefore, they have to focus on some features such as vocabularies and grammatical rules. The difference between accuracy and fluency, is that accuracy does not need interlocutors or a setting of interaction to be achieved.

Nunan (1989) described the language of EFL learners, as it is more accurate than the native speakers' language, referring to the non natives speakers' language as “ more perfect” (p.20), since it gives more importance to grammar and focuses on constructing a complete sentences. Similarly, Jones (2007) argued that “accuracy in oral speech production refers to

sufficient knowledge about vocabulary, grammatical structures, and corrects pronunciation” (p.8). Furthermore, the ability to memorise vocabularies and grammatical rules makes accuracy an achievable goal. Therefore, most students can demonstrate a high level of understanding of the language rules. In structural view, oral teachers focus on the correctness and accuracy of the language. oral activities in this case should be directed to deal with grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation...etc.

4. Factors Affecting the Selection of Oral Activities

Clarke and Silbersteine (cited in Littelwood,1981, p.59) asserted that “classroom activities should parallel the 'real world' as closely as possible”. Therefore, The main purpose of oral class activities is to simulate daily life's situations and create various topics for the language learner (LL). In addition, oral activities, provide LLs with the environment that stimulate them to communicate through the target language (TL) and practice their knowledge about it.

The main goal of teaching oral skill is to urge the learner to use the TL with an emphasis on both the structure and the function. According to Littlewood (1981), “one of the most characteristic features of communicative language teaching is that it pays systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language” (p.1). Therefore, oral class is the source from which the student learns the correct grammar and use of spoken language. Indeed, oral class activities provide the student with the opportunity to practice speaking, and extend his previous knowledge through the interaction and contribution in these activities.

There are many types of oral activities which can be performed in oral session . The choice of these activities depends mainly, but not exclusively, on the following factors:

The learners' level

The Learner's Needs

The objective of The Activity

The available Materials

4.1 The Learners' Level

The challenge facing the teacher is that in one class, students demonstrate different levels of understanding. Thus, finding the activity that fits all students is considered as one of the hardest tasks for the Oral Expression teacher. As it was argued by Paul Braddock (2016), learning activities are related to the learners' level. For instance, A1/A2 (i.e., beginners) students can perform activities such as: Motivating speaking activities for lower levels and Word Family Framework. However, students with a higher level as in the case of C1/C2, should be engaged in activities like fluency activities for higher levels and storytelling tasks.

4.2 The Learner's Needs

Needs analysis is vital before the design of any course. According to Munro (2011), "to help them(learners) to learn a language we need to answer the question what do they need to know in order to learn a language?"(p.73). Therefore, as much knowledge the teacher knows about his learners, as easier to choose the appropriate activity; i.e., knowing the learners' needs helps the teachers to reinforce points of weaknesses, which leads to improve the learners' performance and make the learning process more effective.

4.3 The Objective of The Activity

Mainly, there are two aims of oral activities: teaching the structure and teaching the function (i.e., the use of the language). This perspective of oral activities was discussed by Harmer (2007) in his book *the practice of English language* :

we need to decide whether a particular activity in the classroom is designed to expect the student's complete accuracy-as in the study of a piece of grammar, pronunciation exercise or some vocabulary work, for example- or whether we are asking the student to use the language as fluency as possible. (p.143).

This means that, in general, oral activities aim to improve students' knowledge about spoken language rules or/and motivate them to practice their speaking skill in the target language (TL) in order to improve their fluency. Therefore, before starting any task, it is quite important to be aware of the aim of this task and the expected achievement of students during and after performing the activity.

4.4 Available Materials

According to (Nunan 1995), "Materials whether commercially developed or teacher-produced are an important element within the curriculum"(p.208). It facilitates the teacher's task and enhances the learners' attention and involvement. Therefore, the lack of materials and aids limits the teachers' choices and shortens his/her list of activities.

Similarly, materials selection is depending on the purpose or the type of the activity. As it was discussed by Brown and Yule (1983) "Obviously the sort of materials which is selected for a particular course will be selected on criteria which are determined by the aims of the course". (p.80). Therefore, the available materials should serve both the student and the teacher to attain the course's aim.

5. Types of Oral Activities

It is almost impossible to mention all types of oral activities. Firstly, because there are many types and ways to employ each one of them. And, secondly, because each linguist, researcher or teacher can produce his own type of activity depending on different factors, as it was previously mentioned. Therefore, in an attempt to provide the reader with an overall understanding of the two main categories of oral activities,(i.e. the structural and the functional view) and to give the teacher the choice to manipulate them according to what his students need, we tried to discuss these activities from some linguists' perspectives, as the following:

5.1 Patisson's View of Oral Activities

Patisson(1987) (cited in nuan 1989, p. 68) stated seven types of oral activities :

1. Questions and answers: based on the notion of creating an information gap. This information is hidden from the student. Then, through hints and explanations, the participant is requested to guess the lacking information
2. Dialog and role ply: act a real life situation; in which students are given the right to speak freely; i.e., they are not bounded by a script.
3. Matching activities: for beginner students, it includes pictures and words' diagrams.
4. Communication strategies: it helps the learners to develop their communicative abilities.
5. Picture and picture story: present pictures to stimulate students to speak through description of the picture.
6. Puzzle and problems: it focuses the whole class's attention towards solving the problem, which makes students speak freely. In other words language is used as a means to communicate not as a goal to be achieved.
7. Discussion and decision : it improves the group work through discussions about a topic of students' interest.

All these activities can be designed from structural or functional perspective, or both at the same time. Teachers can manipulate the aim of any activity to fit the learners' needs. As it is argued by Littlewood (1981, p.8) "Each kind of activity has its own role to play in helping learners to develop both fluency of behaviour and clarity of understanding".

Furthermore, the flexibility in oral activity makes it easy for the learners to improve both their accuracy and fluency. In other words, teachers can intervene in any moment to correct the learner's language (structure) ,or adjust the way he uses it (function).

5.2 Littlewood's View of Oral Activities

In the second perspective, concerning the types of oral activities, we consider Littlewood (1981) and his idea of relating structural to communicative function of language. As it was explained in his book *Communicative Language Teaching*, there are three main categories of oral activities:

Structural Activities

Communicative Activities

Structural Communicative Activities

5.2.1 Structural Activities

In this type of activities teachers focus on the structure of the language and care about its correctness. To clarify, we consider the following example, in which students are required to answer with the correct form of the past simple.

Teacher: john has written the letter.

Student: john wrote the letter

Or

Teacher: john has seen the movie.

Student: john saw the movie.

We can notice that there was no communication, and learners' task is simply to reproduce the same sentence with a change in the time of the verb. This practice can improve only the grammatical knowledge. As a result, learners do not worry about the sentence meaning; and narrow most of their attention on the verb.

5.2.2 Communicative Activities

In such activities, the teacher encourages the learners to speak freely. The emphasis in this case is on developing the learner's communicative ability and makes him familiar with the target language. Tasks that include interaction are the most used in this type of activities. As it was claimed by Yang(2010) "In spite of giving the student correct way to learn English, oral English classes should be made of full use to construct natural and authentic environment for the student to speak English"(p.341). It means that the teacher's role in oral class is to create a suitable environment that stimulates the learners to be involved in a conversation. This can be done through activities that imitate real life and which make the student think on the target language as a means not as a goal.

5.2.3 Structural Communicative Activities

Littelwood (1981) suggested some activities that relate structural to communicative function. Accordingly, the teacher has to assess both the language and its use at the same time.

Thus, the previous example can be slightly modified as the following:

Teacher :by the way, has john written the letter yet?

Student: yes, he wrote it yesterday

Or

Teacher: has john seen the movie?

Student: yes he saw the movie.

“It is generally accepted that we have to distinguish between ‘learning that’ and ‘learning how’”(Nunnan, 1989,p.12). In other words, LLs are expected to know various grammatical rules of the language, and how they should use them in their communications. Therefore, Littelwood’s suggestion should be seen as a betterment of the oral activities, since it focuses on both accuracy and fluency of the language. Such view makes oral class more beneficial as it provides the learner with the opportunity to correctly practice the language.

5.3 In-Class Activities

5.3.1 Warm up Activities

In order to hook the majority of students’ attention and prepare them for learning, teachers employ a warm up activity at the beginning of the oral session. Crooks and Chaudron (2001), (cited in bourezzan 2014, p.23), considered warm up activities as a short introduction to the course. It includes the presentation of some key words and hints to help students to be prepared to the topic to be discussed.

Furthermore, in their book, *Classroom Instruction That Works With English Language Learners. 1st ed* , Hill and Flynn (2006) explained some warm up activities. For example, the who/what am I? Is an activity which is based on giving some hints to help students to find the right answer. Teachers give some pieces of information and include key words, then ask students about their prediction in an attempt to guess the right answer.

Remark: although in few works, warm up activity was seen as an oral activity, we should clarify that it cannot stand as an independent one; i.e. it should be considered as an indispensable stage of any oral session.

5.3.2 Conversation

Most teachers try to create debates and discussions about some topics of students' interest. This will stimulate the student to speak and engage in conversations with other students or with the teacher. Murcia (2001) views that "one speaking activity which is particularly suited to this kind of analysis is conversation, the most fundamental form of oral communication" (p. 108). Cited in loubazid 2012, p. 27). Indeed conversations are useful for learning the use of language in a natural way. It provides the student with the opportunity to practice his interactional abilities, thus to improve his fluency. According to Hedge (2000 ,p. 277), the main advantages of conversation activities are :

- It helps and motivates the EFL student to use the TL through conversations and dialogues for long time.
- It provides the students with the opportunity to practice the required strategies in interpersonal communication.
- It is one of the most successful activities to memorize and master language creations (i.e., students can remember most of their participations during the oral activity)

5.3.3 Oral Presentations

There are many ways to employ an oral presentation. Whether individually or in small groups, students are required to talk about a particular topic. In most times, student's presentation is ended by a short conversation, where students are allowed to participate by asking questions or giving remarks. Chivers and Shoolbred (cited in Bouzzeran, 2014,p .45) discussed the characteristics of oral presentation as the following :

- Careful planning and preparation.
- Good time management.

- Relevant and interesting content.
- Good communication skills .
- A suitable audience participation.

5.3.4 Role Plays

Budden (2006) defines role-playing as “any speaking activity in which you act either as someone else or put yourself into an imaginary situation”. According to him, Role-play is considered as “a useful activity for EFL learners to practice the spoken form”. (cited in Bourezzane , 2015, p.40). Furthermore, Thornbury(2005) asserted that “the term ‘role play’ refers to the set of activities in which students take an imaginative leap out of the boundaries of the classroom, providing a useful practice for real life language use”(p.55). Therefore, the main purpose of role plays is to simulate real life situations, where students are required to live the role and perform it as it is real.

6. Obstacles Affecting Student’s Performance

It is crucial for the teacher to be aware of most obstacles that may hinder the student’s performance. Such awareness helps him to adapt oral activities to fit his/her students. For instance lack of motivation can be treated by providing topics of learners’ interest and level. In other words, the teacher’s role is to adjust the topic of the activity and its difficulty to make it interesting and feasible for the majority of students. For this reason, understanding these obstacles plays an important role in assessing students’ performances.

6.1 Psychological Barriers

6.1.1 Anxiety and Stress

Anxiety refers to the fear and uneasiness that appear on the learner in the class. Such feeling is most provoked when the student participates. Despite its negative effect on students' performance, some researchers believe that anxiety can be useful. As was asserted by Long (2000), "certain amount of anxiety can help arousal and performance" (p.134). This means that it can be an additional motivation for the learner to improve his level. However, most of students are unable to control their anxiety. In other words, they cannot benefit anxiety's role as a motivation, without being influenced by its negative effects.

Even though it is tightly related to the learner's personality, anxiety can be treated through the intervention of the teacher. This can be done by creating a friendly atmosphere that encourages the learner to be an active participant. One of these strategies to achieve such environment is to convince the students that all their mistakes are accepted and that making mistakes is the first step in making progress.

Stress, on the other hand, can be defined as the permanent awareness and anxious due to the over thinking on tasks and examinations, or as it is pointed out by Long (2000) as an "academic pressure" (p.135). It is a serious problem which affects not only on the student's academic performance but also on his life . Therefore, it is necessary to observe all students' behaviours during the class.

Loosen the stress, can be done by providing the students with samples of examinations or by giving them questions in form of tests, without grading or marking their answers. The teacher in this case is formatively assessing his student focussing on enhancing their level rather than knowing what they know. The benefit of this strategy, in addition to acquiring new knowledge, is to make students familiar with the examination and tests' atmosphere.

6.1.2 Student's Personality

Students' personality is a crucial factor in their learning. (Seniore,2006). "When students come to class they bring with them their own personality and their learning expectations"(Cited in Harmer, 2006 ,p.153). Therefore, students are expected to be flexible and adaptable with the classroom environment. They also have to accept their peers' personality and to be open minded to what happens in the class.

Personality plays the role of the filter between the teacher's input and students' understanding. One example of the effect of the personality on learning is the reaction towards teacher's assessment; which appears when students disengage after being corrected by the teacher or the peer. Therefore, teachers should be aware on the way they assess their students, in order to preserve the student involvement.

To correct the students' participation without disturbing the pace of his learning, some teachers follow the pause-prompt-praise strategy, suggested by Brown and Yule (2006) in their book *Classroom Instruction That Works With English Language Learners*. This strategy based on three stages. The first is to ask the student to make a pause when he is struggling to find the right answer. In this pause, the teacher should discuss the difficulty facing the student. The second stage is the prompt in which the teacher provides the student with suggestions to facilitate the task. Finally, praising the student for his participation which motivates him and makes him feel more comfortable and willing to more involvement.

6.2 .Linguistic Problems

6.2.1 Lack of Vocabularies

The amount of vocabularies that a student knows decides what he/she is able to say in oral expression. Thornbury (2005) stated that "spoken language also has a relatively high proportion

of words and expression” (p.22). Thus, even when the student is interested in the activity, lack of words can be the barrier that prevents him to participate. Expanding student’s register of the target language’s vocabularies can solve this issue. Therefore, some students follow a daily schedule to learn new words, and employ them whenever it is possible.

Honeyfield(1977) stressed the importance of the context in learning meanings of new vocabularies . According to his explanation, it is not possible for any course to teach the learner all the required vocabularies to understand a written or spoken text. Therefore, teachers should teach the strategy for inferring the meaning of the new words. (Cited in Nunan,1995,p.71)

6.2.2 Grammatical Mistakes

EFL students are expected to achieve an advanced level of grammar knowledge. Munro(2011) asserted “ Being able to arrange ideas in order and to comprehend by using the word order are key abilities in learning language” (p.115) . Moreover, lack of knowledge about grammatical rules makes the student unable to relate words to construct any sentence; In other words, understanding the rules, which governs the production of comprehensible sentences, provides the student with the ability to manipulate words to build utterances with meanings . However, grammatical awareness may obstruct the student’s oral productions. Davies and Pearse (2000) argued that the awareness of correctness in term of linguistics, and the fear of making grammatical mistakes reduce students’ performance and hinder their participation in oral activities. (Cited in Loubazid 2012,p.10).

6.3 Difficult Activities

This problem faces both the teacher and the student. On one hand, teachers are required to provide activities that fit all students’ level. On the other, the student has to cope with these

activities through participation and involvement. Therefore, knowing the level of language learning allows the teacher to work within the student's "Zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky, 1978, cited in Brown and Yule 1983), which refers to the difference between what the learner can achieve with and without the teacher help.

Treating this issue should be done from both sides. First, from the teacher's side, according to Harmer (2007), "we need to do our best to introduce topics that are relevant to our students' experience" (p.157). However, the challenge facing most of the teachers is that in one class, students have different levels; therefore, the activity which could be easy for one student can be tricky or difficult for another. Some teachers, in an attempt to solve this problem, split the tasks of the same activity between students depending on their level. For example in role plays, students with less talking ability take the secondary roles in which their participation is short and their script is clear. However, the teacher should not impose his opinion on who plays what; the distribution of roles should be based on students' choice.

Secondly, from the side of the learner, student's level can be presented in one of the following cases:

- When students' previous knowledge is insufficient to cope with the activity: In this case students find themselves out of the learning process, feeling anxious to be asked to answer or to participate;
- When the students' level is parallel to the course difficulty and the teacher's input: This represents the typical situation; students will pay attention to the activity, and play an effective role in the class.
- When students already know what the teacher aims to teach: they become less serious and they lost concentration on the course. Such behaviour may disturb the class involvement to the lecture, and affects on other students.

Because, teachers are bounded by the syllabus and by the academic level of the majority of students, they cannot focus only on few students at the expense of the others. Therefore, and in attempt to lessen the gap between students' level, the teacher should assign home works to their students. "Homework is an effective means of extending student learning beyond the school day." (Hill and Flynn, 2007,p.77). The main advantage of home work in this case, is that late students can fulfil tasks in their own pace, which give them the opportunity to cope with their peers.

Conclusion

Oral skill is considered as a crucial skill to be developed. It is also considered as a sign of learners' achievement and a means of assessing students' oral performances. Therefore the emphasis was given to teaching spoken language, and to make the learner speak the target language fluently and accurately. Such goal can be attained through the understanding of oral activities and oral class environment. Thus, we attempted to clarify some types of oral activities and investigate the factors that control the teacher in selecting them.

Since our work deals with assessing students' oral performances, we had to include some difficulties that face the student during oral session. Being aware of these barriers of language learning makes the teacher able to predict the students' outcomes, which helps him/her in making the right decision when assessing the students.

