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# MASTER THESIS

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**Submitted and Defended by:**  
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**INVESTIGATION ON MAJOR REASONS FOR GETTING LOW SCORES IN  
THE SPEAKING SECTION OF STANDARDIZED TESTS  
THE CASE OF TOEFL AND IELTS CANDIDATES**

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## **Declaration**

I, **TOUATI Rasha**, do hereby declare that this submitted work is my original work and has not previously been submitted for any institution or university for a degree. I also declare that a list of references is provided forward indicating all the sources of the cited and quoted information. This work was certified and completed at Mohammed KHEIDER University of Biskra.

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this work to

My future self

My beloved Ones Who Always Have Been Very Supportive

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## **Abstract**

The majority of English speakers in Algeria have a wide-open look on the world that is why they seek to have a better life by going to an English-speaking country. As it is known worldwide, there are requirements to travel abroad for immigration, study, or work. One main requirement is succeeding TOEFL / IELTS test with good scores, which means achieving valuable scores in the four sections; reading, writing, listening, and speaking. This study aims to investigate major reasons for getting low scores in the TOEFL / IELTS speaking test in addition to the availability of methods, strategies, and techniques that help candidates improve their performance on these tests. Therefore, we assumed that when candidates are more exposed to the English language, invest more time in practicing speaking skills, and prepare for the test their scores will be improved. To test the validity of the study hypotheses, a descriptive study is conducted with a mixed-method approach, using both an interview and a questionnaire to collect, analyze, and interpret data. The interview is administrated to fifteen (15) English teachers from the British Council, and the Wizard Language Center, and the questionnaire is administrated to twenty-five (25) candidates from the same centers. The received findings confirmed that lack of exposure to the English language and lack in preparation courses aside from other causes are the main obstacles candidates face when passing the test, it also emphasized the importance of speaking skills and proved that Algerian candidates do not give it the required attention, with this, the results have validated our hypotheses. Ultimately, teachers are suggested to change the used approach in teaching preparation courses for these tests, candidates are asked to focus on practicing their speaking skills, prepare well and be ready before passing any test.

**Keywords:** Dissertation, research, study, speaking skill, standardized tests, TOEFL, IELTS, candidates

## **List of Abbreviations and Acronyms**

**TOEFL:**Test of English as a Foreign Language

**IELTS:**The International English Language Testing System

**L1 :**First language

**L2 :**Second language

**EFL :** English as a foreign Language

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# **General Introduction**

## **1-Study Background**

The concept language can be defined as the system of communication consisting of sounds, words and grammar or a system of communication used by the people of a particular country or profession (Everson, 2009). To learn a specific language there are four steps or what is called language skills : reading, writing, listening and speaking these skills work together, when you read you develop your writing skill and when you listen you develop your speaking skill. One of the most important skills is the speaking skill as it is considered as one of the hardest, we find some learners who have been learning language for so long but still can not speak it. So, speaking skill is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing *and* receiving and processing information (Brown, 1994; Burns & Joyce, 1997).

In different types of tests we find these four skills . TOEFL test ‘‘test of English as a foreign language’’ is a comprehensive English language examination required by more than 7.500 colleges and universities around the world and various professional occupations , and also the IELTS ‘‘the international English language testing system’’ is an international standardised test of English language proficiency for non-native English language speakers; focusing on the speaking skill in standardised tests we find that most candidates fail to pass that section due to specific reasons.

In this project we will work on finding obstacles that face candidates ‘‘getting low scores in the speaking section in TOEFL and IELTS tests’’ and figuring suitable solutions to overcome them, in order to do this a mixed method approach will be used. Quantitative and qualitative research methods will be applied together. Data will be collected by making interviews and addressing questionnaires with a case study strategy.

We find that this methodology is the most appropriate to achieve the desired results.

## **2-Statement of the Problem**

English as a foreign language EFL has a process in order to be learnt, students should focus on different language skills to master it and be fluent, as what agreed on language is communication and one way to communicate is through speaking; thus, speaking skill is very important to acquire the English language.

As we observed Algerian students are capable to write and understand English but when it comes to speaking a disappointing failure occurs due to many reasons, the fact that they are not native English speakers, are not exposed to the language, anxiety and fear ...etc

Some students or even non-students seek to continue their studies abroad, work or immigrate and in order to do so they must pass TOEFL or IELTS tests and here they face their biggest fears ‘‘the speaking task’’ . Most of these candidates fail to get good or an acceptable score in the speaking test we believe it is because they do not prepare as they should, they underestimate this section and some do not give it much of importance.

To change this and overcome these problems, we want to help candidates go through these tests successfully by making them more exposed to the target language i.e practice with natives or with highly qualified tutors. They also must practice, practice and practice because it is the key to success so, we see that we need to make preparation courses that adapt the new methods of teaching and tutoring.