Second Chapter: Assessment of Students' Oral Performance

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Conclusion

Introduction

Learning a language requires a lasting assistance. Therefore, teacher's supervision is indispensable for both novice and expert language learners. Teacher's role is not exclusive to students' supervision, but exceeds to many others tasks. Indeed, despite the varieties of these tasks, most of them can be included in the broad term of assessment.

Since assessment of students' learning depends on students, teachers and classroom environment, it is considered as one of the most challenging tasks in teaching. Furthermore, assessment of oral activities is even more complicated. Brown and Yule(1983), " The assessment of the spoken language has traditionally been a headache for the English teachers'". (p.102). Therefore, in this chapter we attempt to provide more clarification for the reader to better understand assessment of students' oral performance.

Assessment can be divided into three main categories. In this chapter, we discuss these categories and explain their similarities and differences. Furthermore, a part of this chapter explains some methods and tools of assessment and clarifies their use and significance in oral sessions.

1. Definition of Assessment

According to Brown and Yule(1983), assessment is the process of gathering information about the student's attainment. It can be divided into three categories: formative, summative and diagnostic assessment. Harvey (1998) asserted, "When the cook tastes the soup it is formative evaluation; when the dinner guest tastes the soup, it is summative evaluation" (p.7). In other words, formative assessment aims to adjust the teaching for the betterment of the learning. However, summative assessment's role is to judge students' performance and teachers' methods.

As a third category, diagnostic assessment aims to investigate the learning and teaching processes, in an attempt to provide the teacher with information about how to help his students. Long (2000), argued that if students' performance were not investigated, teachers would not be able to improve their level by addressing their needs and employing the appropriate method to enhance their existing skills. Therefore, diagnostic assessment plays an essential role as it clarifies what adjustments are needed and what method should be followed.

2. Assessment Criterion

Before we go deeper in investigating assessment methods, we have first to clarify the ambiguity of many concepts and explain the differences between them. For instance, summative and formative, formal and informal, examination and coursework and finally peer and self assessment. Indeed, understanding these terms provides the teacher with an overall vision of what, when and how a particular assessment should be implemented.

Black and Harvey (1986) asserted "...so that assessment is part of a "system" of diagnosis and consequently the outcome of the assessment is not an end in itself, but a guide to remedial action if required" (cited in Riding and Butterfield,1990, p.11). It means that all assessment trends share the same common point of seeking acquaintance from the students. Furthermore, Mansel et al (2009) asserted " "Formative" and "summative" are not labels for

different types or forms of assessment but describe how assessments are used. For example a task or an activity is not formative unless the information it provides is actually used to take learning forward” (cited in Harmer , 2007 p.9). In other words, this information , how it is attained and what is its contribution on students’ learning, defines the type or the category of the assessment.

To make it clear, we assert the synonyms of some important terms as the following:

- ✓ Formative assessment = assessment *for* learning = informal assessment
- ✓ Summative assessment = assessment *of* learning = formal assessment

3. Assessment Categories

The purpose behind employing a particular type of assessment decides to which category it belongs. In general there are three purposes of any assessment. First, when the teacher aims to help the student and improve his level. All his efforts in this case are considered as a formative assessment. Second, when the focus is on students’ obstacles and learning difficulties. The teacher, in this case, follows a diagnostic assessment. Third case is when we test students’ performance or learning approaches by the summative assessment.

To guarantee the best use from any type of assessment, both students and teachers should be aware about how, when and why it should be conducted. According to Mcalister (2013, p.9)

“In deciding which assessment methods to use, institutions, faculties, schools and departments may find it helpful to consider how to make information and guidance on assessment clear, accurate and accessible to all staff, students, placement or practice providers, assessors and external examiners, thereby minimizing the potential for inconsistency of marking practice or perceived lack of fairness”.

Accordingly we list the main categories of assessments as the following:

Formative assessment.

Summative assessment.

Diagnostic assessment.

3.1 Formative Assessment

Phye (1997) viewed that “a definition of assessment should provide a link to educational processes that seek the benefit of each student. It is possible to recognize that assessments have administrative uses as well as instructional value”(p.120) . In this perspective, assessment is seen from its contribution in learning. It represents the teacher’s intervention to guide, support, and instruct his students; i.e., it serves the learning and focuses on improving the student’s level. Therefore, it is referred to, in many books, as assessment for learning.

Furthermore, Riding and Butterfield (1990) asserted that Formative assessment should be conducted in parallel with the course. And that it aims to gather information to be used in adjusting the teacher’s input or the course content. Moreover, Mansel et al (2009) argued, “Formative is the use of day-to-day, often informal, assessments to explore pupils’ understanding so that the teacher can best decide how to help them to develop that understanding.”(p.9). The teacher, in this case, pays attention to all students’ oral productions, seeking for any anomaly or difficulty. Therefore, and in order to facilitate this task, students’ participation should be well organised as much as possible; i.e., students’ contributions during the oral activity should be individual even in group work.

As a result, we shall consider formative assessment as a teaching tool. This perspective was and still adopted by many researchers. For example, Brooks (2002) (cited in Harmer, 2007 p.44), focused on the role of assessment as a teaching tool. The following figure shows some quotations that prove his point of view.

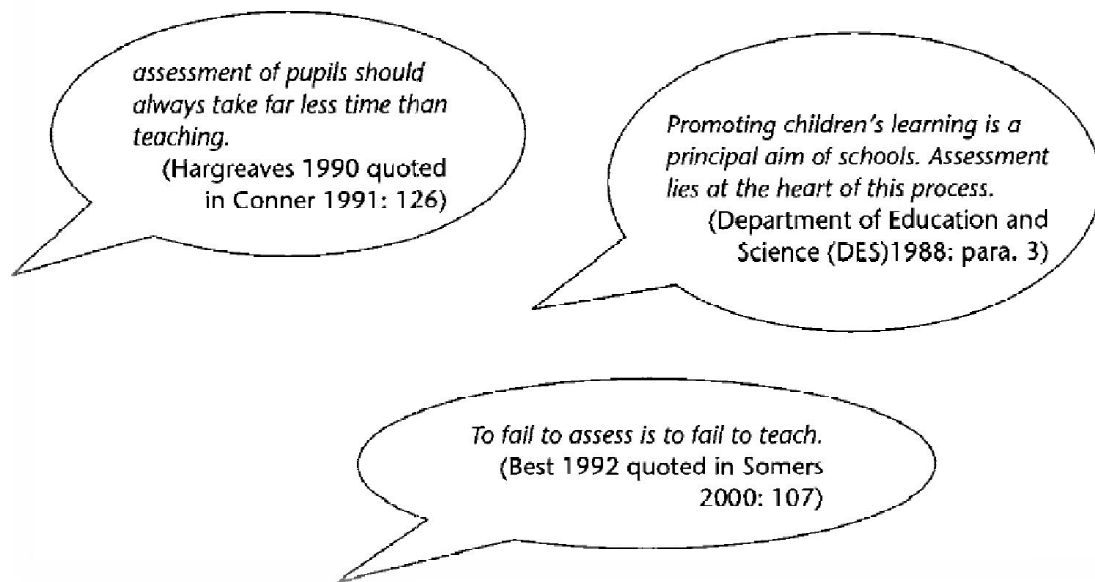


Figure 1: Assessment and Teaching. (Harmer,2007, p.44).

Similarly H, Hatfull and Jacobs-Sera (2009) asserted “Formative assessment is followed by the instructor as input in order to redirect and improve classroom teaching”.(p.24). It reveals the role of the teacher as a prompter, facilitator and a source of knowledge. Hanauer et al (2009) also listed the following characteristics of assessment for learning:

- Formative assessment is a part of effective planning: It provides an effective plan of what, when and how the course should be conducted;
- It focuses on how students learn: It pays attention to students’ productions for further understanding of their learning;
- It helps learners know how to improve;
- It is central to classroom practice: Plays the role of the aid and supports learners in difficult tasks;
- Assessment for learning is constructive: it focuses on improving the students’ level.

- Assessment for learning fosters the motivation: it ensures that student will be supported, which stimulate him/her to participate.

3.2 Summative Assessment

At the beginning, the understanding of the term assessment was narrowed to the examination of the learner. Cohen et al. (1996, p.424-425) asserted:

Traditional assessment cast the teachers as the assessor who set summative examination, marked them in private and wrote a report about student's success or failure in private to be delivered to the student's parents or guardian. The student was largely kept out of the assessment. (Cited in Spinelli2012, p.5).

In such perspective, the main role of assessment is to decide the failure or the success of the student depending on his performance in a given test. Therefore, student's role in assessment is neglected and his final answer represents his only contribution. Fulcher and Davidson (2007) asserted "Scoring is concerned with the *how much* or *how good* of language testing" (p.91). Thus it is not about improving the student's level, rather than knowing his level and achievement of the tested skill. In other words, there is no interaction with the teacher; which means there will be no improvement in the students' learning.

Summative assessment is when a teacher sum up what his students have acquired. Generally, it includes tests and examinations at the end of a learning unit. Therefore, the purpose of summative assessment is to know what the student knows to make a judgment about his/her understanding; or as Riding and Butterfield (1990) stated "Summative evaluation is used to determine the extent to which a candidate has achieved the intended outcomes of a course." (p.59)

However, Hanauer, Hatfull and Jacobs-Sera (2009,p.23) have a contrast view of assessment, according to them, " Assessment needs to be differentiated from the processes of evaluation and testing which are often used interchangeably". For this reason, assessment was

given more importance through the attachment of other tasks, such as the continuous guidance of the learner, and the focus on how we can teach more knowledge rather than knowing what student has understood from what he has been taught.

3.3 Diagnostic Assessment

Riding and Butterfield, (1990) explained diagnostic assessment, as it mainly aims to identify students' areas of weakness in an attempt to promote the awareness which will help the student to improve his level. Similarly, Gardner (2012) stressed the role of diagnostic assessment in defining the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), explained in figure 2, which was (ZPD) identified by Vygotsky (1986) as “the gap between what the learner can achieve without help and what may be achieved with suitable help” (cited in Gardner, 2012, p.90). Based on this, we can define diagnostic assessment as the investigation that looks for the weaknesses of the student and the difficulties of learning.

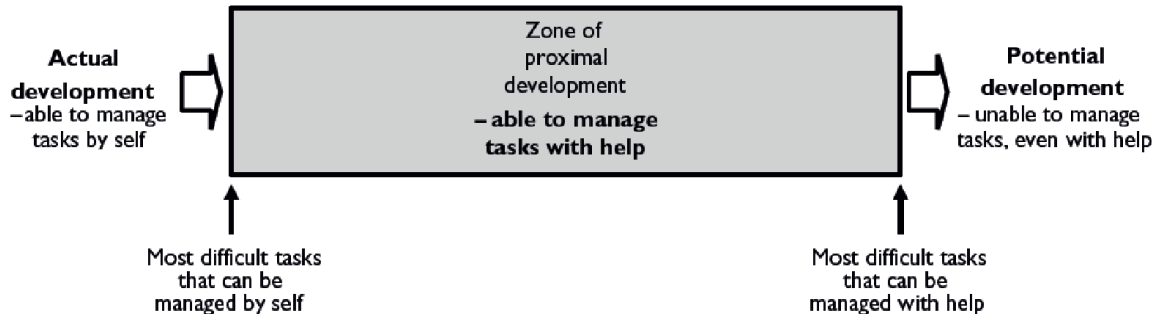


Figure 2: The zone of proximal development. (Cited in Long, Martyn2000, p.39)

Diagnostic assessment provides the assessor with an answer to where and how the student fails. According to Race and Brown (1998), “assessment should provide students with a range of processes through which they can demonstrate their relative strengths and weaknesses”. (Cited in Brown and Abeywickrama, 2010, p. 17).

According to Palomba, et al (1999), “Assessment is the systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving learning

and development.”(p.4). Furthermore, Zachos (2004) stated that assessment “is the process of obtaining evidence to support inferences concerning the attainment of learning objectives” (p.748). These definitions stress the importance of collecting and interpreting evidences of students’ learning in order to enlighten the teacher with all students’ difficulties.

Oral teacher has to be aware about the design, the content and the aim of all the activities to be performed in the classroom. Teachers, in this case, rely on students’ performance as a reflection of the effectiveness of the teaching method. In other words, the decision of which materials and method should be conducted is depending on the gathered information of diagnostic assessment. Therefore, it is seen as a tool to inform the teacher about what the student needs in terms of knowledge, about how this knowledge should be taught and about its effectiveness on students’ performance.

Moreover, Phye(1997) defined diagnostic assessment as the planned process of gathering and synthesizing information relevant to the purposes of:

- Discovering and documenting students' strengths and weaknesses,
- Planning and enhancing instructions, or
- Evaluating learning progress and making decisions about students.

Clearly, such view is included, or at least, related to summative assessment. However, it is a broad concept that considers all factors of learning, and a long term goal that aims to gather the maximum of knowledge about the student in an attempt to understand the obstacles of the learning process. Hanauer, Hatfull and Jacobs-Sera (2009) argued that diagnostic assessment aims to provide both the teacher and the student with information about the actual understanding and performance of the student’s learning.

In sum, we notice that assessment categories are interrelated, and that each category serves learning and teaching in a different way. The following figure summarizes these categories and their main role in assessing students' performance.

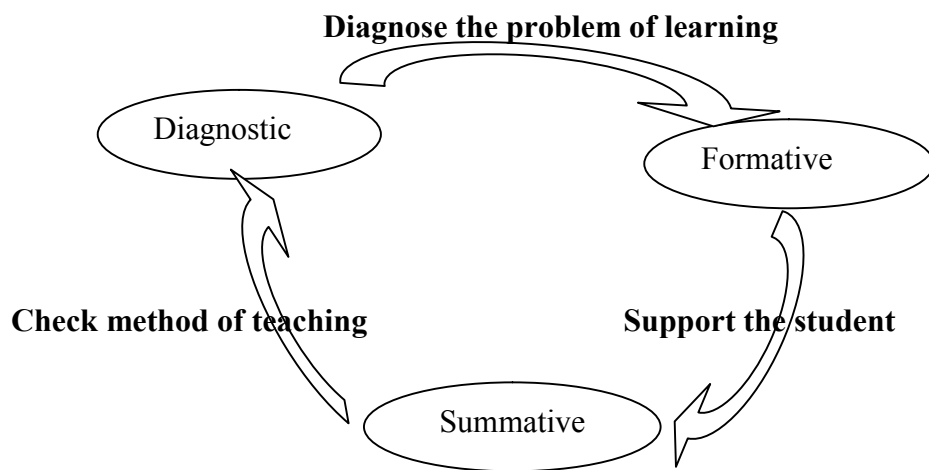


Figure 3: Assessment categories

4. Assessment Methods

After knowing the three main categories of assessment, we can move forward to list some methods of assessment. We should know that each of the following methods belongs to at least one category of assessment.

4.1 Formative Assessment Methods

As it is mentioned before, the main goal of formative assessment is to improve learning; therefore, it is likely to be referred to as assessment for learning. Formative assessment can be conducted through many methods such as:

4.1.1 Group Work

What makes it crucial in formative assessment is that group work allows the interaction between students, which improves the learning process and facilitates the teacher's role. In other words, the teacher is no more the only source of knowledge, and students can also learn from each other. According to Lambdin Kroll, Masingila, & Mau (1992, cited in Phye,1997, p.300), “many teachers depend on cooperative group work to improve late learners' level”.

The advantage of group work is the extensive interaction between students. Such interaction encourages knowledge exchange and enhances students' involvement in the course. Lambdin et al 1992 (ibid) made a note about the difficulty of assessing results of group work. The same remark was asserted by Riding and Butterfield (1990), “Group work requires videotaping and it is very time consuming to assess each individual, as the tape will need to be played a number of times.”(p.157). In simpler words, the production of a group work does not reflect the performance of individual student, which requires the teacher to spend more time and effort to treat each student aside. Therefore, the best employment of cooperative learning should be in formative assessment, where the focus is on making progress and improving teaching outcomes.

Furthermore, group work, for many students, can be the best way of learning. It makes learning less stressful and more enjoyable experience. According to Riding and Butterfield (1990), “The skills valued in a number of subjects are best, and in some cases can only be, acquired through group work”(p.40)

4.1.2 Teacher's Feedback

Whether by questioning, correcting or supporting of the student's participation, teacher's intervention is considered as a crucial method in formative assessment. Brown and Abeywickrama (2010,p.16), asserted “A good deal of a teacher's informal assessment is

embedded in classroom tasks designed to elicit performance without recording results and making fixed judgments about a student's competence''. The teacher, in formative assessment, plays the role of a prompt supporter, in which he provides the students with an overall image of their performances, explaining where and why they failed. Brown and Abeywickrama(ibid) narrowed teacher's feedback in comments or suggestions, and argued that any intervention during student's participation should aim to improve his language ability.

Depending on students' achievement, feedback may take many forms. Brown and Abeywickrama (ibid) reported "A systematic set of observations of a student's frequency of oral participation in class is certainly a formal assessment" (p.17). For instance, when the task is well done, the teacher has to promote his students and encourages them for more involvement. On the other hand, when the task exceeds students' ability, the teacher switches his role to a facilitator. It is important to communicate to students where and why they succeed or failed in any task. As an assessor, the teacher needs to provide further explanations and hints to students.

4.2 Summative Assessment Methods

In order to test the student's understanding or the teacher's method efficiency, the assessor uses summative assessment at the end of a learning unit. As it was argued by Riding and Butterfield (1990, p.44), "summative evaluation takes place at or towards the end of a course. It covers the whole of the course". The following are some methods of summative assessment.

4.2.1 Standardized Tests

After any learning unit, teachers test their students to know what they have learned from what they have been taught. The test should cover the following: student's ability to talk freely, student's knowledge about grammar and vocabularies and his/her performance in conversational settings. Fenstermacher (2014), "The standardized tests widely used in schools are multiple-skill achievement tests that evaluate knowledge and understanding in several curricular areas."(p.18).

In other words, the role of summative assessment is to find out what and how much students have learned the material they expected to learn.

Because it seeks to test the validity of a particular learning method or the acquired knowledge through it, summative assessment should take place at the end of the learning unit. Furthermore, its results are employed in grading the students; i.e., based on tests and examinations, decisions of whether the student is capable to move to the next level are made.

In sum, oral tests rely on student's oral performance to questions or tasks under formal examination setting. Such tests take place at the end of the unit to determine achievement and learning progress, or as Fenstermacher (ibid) asserted, "Standardized tests are used to determine what, if anything, the students gained from instruction."(p.50).

4.2.2 Achievement Assessment

Thompson, J. (2002) defined performance assessment as a "practice that requires students to create evidence through performance that will enable assessors to make valid judgments about 'what they know and can do' in situations that matter." (Cited In Tucker and Stronge, 2005, p.44). Therefore, students are required to prove a certain level of proficiency in a specific task. In general, achievement tests focus on how the student talks. Thus, the teacher may use both fluency and accuracy as a measurement of students' oral performance.

Many tasks can be used to make a judgment on students' performance. Phye (1997, p.117) mentioned open-ended questions, where students are expected to give long answers, as one of these tasks. Furthermore Mcalister (2007, p. 6) defined Coursework as "form of assessment which relies upon performance in one or more of practical work". Unlike examinations, coursework is not bounded by time, and it may be conducted before the end of the learning unit.

achievement tests, as Tucker and Stronge (2005, p.19) asserted should answer the following questions:

- What is a student's level of knowledge in the domain (e.g., what percentage of problems of a given type can we expect the student to solve correctly)?
- What are the student's specific strengths and deficiencies in the domain?
- What are the specific strengths and weaknesses of a given school program or curriculum?
- What specific changes in student performance have occurred as a result of changing the curriculum or instruction?

4.3 Diagnostic Assessment Methods

4.3.1 Quiz and Tests

One of the most useful methods to know students' weaknesses is to test them. However, these tests should not end up with grading students or marking their performance; because in diagnostic assessment the purpose of any test is to define an issue to be treated. Riding and Butterfield (1990, p.23) when explaining the quiz during or at the beginning of the course, asserted, "This helps to draw attention to strengths and weaknesses within an individual student's work, and can therefore serve a diagnostic purpose".

The purpose on which a teacher conducts a test defines the type or the category of that test. The following points are the summary of the types of tests argued by Davidson and Lynch (2002, p. 131):

- Achievement test: to know what the student has learned.
- Proficiency test: to test what the student has learned. This means the ability to use the new knowledge.
- Placement test: to organise students according to their academic level.

- Diagnostic test: to determine weaknesses and strengths of the student.
- Aptitude test: to determine the ability to learn.

4.3.2 Self Assessment

Self-assessment is based on student's enquiry about his learning. Harris and Mccann (2004) argued that it is conducted by students themselves to figure any learning obstacle to be treated and emphasized. Still, the teacher plays a crucial role in self-assessment. Teachers' contribution can be seen in motivating students and rise their awareness about issues and barriers that may hinder their oral performance.

Phye (1997) asserted, "Student self-assessment offers an option seldom explored as an adjunct to teacher assessment."(p.94). Therefore, Students' awareness about his/her learning, makes self-assessment a reliable tool which provides the teacher with a clear image about some obstacles that face students in the classroom. Moreover, Self-assessment, as it is discussed by Andrade, H. & Valtcheva, A. (2009), has many functions such as:

- Identify student's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), and his/her strengths
- Focus both teacher's and student's attention on the real issue of learning.
- Set an achievable learning goal.

Remark: The aim of any method of assessment defines its category. For instance, unlike Phye (1997), Andrade, H & Du, Y. (2007), considered self-assessment as a formative assessment rather than diagnostic one. they argued :

Self-assessment is 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 (p.160).

4.4.3 Needs Assessment

Before defining needs assessment, we first have to make a clarification about the term 'need'. Need in our case refers to the difference between the learner's real or actual achievement and his expected achievement. . Gupta (1999) explained the term need in the following figure.

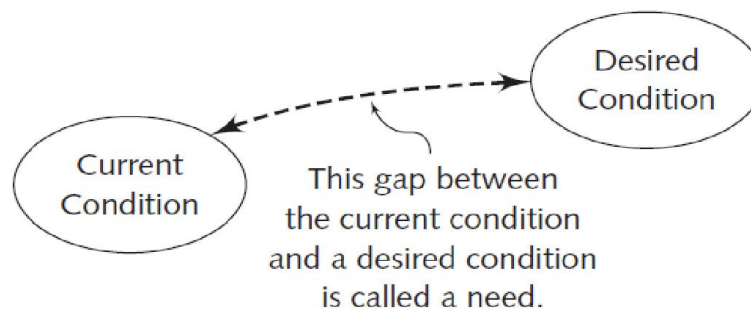


Figure 4: *Definition of a Need.* Gupta (1999, p.67) .

Therefore, needs assessment can be defined as the process of assessment that is based on diagnosing a learning issue. . Gupta (1999) Stated that, “Needs assessment is a process for figuring out how to close a learning or performance gap. It involves determining what the important needs are and how to address them” (p.15).

The first phase of needs assessment is the collection of data about the need or the problem facing the student. In other words, understanding the reasons of failure and considering all the affective factors of the learning process. Then, after having the overall image of the situation, an investigation is conducted to provide the assessor with solutions and actions to be implemented.

Gupta (1999) asserted the following aims of needs assessment:

- Addressing or avoiding a current learning issue;
- Creating or taking advantage of a future opportunity;
- Enhancing the efficacy of learning and improve the performance of the student.

5. Assessment Tools

In order to conduct any method of assessment, the teacher encourages his students to be involved in many oral activities. These activities, therefore, can be seen as the teacher's tool of assessment. In addition, the teacher's intention of the assessment tool decides to which method of assessment it belongs; i.e., some assessment tools can be employed for formative purposes as well as summative or diagnostic ones.

5.1 Group Debates

according to Hariss and Mccann(2004) in a group debate, the teacher presents a topic of students' interest and explains it to them. Then, students will be grouped according to their opinion about the topic. For example, when the teacher raises a debate about the use of smart phones in the class. Students' opinion will contrast, some agree while others disagree. Each group should adopt an opinion and defend on it. Such technique is widely used among oral classes.

The following are some of group debates' advantages:

- Stimulate students to participate: as it is known, debate is the best way to urge, even shy students, to talk.
- A chance for the student to learn how to discuss and defend on his opinion: group debate provides students with the opportunity to be involved in collective discussion.
- Group work: gives a pleasant experience and teach students about how to work together.
- Peer-assessment: in group debate, groups are able to discuss, correct and assess each other.
- Facilitate teacher's assessment: teacher's role in group debate is exclusive to observe students' participation. Hariss and Mccann(ibid) asserted:

If you are walking around the class monitoring a class oral activity (for example all students are working in small groups discussing a particular issue or solving a problem) you may well obtain a fairly good idea of class performance as a whole and individual performance in particular areas. You might come to the conclusion that a particular class needs remedial work in pronunciation, or that a particular student's intonation is not as acceptable as that of other members of the same class (p.12)

5.2 Portfolios

According to Genesee and Uphur(1996), a portfolio is a “ purposeful collection of students' work that demonstrates their efforts, progress, and achievement in a given areas” (cited in Brown and Abeywickrama, 2010, p. 267). Portfolios include material such as:

- Audio or video recording of students' production: it allows the teacher to reply the students' oral productions.
- Remarks about the difficult activities: includes activities where students failed, or face difficulties.
- It also focuses on Pieces of information about students' participation and achievement: how students answer, interact and participate for each activity.
- Personal feedbacks about methods and techniques of teaching: some remarks depending on class reaction towards the oral activity,
- Tests and scores: questions of tests and examinations, and students results.

As it was suggested by Cottieb(1995 cited in Brown and Abeywickrama2010, p.152) , the purposes of portfolio are collection and assessing :

5.2.1 Collection

To collect all data concerning the learning and the teaching process; i.e., the teachers use the portfolio to bank students' performance and oral activities as the following:

- For students' performance: In this part, the teacher attempts to answer questions such as: how the student speaks? For how long? How many times ?

- For oral activities: type of the activity and its content, the number of students involved in this activity, and its role in enhancing students' level.

audio and video recording are crucial for both students' performance and oral activities,. According to Brown and Yule (1983) , “It makes more sense to tape-record the student as he speaks, if only as a means of checking, at a later stage, whether the initial impressions were correct.”(p.105).

5.2.2 Assessing

Recording students' performance provides the teacher with a copy of the session with all its details. Indeed this gives him the time to understand and accurately assess his students. Thus, the portfolio serves the three categories of assessments. Diagnose, evaluate, and improve the student's oral performance.

5.3 Conference and Interviews

Genesee and Upshur (1996 cited in Brown et al, 1984) offered a number of questions that may be posed in a conference:

- What do you think you did well?
- What you do not fully understand about the course?
- Have you any propositions concerning the course content or the way it is presented?

Depending on the purpose of the interview, it can be considered as a tool of investigation or a tool of evaluation of students' oral performance. For instance, Fulcher and Davidson(2007) argued that oral interviews are the most suitable way to evaluate students' speaking ability, and they consider it as a reliable test. However, during the conference oral teachers should play the role of a facilitator and a guide, rather than an administrator of a formal assessment. In this case the aim of the interview turns to a diagnostic assessment. Brown and Abeywickrama, (2010) explained, “Students need to understand that the teacher is an ally”

(p.33). This means that students should freely discuss any obstacle and communicate their opinions about the teachers' methods.

In their book, *Developing effective assessment in higher Education*. Maidenhead, Bloxham, S. and Boyd, P. (2007) listed the tools of assessment. Some of these tools, are summarized in the following table.

Short-answer questions	Film or radio programs	Laboratory examinations and practical tests
Poster	Evaluation of journal	Viva examinations
Fieldwork reports	web pages	Tests
Presentation	Electronic presentation	Examinations
Student-led seminar or discussion	Problems and case study analysis	Making glossaries
Data interpretation exercises	article or other Exhibitions and displays	Portfolio (written)
Annotated bibliographies	Computer-based activities	Concept maps

Table 1: Assessment Tools (cited in Maidenhead, Bloxham, S. and Boyd, P.2007, p 11-12)

Conclusion

According to this chapter, we found that there are several ways to assess students' oral performance. Furthermore; we understood that the assessment categories are tightly related and close to each other. Therefore, Choosing the right method and suitable tool, depends mainly on the teacher's understanding of what should be taught, and on his awareness about his students' needs.

Moreover, we noticed that each assessment category serves the other to form an authentic teaching. For instance, Diagnostic assessment aims to fill the gap of teaching through new techniques. Then, these techniques are employed through formative assessment, in attempt to improve students' achievement. Finally, the outcomes of formative assessment are tested to decide the efficacy of the new learning or teaching methods.

Third Chapter: Field Work

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Introduction

In order to list some reliable assessment methods of students' performances in oral sessions, we conducted a questionnaire to EFL students of second year LMD and, another one to their oral expression teachers. Moreover, we attended a session to check and observe students' participations and teachers' methods of assessment. Therefore, this chapter is devoted to discuss the results of employed data gathering tools. I.e. the questionnaires and the classroom observation.

Furthermore, to better interpret the data, all answers were treated and presented by numbers, ratios and graphics. The analysis of both questionnaires' answers and checklist of the classroom observation provides us with a result that is considered as a proposition of some effective methods of assessing students' performances in oral sessions which should better suite our case study.

1. Students' Questionnaire

1.1 Description of the Questionnaire

To consider students' opinions in our work we have designed a questionnaire for EFL students of second year LMD of the academic year 2016-2017 in BISKRA University. Seventy five (75) students from different classes (i.e. different oral teachers) were randomly chosen. This questionnaire aims to understand students' participation and the most affective factors on their oral performance. Furthermore, it reveals students' perspectives of oral skill learning and its assessment. Therefore, this questionnaire includes closed (YES/NO), multiple choice and open-ended questions. These questions are categorized under the three following sections:

- Students' background: aims to know the student's background and identify some features about his/her learning.

- Students’ participations: to gather information about the environment of students’ participation
- Assessment: to understand students’ perspective about the employed methods of assessment.

1.2 Analyses of Students’ Answers

1.2.1 Section one: Students’ Background

Q1. Your Age is ?

Age	Number	Ratio
Less than 23	63	84%
23 to 24	11	14%
More than 25	1	2%
Total	75	100%

Table 1: Students’ age

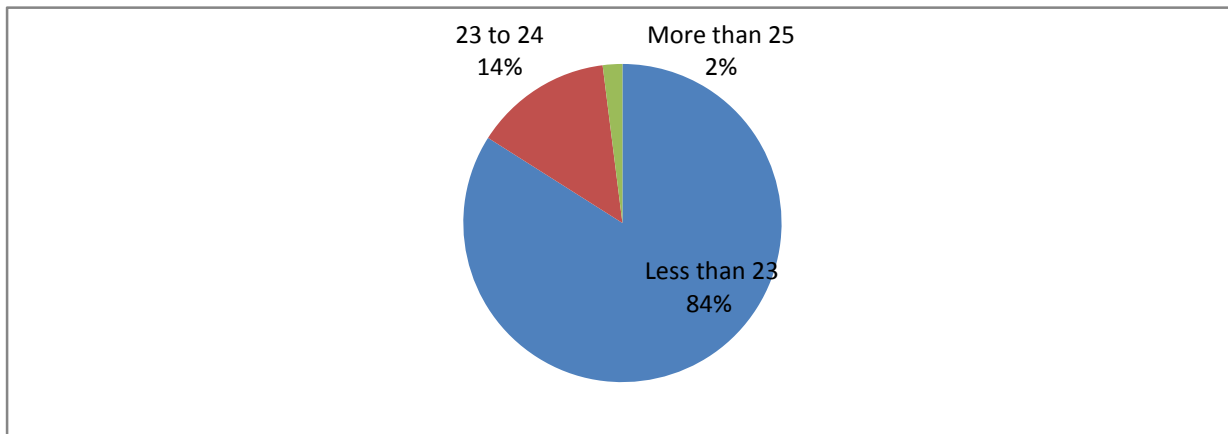


Figure 1 : Students’ age

Knowing students’ age should give us an idea about the studying progress. I.e. whether they attended classes regularly or had cuts during their learning. In the previous table, students’ age was divided into three categories. Students less than 23 years old represent the majority (84%) of

the sample. It means that most of participants have attended their class regularly and that there were neither gaps nor repetitions in their learning. Therefore we can assume that the sample of our questionnaire represents the majority of EFL second year LMD students.

In the second place, 11% of students are between 23 and 24. This means that at least 2 years were lost during the study. Indeed, this shouldn't have a major effect on students' learning progress. Finally, the third category represents the minority (2%) which are students who are studying English as a second diploma, teachers of English in secondary schools or some employee who attempt to improve their English language.

Q2. Why did you choose to study English?

Reason of the choice	Number	Ratio
Personal choice	54	72%
Parents choice	3	4%
Administrative orientation	16	21%
Others	2	2,6%
Total	75	100%

Table 2: Reason of studying English

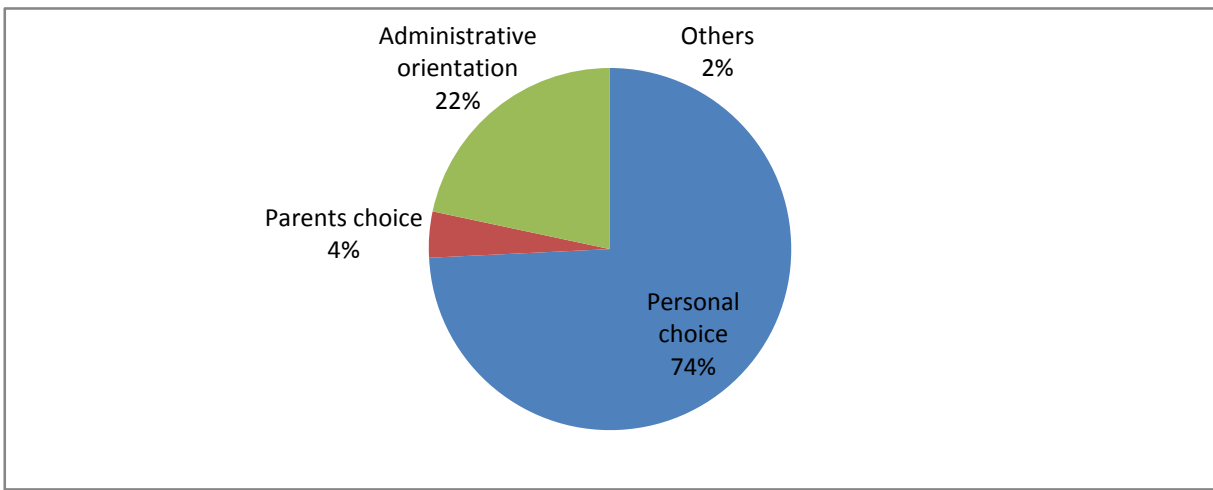


Figure 2: Reason of studying English

The interpretation of students' choice can be mainly divided into two main categories. Firstly, when English is the student's personal choice, 72% of participants have selected English as their first choice. When it is the case, students should have the required motivation and desire toward learning English. Indeed, this adds more credibility to students' answers since they are serious and interested in the language learning.