### **3-Research Questions**

This research seeks to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the major reasons behind candidates getting low scores in the speaking section of IELTS and TOEFL tests ?

RQ2: what are the proposed solutions to tackle these problems?

### **4-Research Hypotheses**

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

RH1: Lack of exposure to the language and ignoring practicing can be major causes of getting low scores in speaking section of IELTS and TOEFL tests

RH2: To overcome these problems candidates must focus on practicing speaking skill and prepare for the test, as they should interact with native speakers in order to grasp the real language.

### **5-Aims of the Study**

- General aim:

The aim of this study is to investigate the reasons why candidates get low scores in the speaking section of standardized tests and to develop suitable solutions in order to improve their results.

- Specific aims:

a. To describe language speaking skill in education.

- b. To study the relationship between the speaking skill and standardized tests.
- c. To identify the factors that leads to failing speaking skill section in TOEFL and IELTS tests.
- d. To develop solutions to this problem in order to help candidates improve their scores.

## **6-Research Methodology**

### **Research Approach**

In order to describe the major reasons behind getting low scores in the speaking section of standardized tests and to find ways to help candidates improve their scores, researchers decide it's more suitable to opt the mixed-methods approach, both quantitative approach and qualitative approach, because it serves the nature of the study.

### **Research Design(s) / strategy(ies)**

In this study, a case study (small-scale study) is used, because it suits the nature of our research.

### **Data Collection Methods / Tools**

In this study, the researcher used both an interview and a questionnaire as data collection tools.

## **7-Population & Sample**

This research will be conducted at the level of English language centers in Algeria; the British Council Center, Wizard Language Center. The population is represented in candidates who already passed the test, they are divided into groups based on different characteristics, in which they were selected randomly.

## **8-Sampling Techniques**

The sampling technique used in this study is the stratified random sample. The population will be divided into 04 groups based on the following characteristics: age, education, occupation and purposes.

## **9-Significance of the Study**

This study is designed to focus on English language skill. The goal is to help candidates succeed TOEFL and IELTS tests by detecting problems they face in the speaking section and work on finding suitable solutions in order to enhance their scores.

## **10- Structure of the Study**

This study is divided into two main parts. The first part is devoted to the literature review. It constitutes of two main chapters while the second one is devoted to the field work and data analysis. The current study comprises three chapters; the first chapter presents an overview on the speaking skill, while, the second chapter provides an overview on standardized tests. Moreover, the third chapter is devoted to data collection, analysis, and discussion.

### **Chapter one**

This chapter deals with speaking skills. We provided its definitions, components, process, types, importance and its relation with the other three language skills.

### **Chapter two**

This chapter deals with standardized tests. We provided a general overview that includes: definitions, characteristics, structure, types. For more information, we provided a deep study on both IELTS and TOEFL tests. In addition, we presented factors that cause candidates to obtain poor scores and suggested solutions for improvement.

### **Chapter three**

This chapter starts with presenting the research methodology adopted for this study namely, research approach and research design. Then, it deals with data collection, analysis, and interpretation. It is based on the use of two data collection methods (a questionnaire and an interview).

# **Chapter One**

## **Language Speaking Skill**

# **CHAPTER ONE : LANGUAGE SPEAKING SKILL**

## 1.1 Introduction

## 1.2 General overview of language skills

### 1.2.1. Definitions of language

### 1.2.2. Definitions of a skill

## 1.3 Overview of speaking skill

### 1.3.1. Definitions of speaking skill

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## 1.4 The relationship between speaking and other language skills