Secondly, when English is parents' choice, administration orientation or selected because of other reasons other than student's choice. This case represent 28% in global. It does not necessary means that these categories of sample are not interested in English. Indeed in many cases, these students find themselves involved in learning English, and they can prove a satisfactory achievement.

Q3. Your English level is?

Answer	Number	Ratio
Very good	5	6,6%
Good	44	58,6%
Average	22	29,3%
Poor	4	5,3%
Total	75	100%

Table 3: Students' level of English

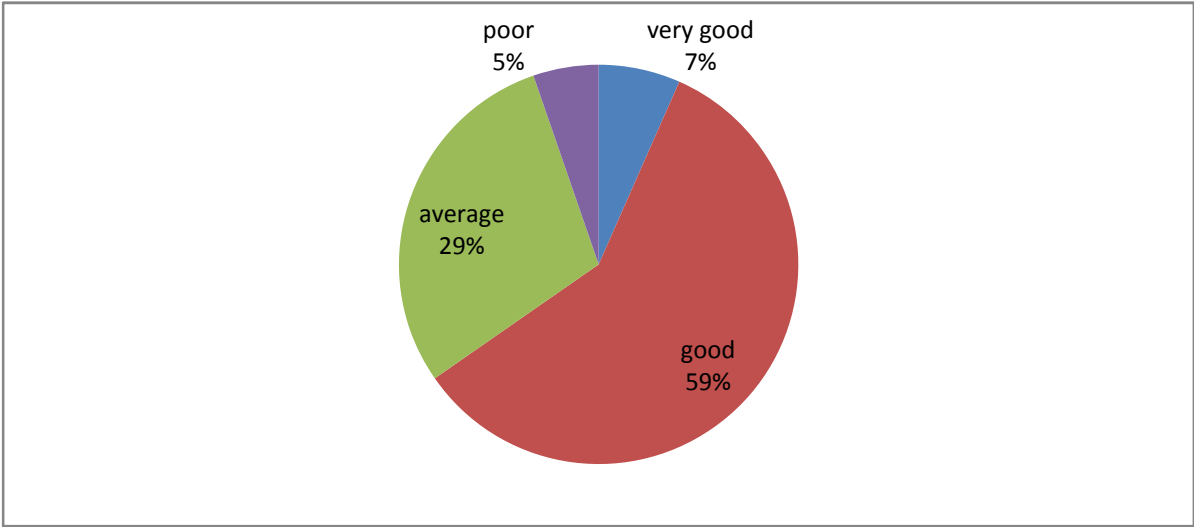


Figure 3: Students' level of English

This question was asked to reveal students' opinion about their level in EFL. The biggest ratio (58,6%) is that of students who think they are good in English. Depending on this answer, we can assume that these students have a self confidence and at least most of them will not suffer from shyness. Therefore, this answer serves our investigation as it guides us to focus on other factors which can effect on students' oral performance.

Q4. Do you speak English outside the university?

Answer	Number	Ratio
Yes	49	65,7%
No	26	34,6%
Total	75	100%

Table4: Students' practice of English outside the classroom.

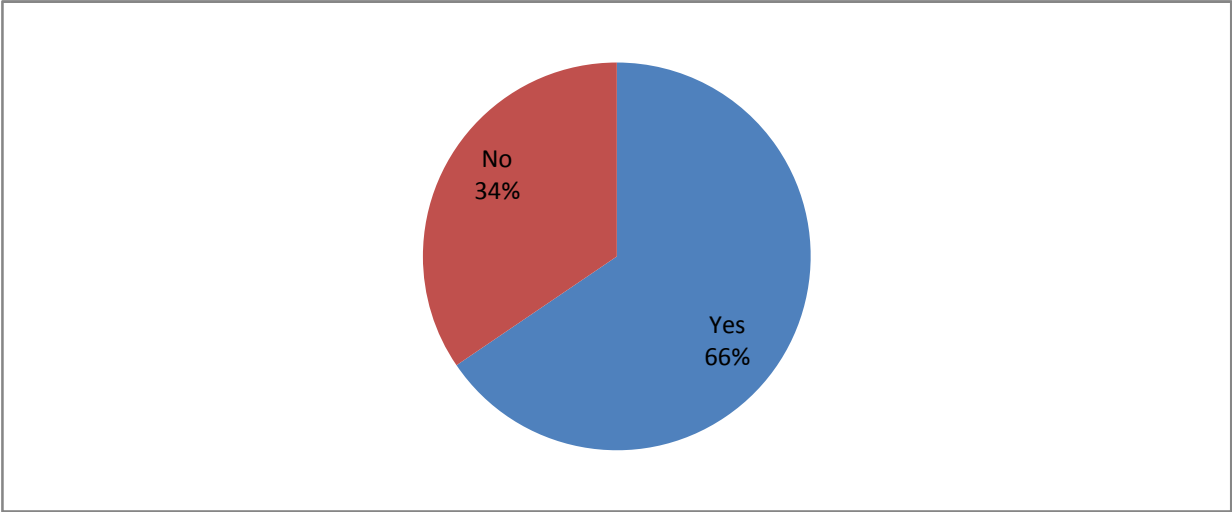


Figure 4: Students' practice of English outside the classroom.

Students' answers help us to know whether they understand that learning a language is not limited to classroom. 34,6% of the participants do not practice outside the university. Indeed, it is not an option for most of students. However, and despite the fact that English is not widely used in our daily life, 65,7 % of the students asserted that they do speak English after the school.

If yes how often?

Answer	Number	Ratio
Rarely	11	22,44%
Occasionally	20	40,8%
Daily	18	36,73%
Total	49	100%

Table 5 : Frequency of practice English outside the classroom

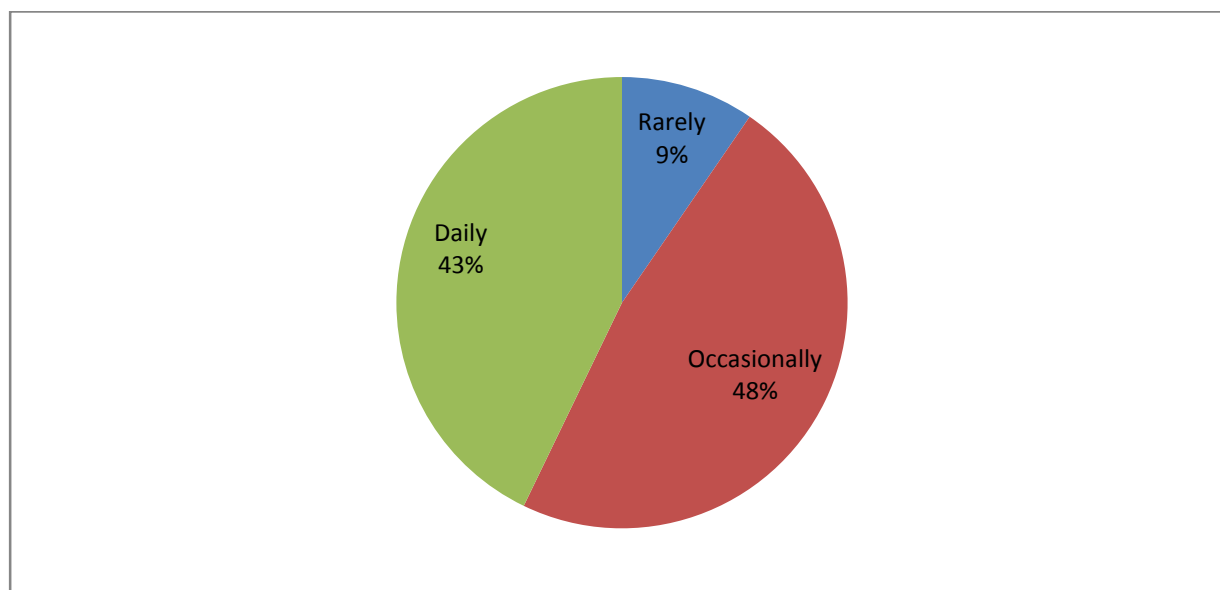


Figure 4.1: Frequency of practice English outside the classroom

For students who asserted that they do practice outside the classroom 36,73% of them speak English daily and 40,8% answered occasionally. Accordingly, we can assume that these participants are able to prove a high level of oral ability.

1.2.2 Section Two: Students' Participations

Q5. According to you, which of the following skills is the most important to be developed?

Skill	Number	Ratio
writing	5	6%
reading	3	4%
listening	2	2,6%
Speaking	65	86,6%
Total	75	100%

Table 5: Students' choice of most important skill

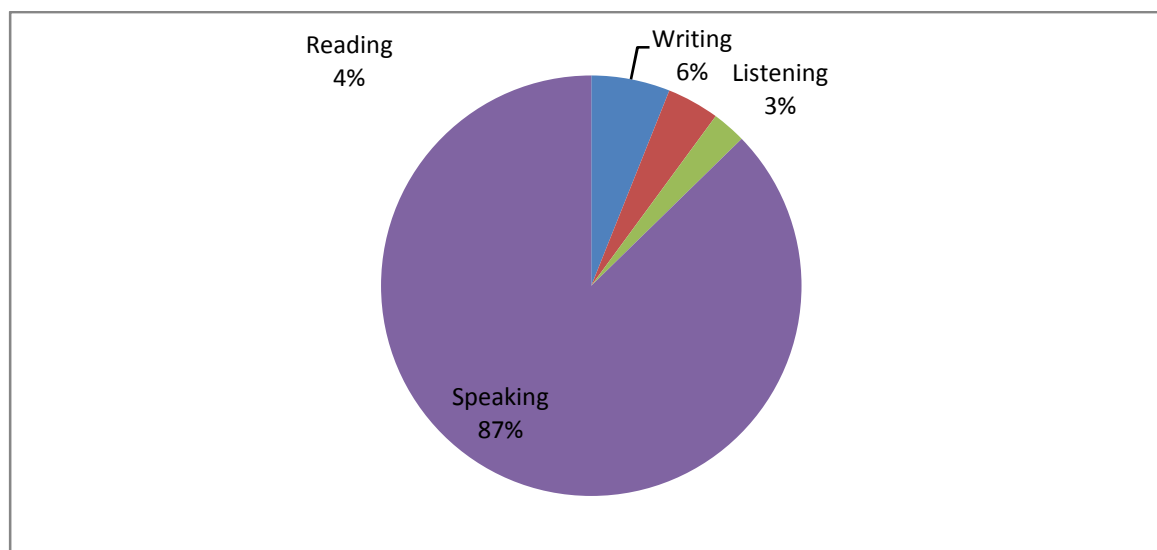


Figure 5: students' choice of most important skill

Despite the fact that the importance of a particular skill depends on the objective and the aim of learning, the table shows that the majority (86,6%) of participants consider speaking as the most important skill to be developed. As it was shown in the first chapter, oral skill do plays a crucial role in learning a language. In other words, it reveals that most students share the same objective, which is mastering English and use it as a means to communicate. On the other hand, only few who answered with other skills. These participants represents only 13% of our sample.

Q6. According to you which is the most important aspect in speaking?

Answer	Number	Ratio
Fluency	9	12%
Accuracy	5	6,6%
Both	61	81,3%
Total	75	100%

Table 7: Students' focus when speak

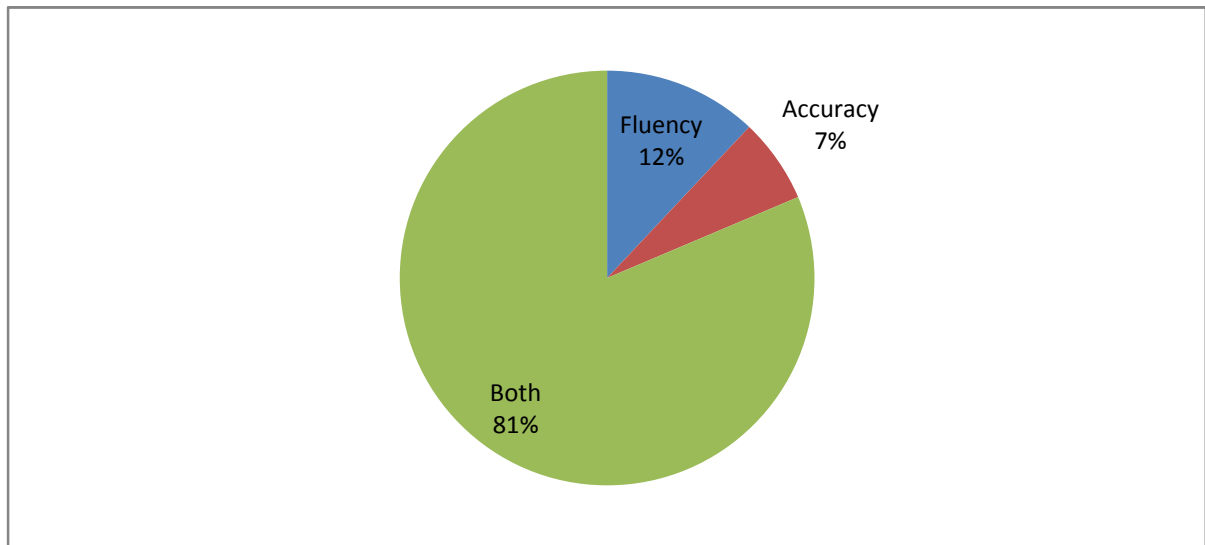


Figure7: Students' focus when speak

This question was asked to discover students' awareness about language proficiency. The previous table revealed that 81,3% of them focus on both fluency and accuracy as indispensable factors of English proficiency. Accordingly, we assume that students work on those two factors similarly. Only 12% of the students focus on fluency whereas, 7% focus on accuracy. These opinions can be due to students' background or their objective of learning the language.

Q7. How you consider oral session?

Answer	Number	Ratio
Uninteresting	4	5,3%
Exciting	17	22,6%
Stressful	54	72%
Total	75	100%

Table 8: students' opinion about oral session

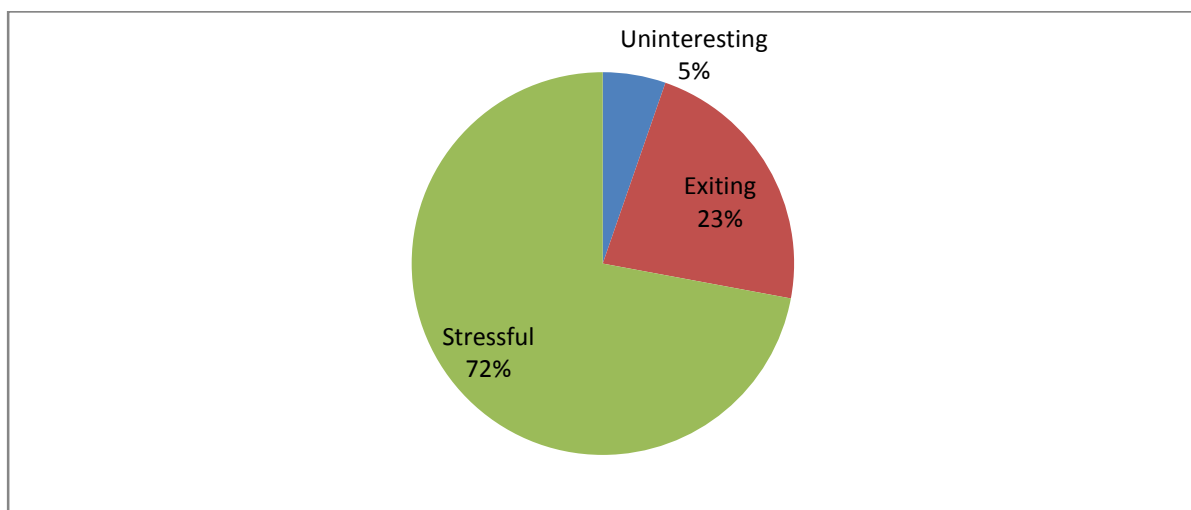


Figure 8: Students' opinion about oral session

We asked this question because it is quite important to know students' opinion about oral session. Answers prove that 72% of participants see it as a stressful session. On the other hand, some students (23%) described oral session as exiting, and 5% see it as an uninteresting session

Q8. How often do you participate in oral session?

Frequency	Number	Ratio
Frequently	33	44%
Occasionally	21	28%
Rarely	17	22,6%
Never	4	5,3%
Total	75	100%

Table 9: Frequency of students' participation in class

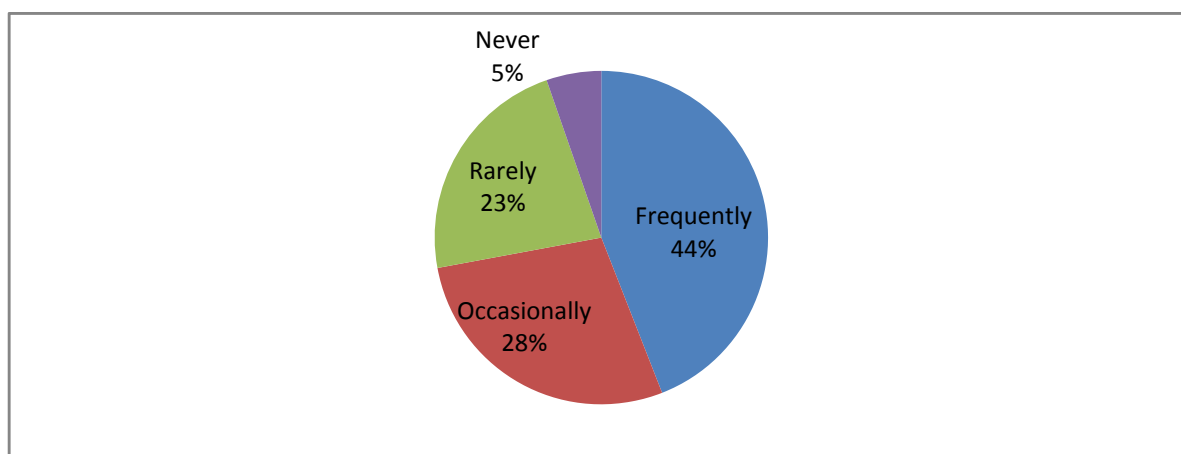


Figure 9: Frequency of students' participation in class

The frequency of students' participations reflects their involvement and interest of oral activities. Results were closed to each other, and they gradually reduced from the most to the least frequently; i.e., the biggest percentage goes to students who participate more. As the table shows 44% frequently participate in the class, while 28% participate occasionally. On the other hand, 22.6% rarely participate.

Q9. From 1 to 5, which of the following activities is most useful? Why ?

Activity	Number(first choice)	Ratio
Role play	11	14,6%
Open discussion	40	53,3%
Question and an answers	19	25,3%
Presentation	3	4%
Images description	2	2,6%
Total	75	100%

Table 10: Students’ opinion about the most useful activity.

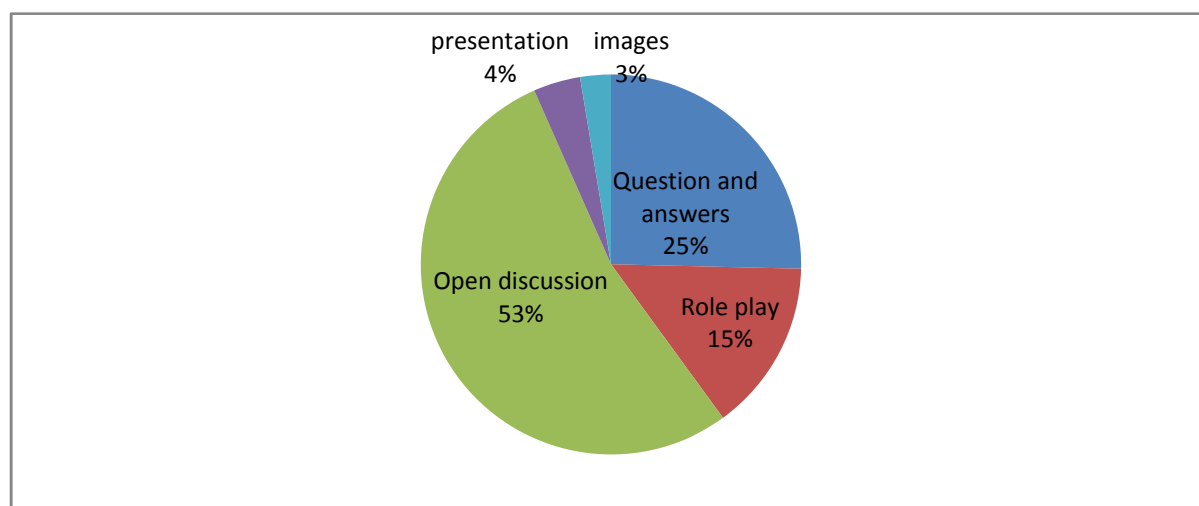


Figure 10: Students’ opinion about the most useful activity.

Any teacher should know which oral activity serves his/her students’ learning. Therefore, students were requested to order the given oral activities from the most to the least useful activity. In the table, we counted only students’ first choice; i.e. how many an activities were selected as the most useful ones. Statistics reveal that 53,3% of participants consider open discussion as the most useful activity. Remarkably, role play is no more students’ favorite part of oral class .Indeed, some students claim that “preparing for the role play consumes time”

while others think that much focus is giving to the “scenario of role play” at the expense of the proper use of the language.

Q10. From 1 to 6, would you order these factors from the most to the least affective on your participation?

Answer	Number(first answer)	Ratio
shyness	26	34,6%
anxiety	9	12%
Fear of making mistakes	20	26,6%
Lack of self confidence	7	9,3%
Lack of motivation	13	17,3%
others	0	0%
Total	75	100%

Table 11: Effective factors on participation

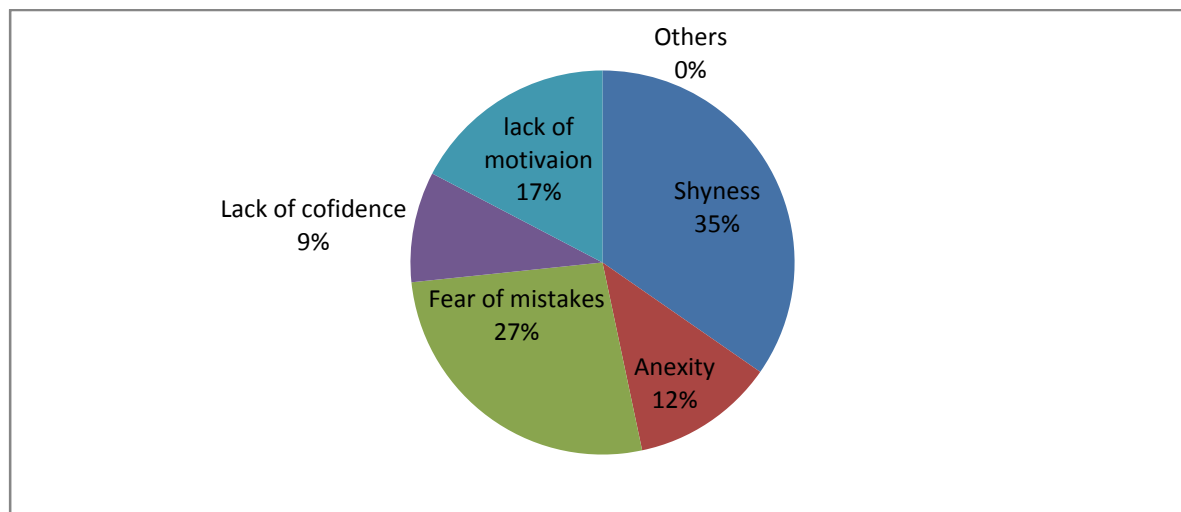


Figure 11: Effective factors on participation

This question was asked In order to diagnose students’ obstacles in oral sessions. Answers show that shyness (34,6%), lack of motivation(17,3%) and anxiety(12%)are the most effective

factors on students' oral performance. Such result is crucial when treating difficulties of oral skill learning. In other words, it provides oral teachers with some specific points on which they should focus their interest and efforts.

Q11. Do students have the right to choose the topic of the oral activities?

Frequency	Number	Ratio
All times	11	14,6%
Sometimes	62	82,6%
Never	2	2,6%
Total	75	100%

Table 12: Students' frequency of choosing of the topic

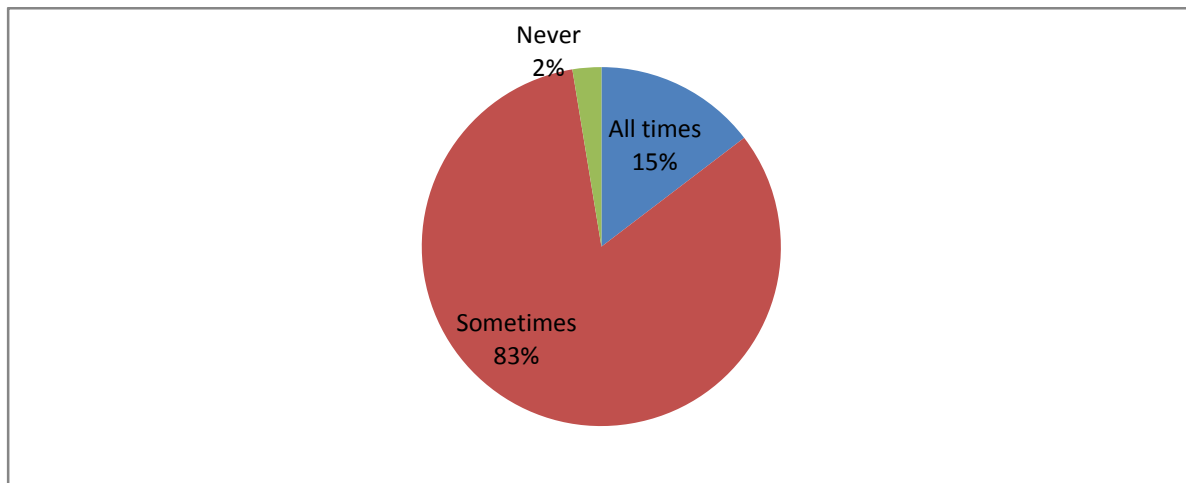


Figure 12: Students' frequency of choosing of the topic

Since students involve only into topics of interest, there right to choose the topic of the activity do matter. Statistics show that 82,6% of the sample sometimes decide the topic, whereas 14,6% answered that topics are chosen by students all the time. This contrast in students' answers can be due to the difference in teachers' ways of teaching oral expression.

1.2.3 Section three: Assessment

Q 12. How often does the teacher intervene to correct students' mistakes?

Frequency	Number	Ratio
Frequently	46	61,3%
Occasionally	19	25,3%
Rarely	10	12,3%
Never	0	0%
Total	75	100%

Table 13: Teachers' interventions to correct students' mistakes

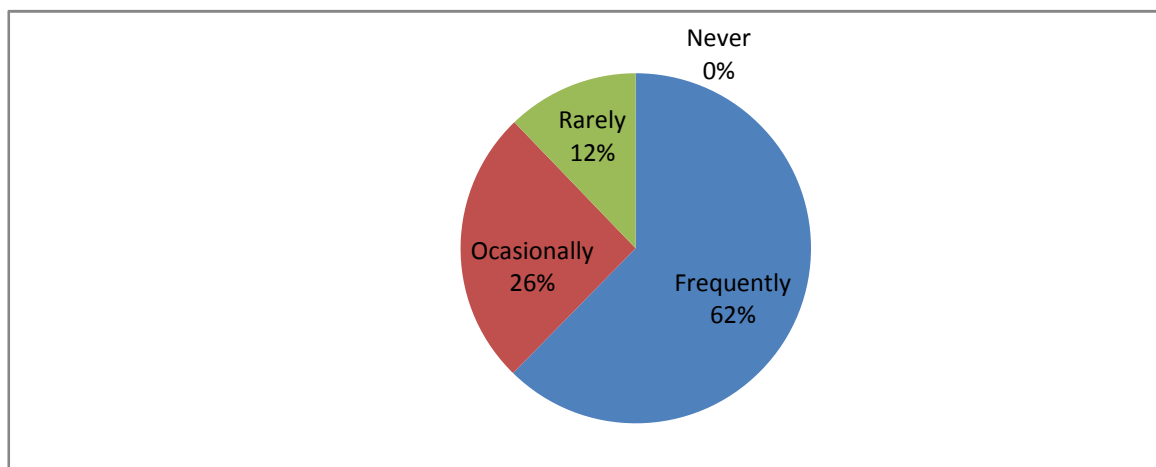


Figure 12: Teachers' interventions to correct students' mistakes

Knowing the frequency of the teacher's interventions during students' talking, can reveal many facts about the assessment of students' oral performance. According to the table, 61,3% of participants assert that teacher frequently intervene. On the other hand 25,3% answered while 12,3% of them answered rarely

Q 13. Are students allowed to correct or help each other when they participate?

Answer	Number	Ratio
YES	66	88%
NO	9	12%
Total	75	100%

Table 14: Students' opinion about peer assessment

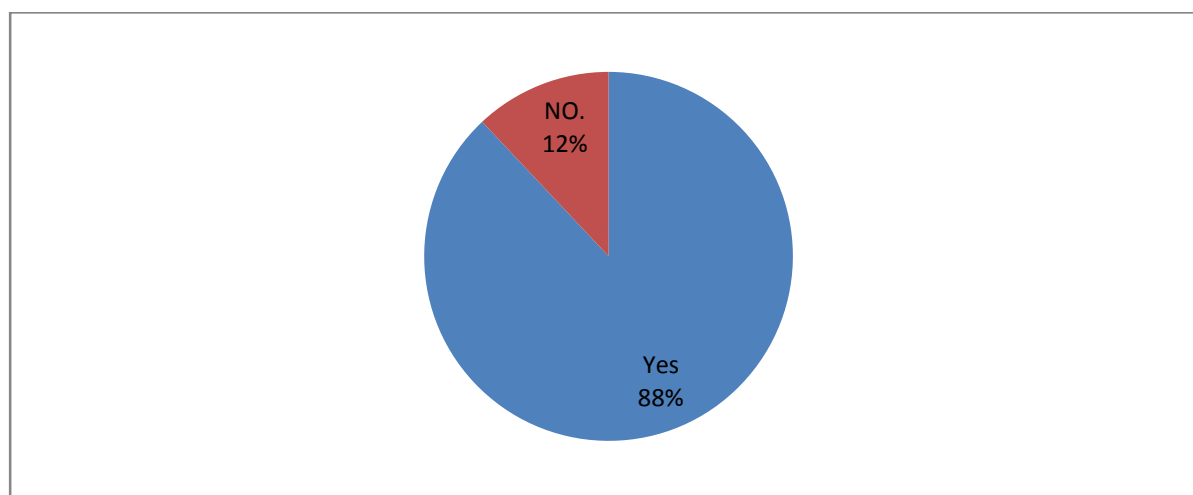


Figure 14: Students' opinion about peer assessment

Statistics show that 88% of students answered that peer assessment is allowed. I.e. students can correct and help each other. As was noticed in classroom observation, peer, assessment is widely encouraged and students are free to intervene any time. On the other hand only 12% of students asserted that peer assessment is not allowed.

Q14. According to you, the final average of your oral performance should be ?

Answer	Number	Ratio
Only examination mark	6	8%
Examination and participation	65	86%
Only participation	4	5,3%
Total	75	100%

Table 15 : Students' opinion about their oral's average

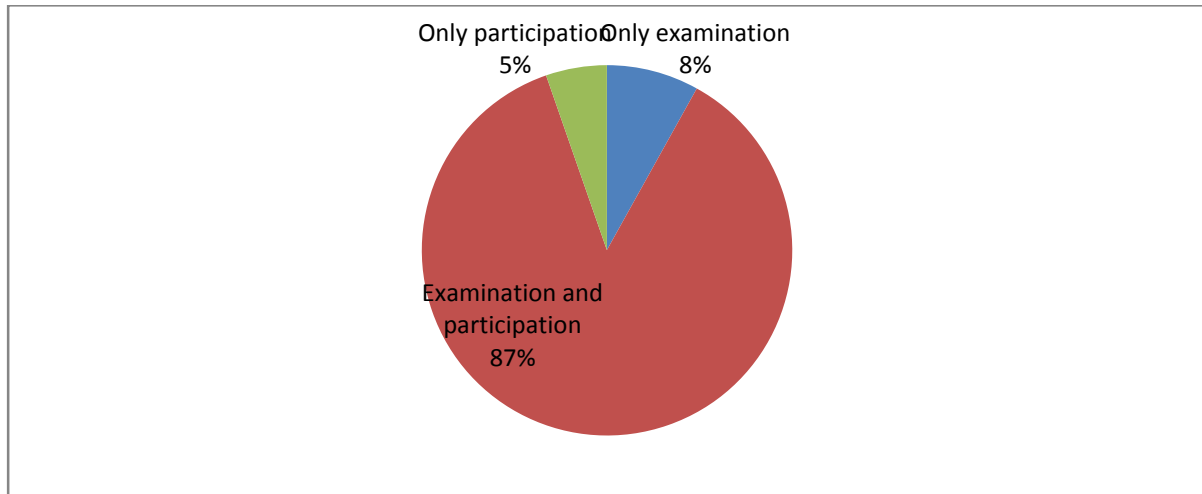


Figure 14: Students' opinion about their oral's average

This question was asked to know students opinion about the summative assessment (final average). As we can see, 86% prefer to include both Examination and participation in their average. Whereas only , 8% and 5,3% of the students think that only examination or participation should represent their average in oral expression module.

Q 15. During the assessment, do you think that the teacher focuses on ?