## 1.5 The importance of speaking skill

## 1.6 Teaching and learning speaking skill

## 1.7 Conclusion

## 1.1 Introduction

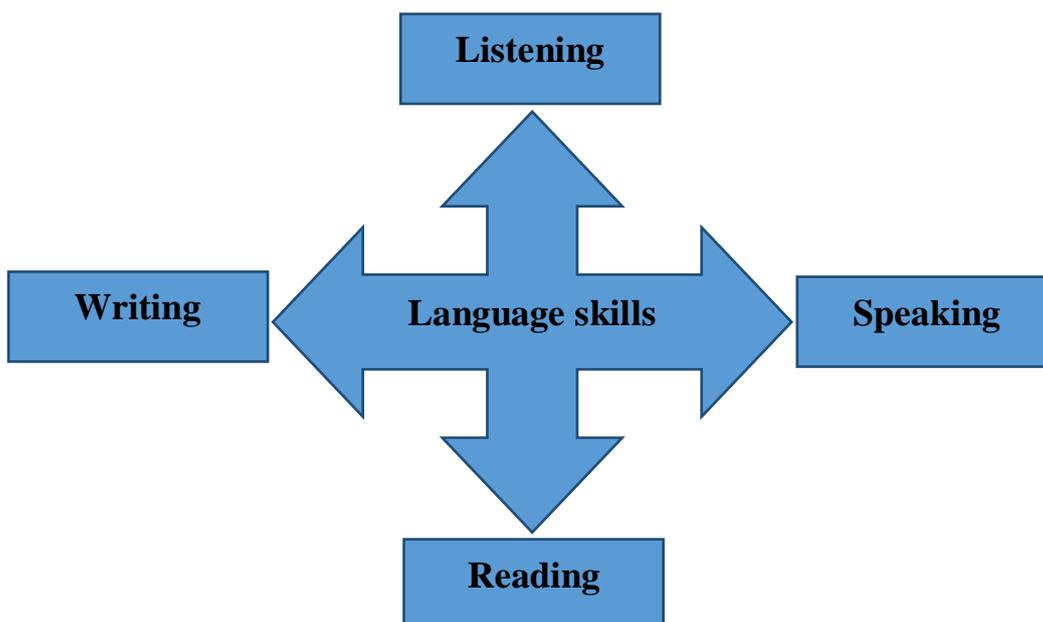
When building a house a strong foundation is needed; similarly, to the language, a person can not be a good language user without mastering the four language skills. To be able to achieve complete communication, the language learner needs to learn these skills together because they complete each other and by knowing this key factor they will work on giving each skill the attention and efforts it requires.

In the following chapter, researchers will focus on language speaking skill they will discuss multiple definitions of language, a skill, and the four language skills. Additionally, they will devote a part to speaking and its relationship with other language skills, as they will emphasize its importance. Finally, researchers will review the process of teaching and learning the speaking skill.

## 1.2 General overview of language skills

Language skill is the ability to use the language well in different contexts, as it is known, language is not a content-based subject like science or mathematics which aims to educate people and fill their minds with information, language is used after acquiring and practicing language skills. In order to achieve a complete communication, there are four skills needed, usually the process of acquiring a language goes through listening first, then speaking after that reading and finally writing, and these are called the four language skills.

**Diagram 3.1: The four language skills**



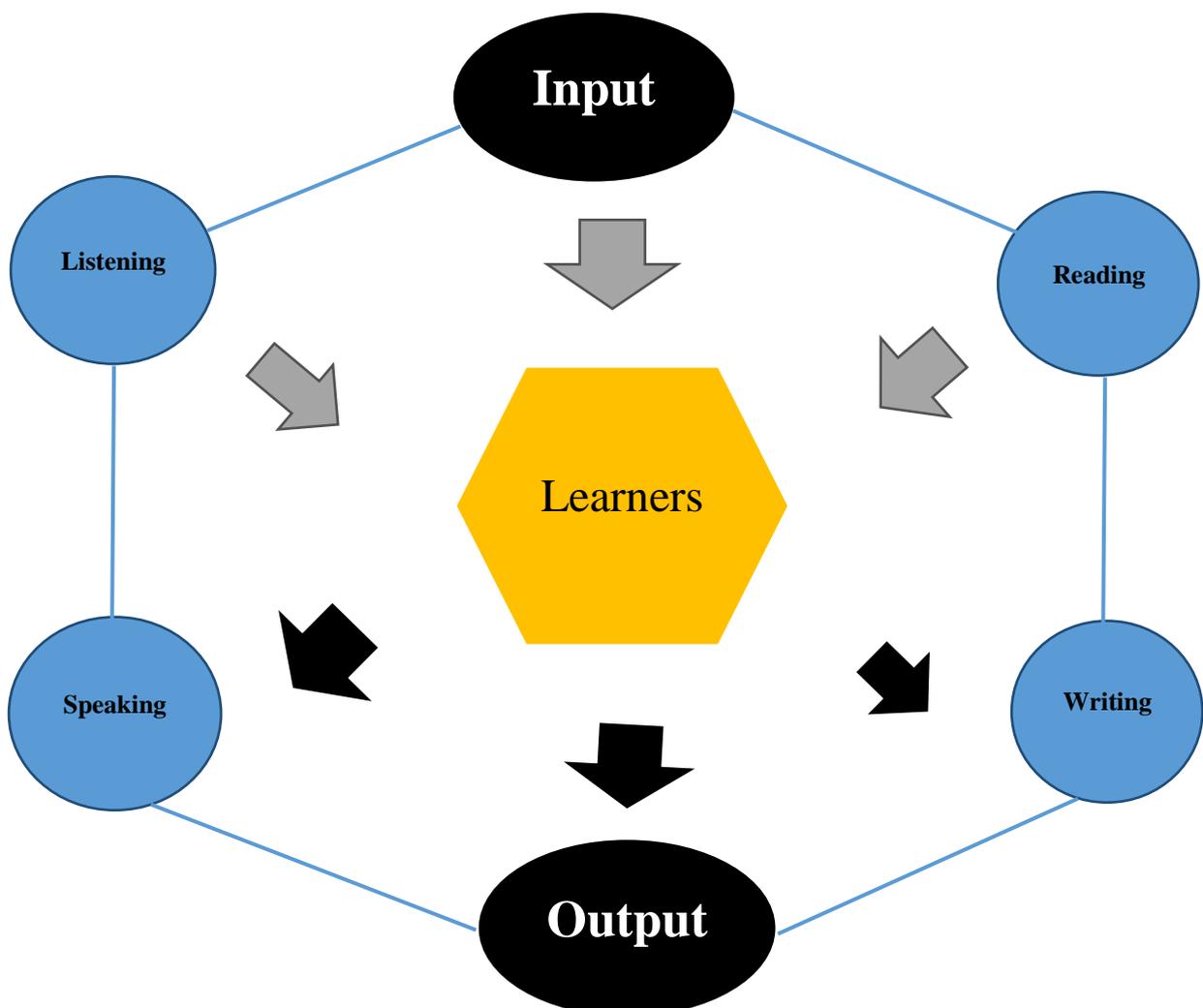
Researchers state that language skills are generally learned in this following order:

- Listening, when learning a new language it is heard spoken at first
- Speaking, then learners try to repeat what is heard
- Reading, after some time they start being familiar with the linguistic side of the language, they see that spoken language depicted symbolically
- Writing, at last, learners reproduce what has been acquired earlier

Language skills are a set of four capacities that allow the learner to comprehend, analyse and produce language for proper and effective communication. These skills are usually divided into two types: receptive and productive.

Receptive skills are the ones concerned with understanding; reading and listening. Productive skills are the ones concerned with producing; speaking and writing.

**Diagram 3.2: The productive skills**



The input refers to the processible language the learners are exposed to while listening or reading i.e. the receptive skills. The output, on the other hand, is the language they produce, either in speaking or writing i.e. the productive skills (Mohammed Rhalmi,2019).

**Listening** is the active process of receiving and responding to spoken and sometimes unspoken messages. It is one of the subjects studied in the field of language arts and in the discipline of conversation analysis(Richard Nordquist, 2019).According to Purdy & Borisoff (1997), listening is the process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken and/or nonverbal messages. Howatt and Dakin state listening is the ability to identify and understand what others are saying. This involves understanding a speaker's accent or pronunciation, his grammar and his vocabulary, and grasping his meaning.

**Speaking** is used twice as much as reading and writing in our communication(Rivers, 1981).According to Chaney (1998), speaking is process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts. Speaking has been classified to monologue and dialogue. The former focuses on giving an interrupted oral presentation and the latter on interacting with other speaker(Nunan, 1989).

**Reading** is development, interactive, and global process involving learned skills. The process specifically incorporates and can be positively and negatively influenced by nonlinguistic internal and external variables or factors(Leu & Kiner, 1987). Reading is the process of receiving interpreting information in language and Johnson (2008) declares it is practice of using text to create meaning.

**Writing** is a thinking process Brown (2001) states it can be planned and given with an unlimited number of revisions before its release. According to Rivers (1981), writing is conveying information or expression of original ideas in a consecutive way in the new language. Harmer (2001) states that writing is a form of communication to deliver thought or to express feeling through written form.

### **1.2.1 Definitions of language**

There is a common view of language, which is held by Wittgenstein, Strawson Dummett, Searle, Putnam, Lewis, Wiggins, and others. This view states that language consists of conventions, it is rule-governed, these rules are conventionalized, a language is learned, there are general learning mechanisms in the brain, and so on. Chomsky's attitude towards this view of language has been rather negative, and his rejection of it is a major motivation for the development of his own theory.

Language is a set (finite or infinite) of sentences, each finite in length and constructed out of a finite set of elements, as he further claims, this holds true for all natural languages since they have a finite

number of phonemes (or letters in its alphabet) and each sentence is representable as a finite sequence of these phonemes or letters (Chomsky,1957).Chomsky added that the grammar of a language should be thought of as a device of some sort for producing the sentences of the language under analysis.

According to Keraf (2005), providing two language understanding. The first notion of language as stated means of communication between members of the public in the form of a symbol of the sound produced by means of said human. Second, language is a communication system that uses symbols vocal (speech sound) which are arbitrary.

Owen (2006), describes the language as a socially acceptable code or conventional system for delivering concepts through the use of symbols, and combinations of the desired symbols are governed by the provisions.

Tarin (1989),has a similar opinion of the ones above as he gives two definitions of the language. First, language is a system that systematically, perhaps also for generative systems. Second, language is a set of symbols as you like or arbitrary symbols.