Answer	Number	Ratio
Testing students to know their level.	24	32%
Correcting mistakes and improving the students' level	30	40%
Knowing student's needs, his weaknesses and strengths.	21	28%
Total	75	100%

Table 15: Teachers' focus during students' assessment

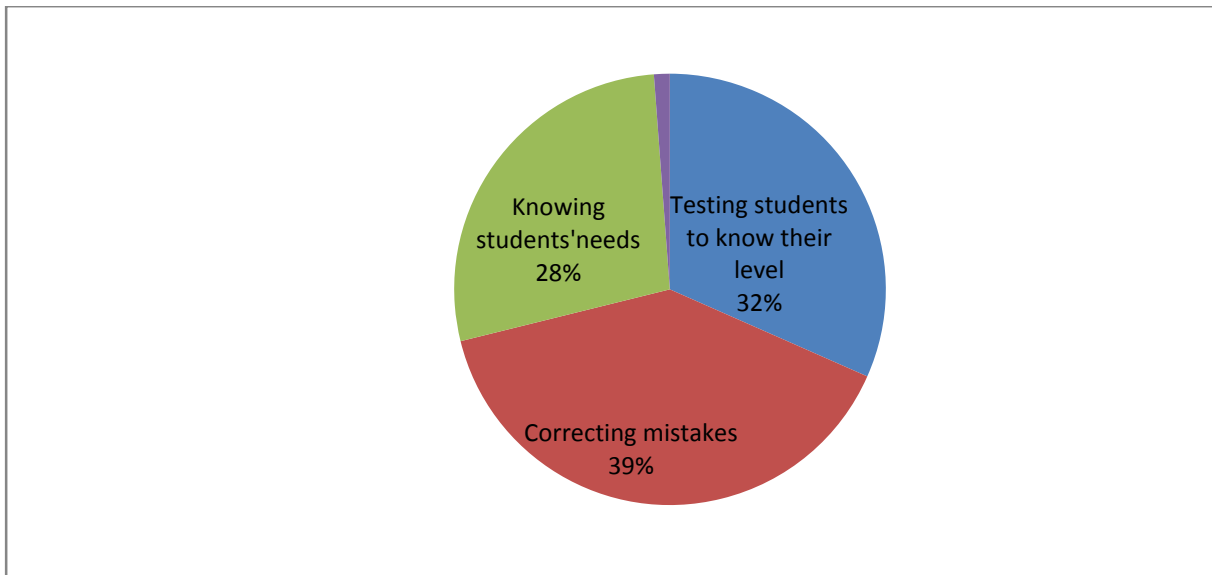


Figure 15: Teachers' focus during students' assessment

The significance of this question is to know which assessment is conducted during oral sessions. Statistics show that the three major categories (summative, diagnostic and formative) are, proximately, equally used. In other words, 32% of students see that the teacher focuses on testing students to know their level, which means the summative assessment. Similarly, 40% of them see teachers' interventions as attempts to correct and improve their level, which represent the formative assessment. Finally, 28% of the sample goes with the teachers cautious and investigation about their needs, which is included in the diagnostic assessment.

1.3 Discussion of Students' Answers

The following points discuss the main ideas in students' answers.

- ✓ Many students consider oral session as a stressful session, such feeling comes from the permanent concentration and preparation for teachers' questions during the whole session. In other words, students expect to be asked at any moment, therefore they try to be ready all the time.

- ✓ As expected, fear of making mistakes do affect on students' performances. (This point was discussed in the first chapter, in which some theoretical solutions to overcome such obstacle were suggested).
- ✓ In sum, we can say that teachers play an active role which can be interpreted by the emphasis given to the formative assessment.
- ✓ Peer assessment depends mainly on the teacher's manner and his organization of his class. For example, some teachers prefer to keep the class under control in order to prevent any misbehavior and to fulfill the task in the available time. On the other hand, others encourage students to interact with each other and to work in groups.

2. Teachers' Questionnaire

2.1 Description of the Questionnaire

As a second source of data, teachers questionnaire was distributed to seven(7) teachers in which four(4) of them are teaching oral expression for second year students, and the rest are teaching the same module for other levels or have an experience in oral expression teaching. Teachers' questionnaire is a combination of fifteen (15) questions of different types. In order to profit teachers' experience and their valuable suggestions, we asked for opinions, clarifications and reasons of teachers' answers in most of the questions. Finally, these questions were categorized into the following sections:

- Section One: Teachers' background; To know more about teachers' experience in O.E or other modules
- Section two students' performance and participations; mainly to understand what factors and how they affect on students' performance.

- Section three: Assessment; to reveal more facts about how assessment is conducted and what can affect on it.

2.2 Analyses of Teachers' Answers

2.2.1 Section One: Teachers' Background

Q1. For how long you have been teaching oral expression?

Years of experience	Number of teachers	Ratio
From 1 to 3	3	43%
More than 3	4	57%
Total	7	100%

Table 16: Teachers' experience .

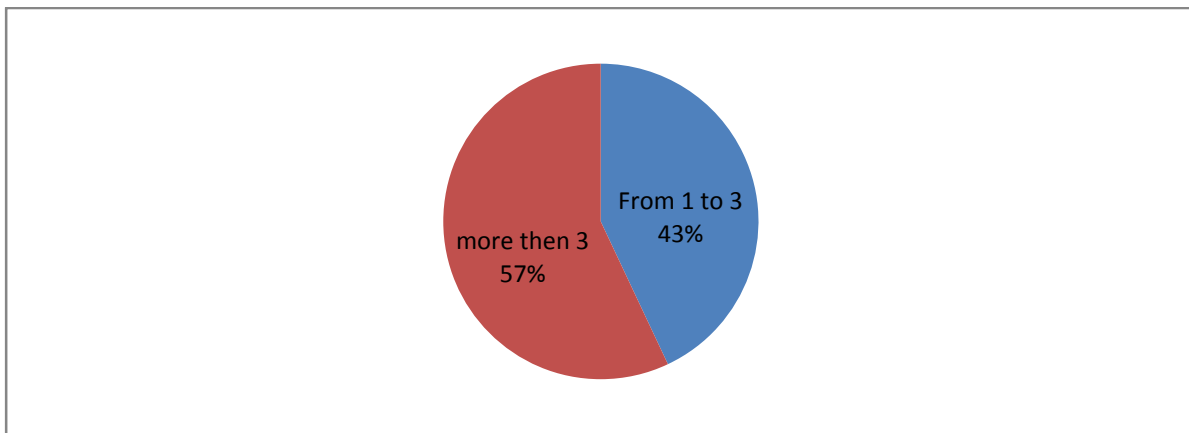


Figure 16: Teachers' experience

The table shows that 43% of oral teachers have an experience of less than 3 years. On the other hand, 57% have more than 3 years of experience in oral module teaching. Knowing teachers' experience gives us an idea about the employed methods of assessment and whether a teacher should involve new techniques or follow the old manners. In other words, experienced

teachers have the required knowledge about teaching oral expression which makes them able to create or develop new approaches when assessing their students.

Q 2. Have you taught other modules?

Answers	Number of teachers	Ratio
Yes	5	71,4%
No	2	28,6%
Total	7	100%

Table 17: Teachers' experience in the other modules

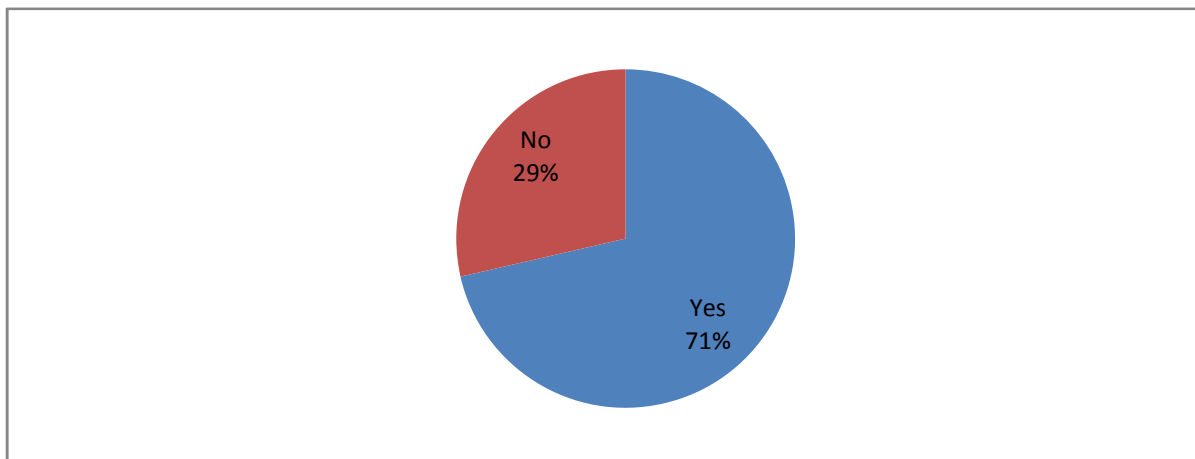


Figure 17: other modules experience

Since our main focus is on the assessment of EFL learners' performance in oral expression, we assume that teaching other modules (such as grammar and phonetics) helps the teacher in assessing students' learning. Statistics show that the majority of teachers (71,4%) have a previous experience in other modules. On the other hand 29% taught only oral expression module.

A. 40 to more than 50 min

C. 20 to 30 minutes

B. 30 to 40 minutes

D. Less than 20 minutes

Answer	Number	Ratio
A. 40 to more than 50 min	0	0%
B. 30 to 40 minutes	2	28,6%
C. 20 to 30 minutes	4	57,2%
D. Less than 20 minutes	1	12,3%
Total	7	100%

Table 19: Teachers' talking time

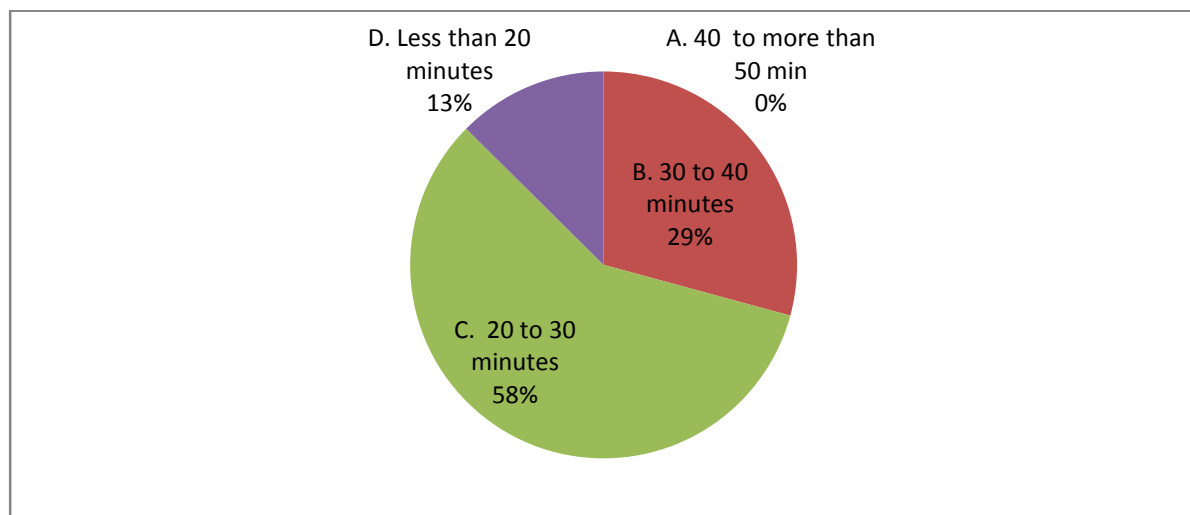


Figure 19: Teachers' talking time

The significance of this question is to have an idea about student talking time (STT) and teacher talking time (TTT). It is quite important to distinguish between who is talking and for how long. Answers were contrasted, for instance, 28,6% of teachers talk between 30 to 40 minutes. On the other hand, 12,3% of them talk for Less than 20 minutes, and the majority (57,2%) of teachers talk between 20 to 30 min.

Q 5. How often do students choose the type of the activity (I.e. whether, role plays or conversation or presentation....etc)

- A. Always. B. Often C. Sometimes D. Rarely

Answer	Number	Ratio
Always	0	0%
Often	3	42,9%
Sometimes	2	28,6%
Rarely	2	28,6%
Total	7	100%

Table 20: Students’ choice of the activity

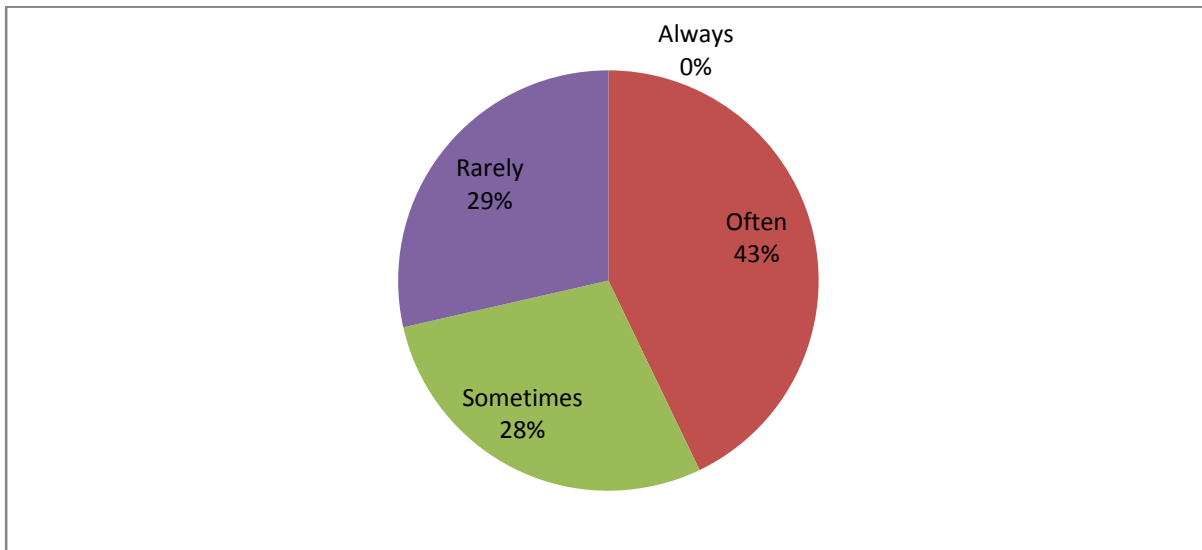


Figure 20: Students’ choice of the activity

Giving students the choice of the activity increases their involvement in the session. Figure.20 shows that 28% of the teachers sometimes and 29% rarely leave the choice of the

activity type to their students. On the other hand the majority of them(43%) answered “often”, which means that these teachers are aware about students’ opinions and try to provide activities which meet students’ desire.

Q 7. According to you, which is students’ most favorite activity?

- a. Open discussion b. Questions and answers c. Role play d. Presentation e. Others

Activity	Number	Ratio
Open discussion	4	57,1%
Questions and answers	2	28,5%
Role play	0	0%
Presentation	1	14,28%
Others	0	0%
Total	7	100%

Table 21: Students’ Favourite Activity

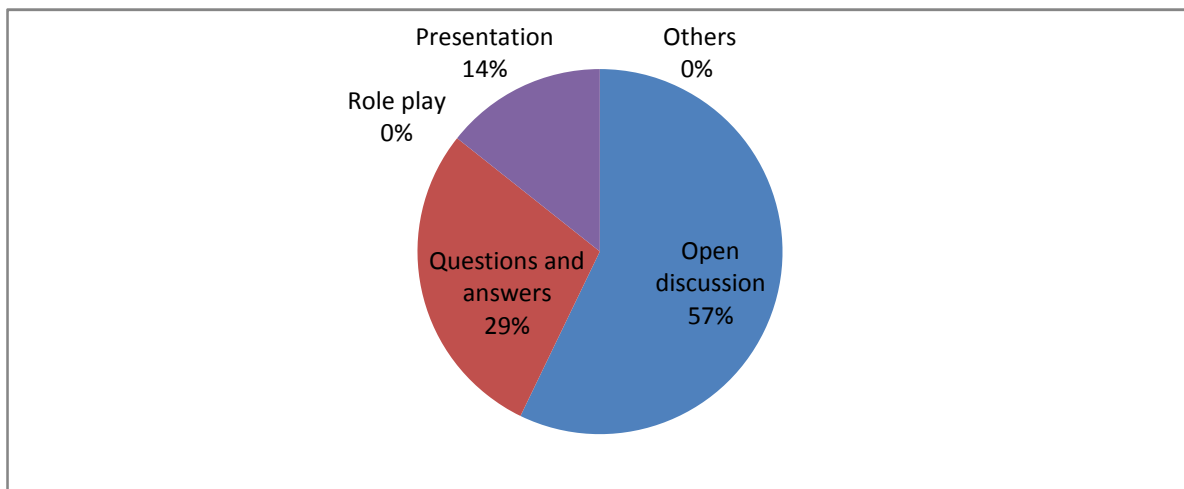


Figure 21: Students’ Favorite Activity

Statistics show that 57,1% (majority) of teachers consider open discussion as the most favorite activity for their students. According to the given answers, questions and answers is the second favorite activity (28.5%).

Q 8. According to you, which of the following obstacles has the most effect on your students' participation?

- a. Lack of interest
- b. lack of vocabulary
- c. Fear of making mistakes
- d. lack of fluency

Factor	Number	Ratio
Lack of interest	2	28,6
Fear of making mistakes	3	42,3%
lack of fluency	1	14,28%
lack of vocabulary	1	14,28%
Total	7	100%

Table 2: Obstacles of participation

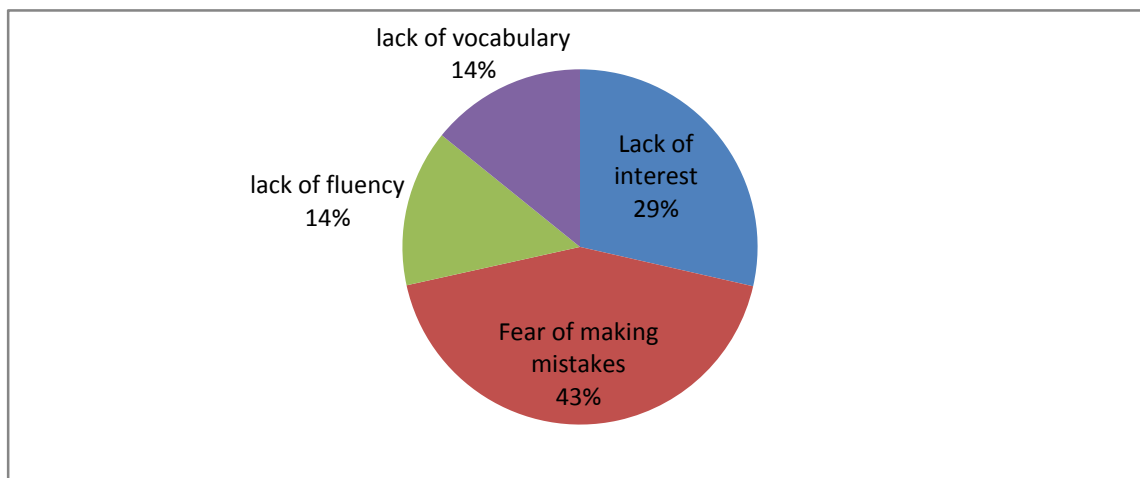


Figure 2: Obstacles of participation

The table shows that the majority of participants (42,3%) answered fear of making mistakes. Indeed, many teachers, in their comments, consider the psychological barriers as the biggest obstacles. In the second place, the lack of interest do influence on students' oral performance. According to the statistics 28,6 % of teachers see it as a crucial factor in students' oral performances. (As it was seen in the previous answers, the majority of teachers include students' opinion in the choice of the activity to avoid the lack of interest).

2.2.3 Section three: Assessment

Q9. Are students allowed to correct each others?

a. Yes

b. No

Answer	Number	Ratio
Yes	7	100%
No	0	0%
Total	7	100%

Table 23: peer assessment

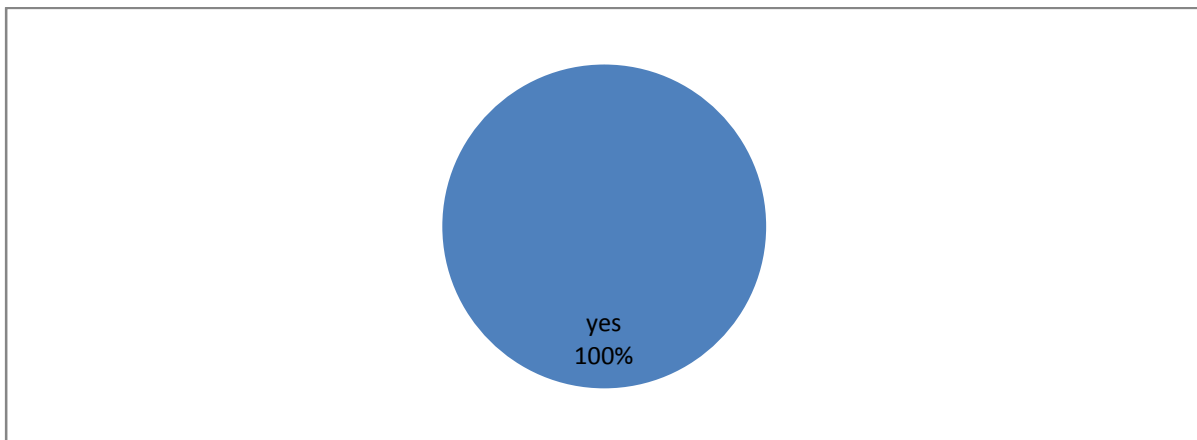


Figure 23: peer assessment

All teachers agreed on the necessity of students' assessment to each other (peer assessment)
 . Some teachers think that when students are allowed to interact with each other, they involve in the class and produce more.

Q10. When a student participates, you focus on

- a. Fluency b. Accuracy c. Both d. Other

Answer	Number	Ratio
Fluency	0	0%
Accuracy	1	14,2%
Both	6	85.8%
Other	0	0%
Total	7	100%

Table 24: Teachers' focus when students talk

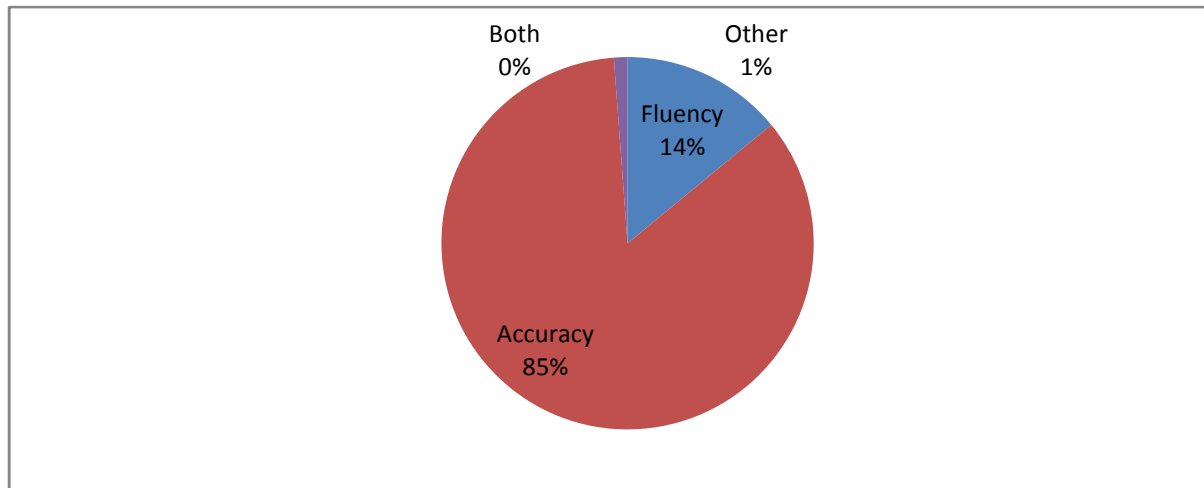


Figure 24: Teachers' focus when students talk

As discussed in the theoretical part, the aim of any activity is to improve fluency, accuracy or both. Teachers' answers show that most of them (85.8%) focus on both, the fluency and the accuracy at the same time. The rest (14,2%) of teachers prefer to distinguish between activities' aims. They believe that more progress can be achieved when activities are narrowed to specific goals. It also facilitates teacher's assessment since he/she focuses only on one criterion of students' performance.

Q 11. Do you use audio /video recording to assess students' performance?(i.e. record students' oral productions to check them lately).

a. Yes

b. No

Answers	Number	Ratio
Yes	0	0%
No	7	100%
Total	7	100%

Table 25: The use of audio /video recording

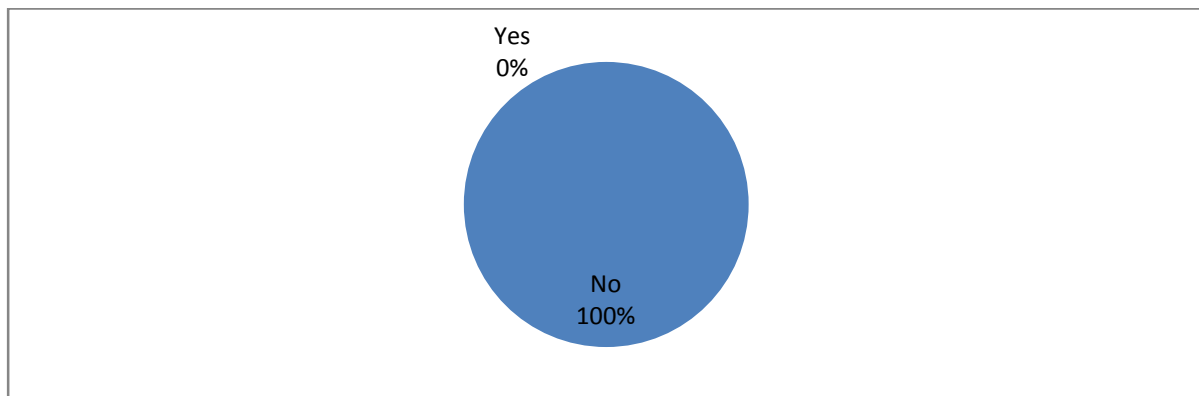


Figure 25: The use of audio /video recording

As shown in the table, none of the teachers use audio/video recording as a means of assessment. For most of teachers, the number of students makes it difficult to use recoding in assessing students' oral performance. According to teachers' comments, limitation of time bounds the use of such techniques. Others think that two sessions per week are barely enough for the curriculum.

Remark: as a home work some students choose to record their presentations to be exposed in the classroom. Such way of learning is not widely used in our classes.

Q 12. How often you intervene when student participate:

A Always C. Often C. Sometimes D. Rarely E. Never

Answer	Number	Ratio
Always	2	28,6%
Often	3	42,9%
Sometimes	2	28,6%
Rarely	0	0%
Never	0	0%
Total	7	100%

Table 26: Teachers' interventions

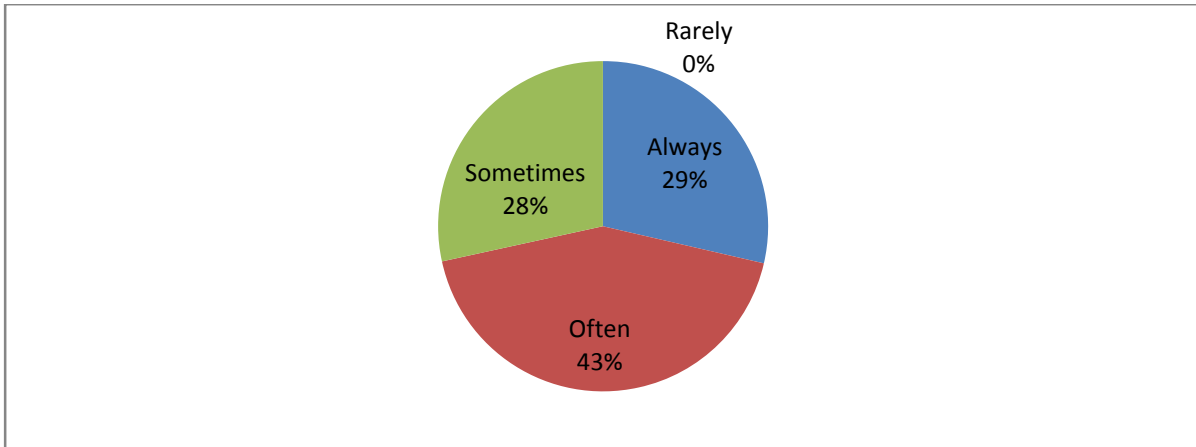


Figure 26: Teachers' interventions

According to the figure, 42,9% of Teachers intervene depending on the student talking. I.e. when a student is struggling to find a word or express an idea. Similarly, 28,6% answered they often gives a push to move the student forward.

Q 13. Do you use portfolio to assess students' productions.

Yes

No

Answer	Number	Ratio
Yes	2	28,6%
No	5	71,4%
Total	7	100%

Table 27: The use of portfolio

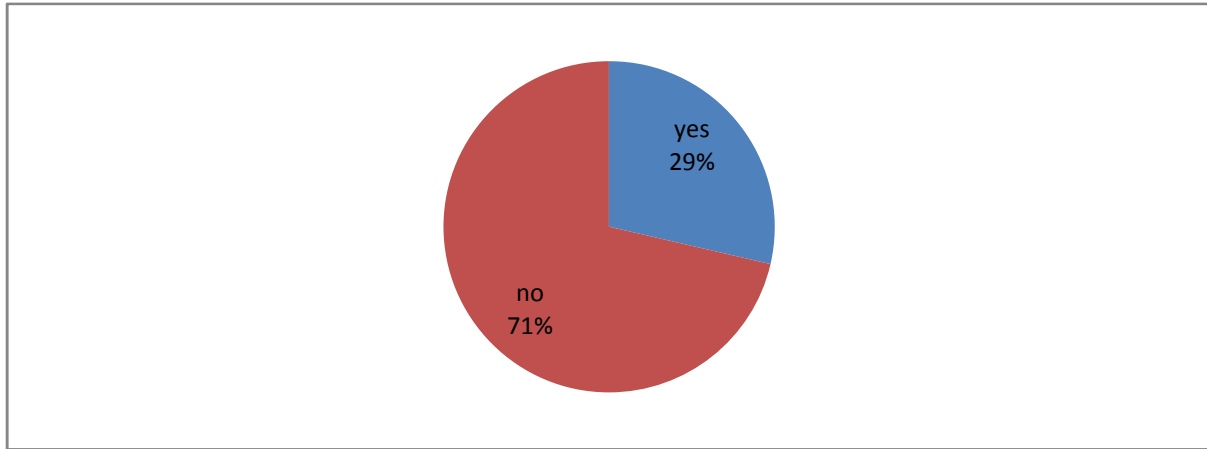


Figure 27: The use of portfolio

Answers of this questions show that only 28,6% of oral teachers use portfolio (mainly in tests, in other word, portfolios are exclusively used for summative assessment) . The rest of teachers (71,4%) do not use portfolio, because, in most of time, they are involved as a part of the conversation or the oral activity. Therefore their role is to help and guide students rather than investigate difficulties and obstacles .

Q 14. Do you use interviews or other tools to investigate students' needs?

a. Yes

b. No

Answer	Number	Ratio
Yes	5	71,42%
No	2	28,57%
Total	7	100%

Table 28: The use of interviews

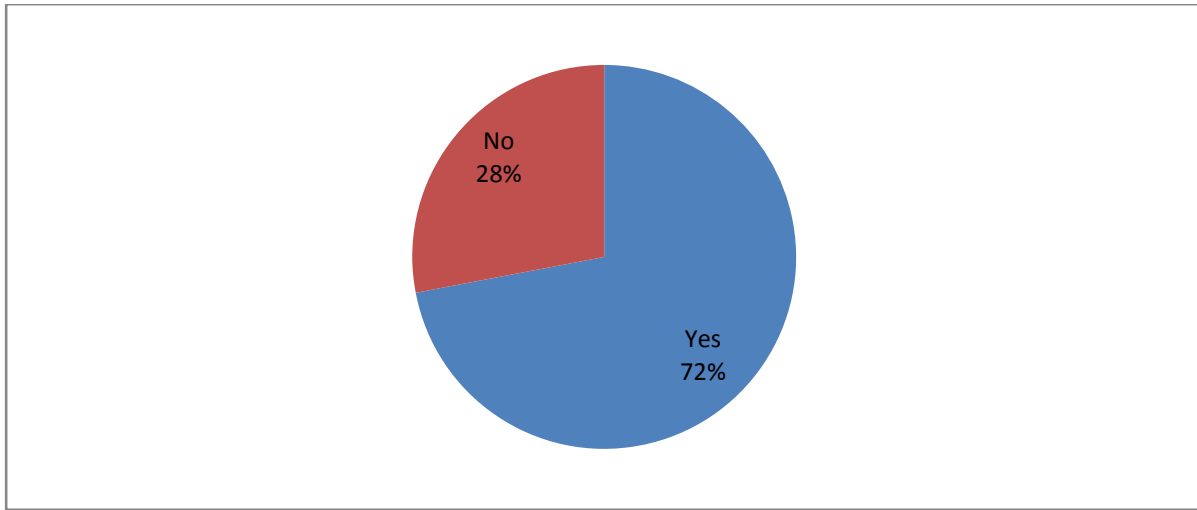


Figure 28: The use of interviews

The figure shows that 71,42% of oral teachers use interviews or at least short discussions to know their students' needs. We notice that the majority of teachers who use portfolios (from question 13), also use interviews. Therefore, we can assume that there is an awareness of students' needs and that teachers try to know how to fill learning gaps.

Q 15. According to you, what are difficulties of assessing students' speaking?

Teachers' answers were about the following points:

- Students' number: teaching oral requires giving specific instructions to each student. However, the number of students which is around 40 raises a challenge for oral teachers to cope with all their students.
- Students' level : teachers find some difficulties to provide the suitable activity for the whole class. In other words, what is easy for some students can be complicated for others.
- Passive students : some students barely participate therefore, teachers cannot diagnose their needs.

- Examinations and tests: unlike written examinations, oral examinations require an immediate decision about the student's performance.

2.3 Discussion of Teachers' Answers

- ✓ According to some previous statistics in teachers' answers, the majority of them follow the formative assessment. I.e. their main goal is to improve students' level by helping them to involve in the activity and support them whenever needed.
- ✓ We notice that the majority of students and teachers share the same opinion about the favorite activity. This, therefore, should improve students' participation since there is an agreement about the type of the activity. It also enlightens the other teachers about which type of activities they should focus on.
- ✓ Peer assessment encourages student to pay attention to their peers' participations. Indeed it also gives the teacher the opportunity to administer the class interaction and observe students' performance.
- ✓ Even though, teachers encourage students to talk freely and to not care about mistakes, in some cases, they have to intervene to correct the student. (Teachers' interventions are mainly to avoid repeating these mistakes by the other students.)

3. Classroom Observation

3.1 Description of Observation's Checklist

In order to understand the assessment of students' oral performance of second year EFL learner, and to facilitate the interpretation of both students' and teachers' answers of the questionnaires, one classroom observation took place on March 2017, during a session of oral expression. The session included two (2) activities:

1. Description and interpretation of some images, for 25 minutes.
2. Conversation in relation to the first activity, for 35 minutes

We have filled the checklist by A, E, or N according to the following:

A: Acceptable: the criterion is observed but it may need improvement.

E: Excellent: the criterion is observed and it is well employed.

N: Not observed: The criterion is not remarked .