According to Santoso (1990), language is a series of sound produced by said means of a conscious human being.

According to Wibowo (2001), language is a system of symbols that are meaningful and articulate sound (generated by said tool) which are arbitrary and conventional, which is used as a means of communicating by a group of human beings to give birth to feelings and thoughts.

According to Mackey (1986), language is a form and not a state or something that sounds arbitrary symbol system, or also a system of many systems, a system of an order or an order in the system- the system.

According to Shamsuddin (1986), he gave two language understanding. First, language is a tool used to shape the mind and feelings, desires and deeds, a tool used to influence and be influenced. Second, language is a clear sign of a good personality or bad, a clear sign of the family and the nation, a clear sign from the mind of humanity.

As with Wikipedia, which is almost the same on the definition of language that has been presented by experts. According to Wikipedia, language is:

1. a system to represent objects, actions, ideas, and circumstances.

2. an apparatus which is used to convey their real concept into the minds of others
3. a unified system of meaning
4. a code that is used by a linguistic expert to distinguish between form and meaning.
5. deliver a speech grammar that have been established (eg, words, sentences, and others.)
6. a speech system that will be understood by the linguistic community...

### **1.2.2 Definitions of a skill**

A skill is the ability to use one's knowledge effectively and readily in execution or performance. It also refers to dexterity or coordination in the execution of learned tasks.

A skill can be defined as an ability to do an activity or job well, especially because it has been practiced. In other words, a skill is the ability to perform an action with determined results often within a given amount of time, energy, or both.

Skill is the knowledge and ability that enables you to do something well. A skill is a type of work or activity which requires special training and knowledge. The definition of a skill is a talent or ability that comes from training or practice.

## **1.3 Overview of speaking skill**

Speaking, among the other language skills (listening, reading, and writing) is considered the most important one. according to Ur (1984) many if not most foreign language learners are interested in learning to speak.

### **1.3.1 Definition of speaking skill**

Speaking is an act of making vocal sounds. We can say that speaking means to converse, or express one's thoughts and feelings in spoken language. To speak often implies conveying information. Otherwise, Speaking is the delivery of language through the mouth. To speak, we create sounds using many parts of our bodies including lungs, vocal tract, vocal cords, tongue, teeth, and lips.( Bygate, 1987) quoted that:

"Speaking is the vehicle par excellence of social solidarity, of social ranking, of professional advancement and of business .It is also the medium through which much language is learnt, and

which for many is particularly conducive for learning. Perhaps, then, the teaching of speaking merits more thought"

Speaking is also defined as an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information. Its form and meaning are dependent on the context in which it occurs, the participants, and the purposes of speaking (Burns & Joyce, 1997). Eckard & Kearny (1981), Florez (1999) and Howarth (2001) define speaking as a two-way process involving a true communication of ideas, information or feelings.

Speaking skill is the ability to express oneself orally, coherently, fluently, and appropriately in a given meaningful context using correct pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary and adopting the pragmatic and discourse rules of the spoken language, McDonough and Shaw (2003) state that speaking is not the oral production of written language, but involves learners in the mastery of a wide range of sub-skills, which constitute an overall competence in the spoken language. Additionally, Chaney (1998, p. 13) states that "Speaking is process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts". In other words, Brown and Yule (1983) define speaking as "the skill that the students will be judged upon most in real-life situations". Speaking skill is the ability to communicate effectively. It allows the speaker to convey messages in a passionate, thoughtful, and convincing manner. Speaking skill also help to assure that one won't be misunderstood by those who are listening. Speaking is the productive skill in the oral mode. It is more complicated than it seems at first and involves more than just pronouncing words.

### 1.3.2 Types of speaking skill

Speaking is the skill that makes human beings different from and superior to the species of living beings. Speaking is a complex cognitive and linguistic skill. It is performed in different types according to different scholars. Firstly, speaking can be formal and informal.

**Formal** speaking is a type of speaking which does not involve in any way personal matter. It is the type in which the speaker has to follow some norms and principles whenever conveying the message in a structured manner. The topic to be spoken is generally organized, far away from the irrelevant stuff. Formal speaking can be included conferences, debates, presentations, speeches, etc... Formal speaking is more likely to adhere to the rules of Standard language so, formal speech rarely includes slang words. There will be fewer contractions used and the speaker is likely to follow a proper sentence structure. Whereas, **informal** speaking takes place in an unstructured manner and outside of

the formal one. Informal speaking is a type of speaking which involves personal things, everybody is free to tell anything to anybody. It is considered the most natural way of speaking. In social gatherings or at home people talk to each other is not bound with any formality or strict discipline order particular format or particular vocabulary which means everyone speaks and shares their thoughts freely. Informal speaking differs from standard language, using a more relaxed tone and deviation from the typical rules of grammar. It is commonly heard in everyday life. The informal speech may include slang words and contractions to save time.