During the session ,all the students' participations were counted, and all the items were checked for each activity. The items of the check list were categorized under the following points:

- **Students' participation**

- ✓ Number of students: the number of attended students
- ✓ Number of participants: how many students participate in each activity, this helps us to know whether the activity attract the majority of students' attention.
- ✓ Time of participation: for how long a student talks when he/she participates

- **Classroom interaction**

- ✓ Teacher's talking time: measure the time of talk for students and teacher during the whole session.
- ✓ Students' questions : observe and count students' questions.
- ✓ Group work and collective answers: know how tasks are done (individually or in groups).
- ✓ Peer assessment and students' correction: see if students correct and help each others during their oral participation.
- ✓ Turn taking in conversation: observe how conversations and class interaction are conducting.

- **Teacher’s Assessment**

- ✓ Topic introducing (whether the learning objective is introduced or not): see whether the topic and the lecture's aims are explained at the beginning of the session.
- ✓ Learning aids : what materials and aids are used during the oral session
- ✓ Teacher’s intervention: make remarks about teacher’s interventions during students’ participations.
- ✓ Awareness of students’ learning needs: to see how much time and efforts are spent for individual needs.
- ✓ Questions with no participations: this gives us an idea about the difficulty of the activity
- ✓ Creation of class discussion: to know whether the teacher is committed to the topic.
- ✓ Delivers well-planned lecture: to have an idea about time and tasks division.
- ✓ Summarizes main points: to know whether the session’s outcomes are summarized at the end of the session.

3.2 Analysis of classroom observations’ checklist

3.2.1 section one: Analysis of Students’ participation

Criteria	Activity 1 Talking about images	Activity 2 Conversation
Number of students	33	33
Number of participations	37	45
Time of participation	A	A

Table 29: Students’ participation

3.2.1.1 Number of Students

We counted the overall number of students in the session and we found 33 students, we also asked the teacher about the average of attendances which was from 30 to 37 students out of 45.

3.2.1.2 Number of Participations

During the first activity (interpretation of some images), we counted each of the students' participation which includes their short/long answers, their questions and their interactions with each others. 37 students involved with the activity and participate differently. In the same way , we estimated 45 students who have interacted and express their opinion about the activity in a form of conversation. Even though numbers are close, we noticed that there was more interaction and interest from the students during the second activity.

Remark: teachers' ways of presenting and adapting the activity can hook more students' attention ;i.e., some teachers do have the ability to involve the majority of students in any field of interest. In this case, only the difficulty of the activity decides how many students raise their hands.

3.2.1.3 Time of Participation

In this item, we focused on how long students talk when they participate. We saw that the time of talking depends mainly on Students' linguistic ability (language level),i.e., the linguistic ability makes some students free to express ideas fluently. Similarly, it bounds others so their participations consist of one sentence or, in many cases, one word.

3.2.2 section two: Classroom Interaction

Criteria	Activity 1 Talking about images	Activity 2 conversation
Approximate teacher's talking time (min)	25	15
Group work and collective answers	E	E
Peer assessment and students' correction	A	A
Turn taking in conversation	A	E

Table30: Classroom Interaction

3.2.2.1 Teacher's Talking Time

Knowing the division of time and for how long the teacher talks can reveal many facts about his/her role in the oral session. We noticed that the teacher talk for about 20 min for the first activity and 15 minutes for the second one. Most of this talking is devoted to formative assessment; i.e. help students and facilitate the task.

Remark: in some cases, the teacher keeps out the conversation, his task is to maintain the talking by involving new perspectives or ideas and create an argument about it.

3.2.2.2 Group Work and Collective Answers

In both activities, students were organized into groups of three to five students. Many discussions were noticed in each group; furthermore, students were talking more freely in the groups. We also noticed an interesting exchange of knowledge, grammatical rules and in most cases vocabularies during the group work. Concerning the collective answer, the most important remark was that shy students participate in collective answers.

3.2.2.3 Peer Assessment

Even though, it needs some organization, Peer assessment was acceptable during the whole session. In general, students can complete each others' sentences or correct them. Furthermore, in some cases, they are asked to discuss peers' performance, say their opinion and ask questions. In such case, we notice that when students play the role of an audience they pay more attention which gives them the opportunity to meet new words and learn more about pronunciation.

3.2.2.4 Turn taking in conversation

We noticed that students are free to talk. I.e. there is no presetting of interlocutors and every student can involve in the conversation nearly anytime. Indeed this helps students as it simulates the natural conversation of a daily life. Creating a natural setting in the oral session can also reduce the pressure on students. In other word, students feel more comfortable when there are no conditions about when or for how long they should talk.

3.2.3 Section three: Teacher's Assessment

Criteria	Activity 1 Talking about images	Activity 2 conversation
learning objective introducing	A	A
Teacher's intervention	E	E
Delivers well-planned lecture	A	A
Awareness of students' needs	A	A
Summarizes main points	N	N

Table 31: Teachers' assessment

3.2.3.1 Learning Objective Introducing

At the beginning of both activities, the teacher gave a detailed explanation about the activity. Instructions about how the task should be fulfilled are well represented. However, there was no talking about the activity's objective; i.e. the teacher did not explain the significance and the benefit behind the activity.

3.2.3.2 Teacher's intervention

Since we are investigating the assessment of students' performance, we had to focus on teachers' interventions and what are their purposes. As expected, the three assessment types (summative, formative and diagnostic) were present in teachers' interventions. However, we remark that in the most of time teachers help their students by providing some missing words, or how they pronounce. We can say, therefore, that teachers' focus is on improving students' level which means the formative assessment.

3.2.3.3 Lecture Planning

Generally, we noticed that oral lectures were well planned. the lecture starts with an introduction of the activity, or a reminder if the session is to complete a previous activity. Then, students are given time to think about the task or to make some drafts. In that time, Teachers, permanently check students for help or clarifications. After that, teachers ask students to answer or to express their ideas .

Remark: In some cases, a long time (about 10 minutes) is given to students as chance to think when new task takes place. We assume that this time could be better used if it is devoted to openly discuss this new task. However, according to the teacher, this time can also serve as a break for students. Furthermore, many students need time to prepare what they will say.

3.2.3.4 Awareness of the Student's Learning Needs

Due to the number of students and to the time of the oral session, we barely observe few attempts to treat individual needs. Yet, teachers try to provide activities that serve the majority of students. Such activities fit most students' level and aim to achieve the lecture's aims.

3.2.3.5 Summarizes Main Points at the Close of the Session

When the activity deals with the structure of the language, a recall of what has been learned should be done at the end of each session. However, in our case no time was given to this point. Indeed, most students lose their concentration and think only on going out when the session is at its end. Therefore, the teacher prefers to leave the summary of what has been learned to the next session as a reminder. This can be more useful since students will be fresh at the beginning of the session and since it links courses to each other.

4. Discussion of Classroom Observation's Findings

4.1 Students' Participations and Topic

We noticed that in one session the topic of the activity decides the participants. For example only girls participate when the teacher asked a question about cooking.

Self confident students (4 to 6 students in the session) take their time when they talk. Indeed, they participate even when they are not sure about their answer. However, for the rest of the class, most students talk only when collective answers are given. I.e. when the teacher asks a question they answer in the same time, and this makes a cover for shy students to participate.

4.2 Classroom interaction

In the oral session, teachers' talking time should be reduced as much as possible. Indeed, this will give students the chance to participate as it gives the teachers the opportunity to assess their students' oral performances. During the classroom observation we noticed that, the teacher talks

more and involves as an interlocutor, in this case he attempts to facilitate, guide and enrich the conversation with new vocabularies and topics.

Students were given time to work in groups. We noticed that they talk freely to each other and that the shyness factor disappears. For most of them group work means a safety place to practice their language. Because, in most cases, group members are friends they do not worry about making mistakes.

4.3 Teachers' Assessment

Knowing the aim of the activity and what is expected to be learned can help students to focus their attention on a specific point. Although, the teacher widely explains the instructions of any activity, he did not talk about the learning objective. Indeed, we assume that Students should know the significance and the outcomes of what they do.

It is not possible for a teacher to treat his/her students' need case by case. Furthermore, as it was discussed in chapter one, it is students' responsibility to cope with the class through home works and individual practice. In our case the teacher provided his students with some topics to be prepared for the next session. Therefore, as observed, teachers' role is to motivate and guide students to expand their learning and not bound it to the classroom.

The formative assessment of any student's oral performance requires a knowledge about his learning needs; i.e., before a teacher can help a student, he/she should know what this student needs. On the other hand, knowing the student's needs require the diagnostic assessment, which is based on testing the student to find his weaknesses.

Conclusion

In general Teachers' and students' answers prove an accordance in many perspectives about oral expression module. Such accordance can be seen in answers about the favourite activity, the obstacles in oral expression and the teachers' interventions. Furthermore, the analysis of data reveals that there are some efforts from both students' and teachers' side to make oral session more fruitful. However, we still recommend the use of portfolios and recoding because of their importance in summative and diagnostic assessment. On the other hand, students need to accept the fact that learning a language includes making mistakes and that the teacher's main interest is to support the learners, and encourage them to freely participate in oral activities.

General Conclusion

We conduct this research to provide oral expression teachers with some effective methods of assessing their students' performance. In the first and second chapter we explained students' performance and teachers' assessment as they represent our research's variables. Furthermore, the third chapter was devoted to the analysis of gathered data through the questionnaire and the classroom observation.

Consulting this work helps the reader to understand the real difficulty of assessing students' oral performance, and reveals a part of oral teachers' effort to assess his/her students. The Investigating about our variables in the first and second chapter provided us with a list of some effective methods of assessing oral performance. However, and to fit our case study, this list was shortened and some of its methods were adjusted after The analysis and the interpretation of the gathered data . The theoretical part of our work and the field work statistics enlighten us with the following recommendations:

1. Recommendations for the learners

- Students should be convinced that making mistakes is the first step of learning.
- We advise students to investigate their speaking obstacles. Especially lack of vocabularies and grammatical rules. This can strengthen their points of weakness and fade the contrast between their level which helps the teacher in assessing their performance

• 5.2 Recommendations for Oral Expression Teachers:

In order to be more accurate in the teachers' recommendations , we have categorized our outcomes on the following categories:

2.1 Summative Assessment (tests and examinations)

- The participation of student during the course reveals his interest and reflects his level. Therefore, we suggest including his efforts during oral sessions with the examination mark.
- Because of its role in noting students' performance, efforts and all their participations, the use of portfolios is highly required. It saves students' rights and gives teachers' decisions more credibility.
- As in written examinations, giving a mark to evaluate students' oral performance, requires to reexamine their answers. Therefore, teachers should record what the student say during the test to be revised later. This method is used in international oral tests like TOFEL and IELTS.
- The fear of examination reduces students' performance. Therefore we suggest devising the student's final mark on many examinations. For example four tests of five (5) points each, during the whole semester. This will lessen students' stress and gives them new opportunities in case of failure. It also makes teachers' judgment more fair since it is based on more than one single examinations.

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5.2.2 Formative Assessment

- Providing topics of students' interest enhances their involvement and makes them more productive.
- We recommend to focus on conversations since it is students' favorite activity and it improves their ability of talking in real life situation.

2.3 Diagnostic Assessment

- The use of portfolio helps oral teachers to register students' performance and follow their progress. Therefore, it plays a crucial role to treat learning difficulties and diagnose reasons of failure.
- As was noticed during the classroom observation, most of session's time was devoted to formative assessment (help students and motivate them to practice). Therefore, we recommend giving more time to diagnose difficulties that hinder students' oral productions.
- Recording students' performance to be checked after the oral session is the only method which makes it possible for the teacher to take his time to identify his learners' weaknesses.

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Appendices

Students' Questionnaire

Dear students,

This questionnaire is an attempt for gathering information needed for the accomplishment of a Master dissertation, titled:

Investigating The Effective Methods Of Assessing EFL Students' Performance In Oral Sessions

Your answers are very important for the validity of the research we are undertaken. Therefore, you are kindly requested to answer the following questionnaire as frankly and truthfully as you can.

Please, tick the appropriate box () and make full statements whenever necessary.

Section One: Student Background

Q1. Age:

Q2. Why did you choose to study English?

. Personal choice

. Parents' choice

. Administrative orientation

. Others

Q3. Your English level is?

- . Very good
- . Good
- . Average
- . Poor

Q4. Do you speak English outside the university?

YES

NO

If yes, how often?

- . Rarely
- . Occasionally
- . Daily

Section Two: Students' Oral Performance

Q5. According to you, which of the following skills is the most important to be developed?

. Speaking

. Reading

. Writing

. Listening

Q6. According to you, which is most important in speaking?

. Fluency

. Accuracy

. Both

Q7. How do you consider oral sessions?

. Uninteresting

. Exciting

. Stressful

Why?.....
.....

Q8. How often do you participate during oral expression session?

. Frequently . Rarely
. Occasionally . Never

Q9. From 1 to 5, which of the following activities is most useful? (1 most useful, 5 less useful)

Activities	Usefulness
Role play	
Open discussion	
Questions and answers	
Presentation	
Image description	

Others.....
.....

Q11. Do students have the right to choose the topic of the oral activities?

All time Sometimes Never

Q12. According to you, which of the following obstacles has the most effect on your participation?

Lack of interest	<input type="checkbox"/>	lack of vocabulary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fear of making mistakes	<input type="checkbox"/>	lack of fluency	<input type="checkbox"/>

Others.....

Section Three: Assessment

Q13. When the student is talking, how often does the teacher intervene to correct his/her mistakes?

. Frequently	<input type="checkbox"/>	. Rarely	<input type="checkbox"/>
. Occasionally	<input type="checkbox"/>	. Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q14. Are students allowed to correct or help each other when they participate?

Yes No

Q15. According to you, the final average of your oral production should be?

. only examination mark	<input type="checkbox"/>
. examination and participation mark	<input type="checkbox"/>
. only participation	<input type="checkbox"/>

Others.....

Q16. During the assessment, do you think that the teacher focuses on? (You can choose more than one of the following)

. testing students to know their level	<input type="checkbox"/>
. correction of mistakes and improving the student's level	<input type="checkbox"/>
. knowing students' needs, his weaknesses and his strengths	<input type="checkbox"/>

Finally, your comments are welcomed.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Thank you for your time!

Why?

.....
.....

Q4. In a typical session you talk for?

- 40 to more than 50 min
- 20 to 30 minutes
- 30 to 40 minutes
- Less than 20 minutes

Q5. How often do students choose the type of the activity (I.e. whether, role play or conversation or presentation....etc)

- Always.
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

Q6. According to you, which are students' favorite activities?

- Open discussion
- Questions and answers
- Role play
- Presentation
- Others

If others, please state them ?.....

Q8. According to you, which of the following obstacles affects the most on your students' participation?

- Lack of interest
- lack of vocabulary
- Fear of making mistakes
- lack of fluency

Others.....
.....

Section two: Teachers' Assessment

Q9. Are students allowed to correct each others?

Yes

No

Why?.....
.....

Q10. When a student participates, you focus on

- Fluency
- Accuracy
- Both
- Other

Q11. Do you use audio /video recording to assess students' participations?(i.e. record students' talking)

Yes

No

Please explain why

.....
.....

Q12. How often do you intervene when student participate?

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

Q13. Do you use portfolio to assess students' productions.

Yes

No

If yes, how?

.....

Q14. Do you use interviews or other tools to investigate students' needs?

Yes

No

If yes, what are they?

.....
.....

Q15. According to you, what are the difficulties you often encounter when assessing students' speaking?

.....
.....

Finally, we appreciate any remarks or piece of advice

.....
.....
.....
.....

Thank you!

Classroom Observation Checklist

Observer:
Department:

Date:
Class Observed:

Time:

In order to understand the assessment of students' oral performance of second year EFL learner, the following classroom observation has been conducted to observe the following points:

1. Students' participation
2. Teacher's assessment
3. Classroom interaction

Therefore, a checklist for each of these axes will be filled during the session of oral expression as following:

(**A:** Acceptable, **E:** Excellent , **N:** Not Observed)

1. Students' participation

Criteria	Activity 1 Talking about images	Activity 2 Conversation
Number of students		
Number of participations		
Time of participation		

2. Classroom interaction

Criteria	Activity 1 Talking about images	Activity 2 conversation
Approximate teacher's talking time (min)		
Group work and collective answers		
Peer assessment and students' correction		
Turn taking in conversation		

3. Teacher's assessment

Criteria	Activity 1 Talking about images	Activity 2 conversation
learning objective introducing		
Teacher's intervention		
Delivers well-planned lecture		
Awareness of individual students' needs		
Summarizes main points		

Résumé

Ce travail étudie certaines méthodes d'évaluation du rendement des élèves lors des séances orales. Au cours de cette enquête, nous avons essayé d'adapter ces méthodes pour mieux s'adapter aux étudiants EFL de deuxième année LMD de l'Université de Biskra. Pour atteindre cet objectif, nous sommes concentrés sur la compréhension de l'évaluation et la performance orale des élèves, qui représentent les variables de notre recherche. Dans la partie théorique de notre travail, nous avons organisé tous les contours dans un ordre logique pour faciliter la compréhension de l'évaluation de la performance des élèves.

Cette enquête nous éclaire que les barrières psychologiques et la difficulté de l'activité orale déterminent la performance des élèves et contrôlent leurs progrès; Et d'autre part, l'utilisation de portefeuilles et d'enregistrements aide l'enseignant à évaluer ses étudiants. En outre, nous supposons que la fourniture de sujets d'intérêt des étudiants renforce leur participation et les rend plus productifs.