In addition, there are other types of speaking set by Brown such as imitative, intensive, responsive, interactive and extensive

**Imitative speaking** is the type based on repetition, learners repeat what they heard in an understandable way. Comprehension is not important at this level the main objective is to reproduce what was said to them taking into consideration the pronunciation aspect in order to convey the message clearly.

**Intensive speaking** involves producing a limited amount of language in a highly controlled context. An example of this would be to read aloud a passage. Competency at this level is shown through achieving certain grammatical or lexical mastery.

**Responsive speaking** is slightly more complex than intensive, it contains interaction but at a limited level of small conversations, standard greeting, or short replies. At this level, the dialog includes a simple content.

**Interactive speaking** is lengthier and more complex in terms of interaction, it is usually more interpersonal than transactional, by interpersonal it is meant speaking for maintaining relationships while, transactional is speaking for sharing information.

**Extensive speaking** is normally some sort of monolog, it includes speech, story-telling... that can be used independently or integrated with each other, depending on purposes (Brown, 2004, p. 142). This involves a great deal of preparation and is not typically improvisational communication. In a conversation, body language can be relied on to make up for communication challenges. However, with extensive communication speaking in a comprehensible way is sort of impossible without relying on feedback.

From another point of view, Vilagran (2008) classified types of speaking as following ; interactive, partially interactive, and non-interactive

**Interactive speaking** situations include face-to-face conversations and telephone calls, in which we are alternately listening and speaking, and in which we have a chance to ask for clarification, repetition, or slower speech from our conversation partner.

**Partially interactive** speaking situations include giving a speech to a live audience, where the convention is that the audience does not interrupt the speech. The speaker nevertheless can see the audience and judge from the expressions on their faces and body language whether or not he or she is being understood.

**Non-interactive** speaking situations include recording a speech for a radio broadcast, performing in a play, reciting a poem or singing.

### **1.3.3. Components of speaking skill**

According to Vanderkevent (1990) there are three components in speaking: the speakers, the listeners and the utterances.

**The Speakers** are people who produce the sound. They are useful as the tool to express opinion or feelings to the hearer. So if there are no speakers, the opinion or feelings won't be stated.

**The Listeners** are people who receive or get the speaker's opinion or feeling. If there are no listeners, speakers will express their opinion by writing.

**The utterances** are words or sentences, which are produced by the speakers to state the opinion. If there is no utterance, both of the speakers and the listeners will use sign.

In addition, other scholars such as Syakur (2007) and Harris (1974) state that there are at least five components of speaking skill concerned with comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency.

- **Comprehension**

For oral communication, it certainly requires a subject to respond, to speech as well as to initiate it. Comprehension refers to the fact that participants fully understand the nature of the research project, even when procedures are complicated and entail risks (Cohen et al., 2005).

- **Grammar**

Greenbaum and Nelson (2002) argue that grammar refers to the set of rules that allow us to combine words in our language into larger units. It is needed for students to arrange a correct sentence in conversation. It is in line with explanation suggested by Heaton (1978) that students' ability to

manipulate structure and to distinguish appropriate grammatical form in appropriateness. The utility of grammar is also to learn the correct way to gain expertise in a language in oral and written form.

- **Vocabulary**

Vocabulary is a set of lexemes including single words, compound words and idioms (Richards and Schmidt, 2002). Vocabulary is essential for successful second language use because without an extensive vocabulary, we will be unable to use the structure and function we may have learnt for comprehensible communicative. It can be said that one key to the success in communicative, which is the power of words.

- **Pronunciation**

Pronunciation refers to the traditional or customary utterance of words. From that statement can be concluded that pronunciation is the way for students to produce the utterance words clearly when they are speaking (Kline, 2001). Moreover, pronunciation includes all those aspects of speech which make for an easily intelligible flow of speech, including segmental articulation, rhythm, intonation and phrasing, and more peripherally even gesture, body language and eye contact (Fraser, 2001).

- **Fluency**

Fluency is defined as the ability to speak communicatively, fluently and accurately. It usually refers to expressing oral language freely without interruption. Signs of fluency include a reasonably fast speed of speaking and only a small number of pauses and “ums” or “ers”. These signs indicate that the speaker does not have spend a lot of time searching for the language items needed to express the message.

#### **1.3.4. The speaking process**

The speaking process has three stages, it includes activities that occur prior to, during, and after the actual speaking event. For instance, before speaking, the speaker determines the content of the message, the presentation way, and the target audience. During speaking, the speaker focuses on the tone of voice, suitable vocabulary, possible responses, the environment, and nonverbal gestures. Following speaking, the speaker accepts comments, answers questions, and explains none understood concepts.

- **The pre-speakingstage**

Just as pre-writing precedes drafting, pre-speaking begins before speaker actually speaks. Speaker's experiences, observations, and interactions have an impact upon what they say and how they say it. Pre-speaking activities involve thought, reflection, and provide opportunities for speakers to plan and organize for speaking. These are some purposes for pre-speaking:

- To choose a speaking topic; speakers generate ideas for speaking topics through a variety of pre-speaking activities such as listening to music, listening to a speaker, reading and researching, reflecting upon personal experience.
- To determine the purpose; speakers talk to express ideas, emotions, and opinions, and to share information. so they must ask themselves "What is my purpose for this speaking?".
- To determine the audience; speakers must ask themselves "Who is my intended audience?" Some possible audiences are familiar audiences like friends, family, teachers. Extended but known audience like community. Extended but unknown audiences like media.
- To determine format; speakers must consider how their ideas and information can be presented effectively. Some possible formats include discussions, formal speech, dramatic presentation, monologue...

- **The during-speaking stage**

Speaking actively engages speakers in interactions with peers and other audiences. speakers who have been provided with supportive, collaborative environments and opportunities to prepare for their informal and formal speaking experiences are more likely to have the confidence needed to go public with their ideas and information. These are some purposes for during-speaking:

- To express personal feelings, ideas, or viewpoints.
- To explore and experiment with a variety of ideas and formats.
- To converse and discuss.
- To inform or explain.
- To entertain or amuse.
- To tell a story.

- **The post-speaking stage**

Following speaking experiences, both formal and informal, it is important to have speakers reflect upon their performance. Their reflection, should include the audience, who can help them set personal goals for improving their speaking abilities. This type of reflective assessment and goal setting encourages critical thought. These are some post-speaking purposes:

- To reflect upon performance; speakers who have opportunities to reflect upon their speaking experiences, in light of pre-determined criteria, grow in their abilities to speak effectively.
- To set goals for improvement; When speakers reflect upon their performance, they begin to recognize what they have done well and where they require improvement.

### **1.3.5. Basic functions of speaking**

The mastery of speaking skills is a priority for any language learner. Several language experts have attempted to categorize the functions of speaking in human interaction. According to Brown and Yule, Richards (2018) after Jones (1996) and Burns (1998), there are three functions of speaking: talks as interaction, talk as transaction, talk as performance.

- **Talk as interaction**

Talk as interaction refers to what we normally mean by “conversation” and describes interaction that serves a primarily social function. When people meet, they exchange greetings, engage in small talk, recount recent experiences, and so on because they wish to be friendly and to establish a comfortable zone of interaction with others. The focus is more on the speakers and how they wish to present themselves to each other than on the message. Such exchanges may be either casual or more formal, depending on the circumstances, and their nature has been well described by Brown and Yule (1983).

- **Talk as transaction**

Talk as transaction focuses more on the message that is conveyed, on what is said or done and how people interact socially with each other clearly and accurately. In this type of spoken language, speakers usually focus on meaning or way to understanding.

- **Talk as performance**

In this case, speaking activities focus more on monolog rather than dialog. Function of speaking as performance happens at speeches, public talks, public announcements, retell story, telling story and so on. Thus, the successful talks in public or in speeches need a good performance.

## **1.4. The relationship between speaking and other language skills**

Language is a cognitive process by which we communicate our thoughts and feelings to others using the four language skills reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Reading, writing, speaking and listening are interrelated and affect one another. There is a fundamental and reciprocal relationship among oral language (listening and speaking), written language, and reading. Initially, reading and writing are dependent on oral language skills. Eventually, reading and writing extend oral language.

### **1.4.1 The relation between speaking and listening skill**

Speaking and listening are interdependent processes. The activity of Speaking involves conveying meaning using a code and listening involves understanding the meaning with the help of that code

used by the speaker. In transactional or conversational discourse, sending-receiving and receiving-sending are an alternative phenomena.

The relationship between speaking and listening is represented in the following diagram below.

According to Brown (2001, p. 275), there is a natural link between speaking and listening because they complement each other. In this sense, listening is deemed as the important skill that contributes in developing the speaking skill.

In other words, Harmer (2007) shows that, "Listening texts are good pronunciation models, in other words, and the more students listen, the better they get, not only at understanding speech, but also at speaking themselves". Consequently, speaking fluently needs listening effectively.

The processes of speaking and listening are most often intertwined and happen under the pressure of ever ticking time (Louma, 2004).

Listening as comprehensive ability belongs to the implicit process, while speaking as productive ability belongs to the explicit process. Therefore, they are two closely related but opposite processes in oral communication, one from surface structure to deep structure, another from deep structure to surface structure. Listening and speaking are an interrelated continuum. Firstly, listening and speaking prerequisite each other. One learns to speak by listening. Speaking is important as a signaling device to negotiate better listening. Secondly, more listening provides real linguistic context and appropriate language for oral communication. Thirdly, more speaking enhances the internalization of new information. Fourthly, listening and speaking test each other. Listening is examined in speaking, that is, the accuracy of listening and degree of mastering listening skills can be checked in oral expression. Accuracy of speaking can be examined through listening, that is, one can correct his pronunciation and check the appropriateness of lexical use in speaking.

#### **1.4.2. The relation between speaking and reading skill**

Discussing reciprocity between reading and speaking, Ann Hilferty states: "By reciprocity I mean that as skills in some aspect of oral language increase, they help development in reading, and as a person improves his reading skills, that improvement seems to enhance further improvement in the spoken language. This seems to be a continuing spiral". In addition, The development in spoken language influences development of reading. That's true, but it's also true that as people develop stronger reading skills, they further enable their development of more sophisticated speaking skills. Although, reading is a receptive skill and speaking is a productive one, there is an important relationship between the two of them, and reading is the one with a greater impact on speaking. This means that what we read (information we get while reading) must be shown or used through our speaking act. Reading is visible, while speaking is audible, but both of them are very important

skills. There is a reciprocal link between them, that is, each of the two skills has a certain influence on the other one.

Reading contributes significantly to the competence in language learning. Therefore reading is considered the best way to learn new vocabulary, “reading has long been seen as a major source of vocabulary growth.” (Nation, 1995). Lewis (1993) states that learning vocabulary is the core task in second language learning and any language skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translating cannot exist without vocabulary.

In other words, Cunningham (1998) emphasizes, an improved vocabulary will help learners develop their speaking skills. Laufer (1997), too, stresses that “without words to express a wide range of meaning, communication in a second language cannot happen in a meaningful way.”

Learners will improve their speaking competence if they have better vocabulary knowledge which they can get through reading.

"Speech without vocabulary cannot be produced as vocabulary is one of the essential and fundamental components of communication"(Levelt, 1993). Therefore, Integrating speaking and reading skills strengthen learners' speaking skills and improves their fluency.

### **1.4.3. The relation between speaking and writing skill**

Both speaking and writing belong to productive ability. Speaking is performed via vocabulary, grammar rules, rhythm, and intonation. However, writing requires more logical thinking and complicated grammatical structures. Speaking and writing are interrelated and cause positive transfer to each other.

Writing and speaking have a close relationship because they help in improving the language and understanding how it works. "Oral acquisition of language also can help the improvement of writing"(Zhu, 1997). Speaking paves the way to create more language in the written form. It allows learners to make mistakes which writing does not, such as: not knowing how to spell a word, or, confusing two similar-sounding words. These mistakes will be fixed when writing because of practicing when speaking (Walker, 2012).

A research study conducted in 2015 by Pamela Rausch, shows that if the learners have skills to produce academic language in writing, they can transfer the argumentative skills to language speaking skills.

Additionally, consistent writing helps language speaking skills, when writing, several things are noticed like ideas, grammar, sentence structure... and since writing is a slower process than speaking,

more time is available for the learner in order to know how to use words properly. Thus, the speaking skills will improve by leaps and bounds.

## **1.5. The importance of speaking skill**

According to Zuliati (2013) speaking is an important language skill, in which communications take an important role in the world of information, speaking is a spoken language that is taught in the era of globalization. Because of speaking, people can communicate with each other from different countries, they can share ideas and opinions.

Speaking is only one of the communication skills that we have. For most people there are four main skills: speaking, listening, writing, and reading. Speaking is closely related to these three other areas.

Speaking and writing are alike in that they both express out thoughts to others. Speaking is understood by listening, and speakers must use listening skills themselves to judge how their words are being received. Speaking a text aloud (one way of reading) brings the receptive skill of interpreting writing together with the expressive skill of speaking. (Elizabeth, 2003)

The four language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing are all interconnected. Proficiency in each skill is necessary to become a well-rounded communicator, the capacity to put words together in a meaningful way to reflect thoughts, opinions, and feelings provides the speaker with many advantages:

- Ability to inform, persuade, and direct.
- Ability to stand out from the rest.

The ability to stand before others and speak effectively is not an ordinary ability. Many people are deathly afraid of public speaking; others have little ability to form thoughts into sentences and then deliver those words in a believable way.

- Ability to benefit derivatively.

Well-developed verbal skills can increase one's negotiation skills, self-confidence, comfort with speaking in front of larger audiences; thereby, imparting a certain credibility to the speaker.

- Personal satisfaction.

Speaking skill is a vitally important method of communication. According to Nunan (1991, p. 39):

To most people, mastering the art of speaking is the single most important factors of learning a second or foreign language and success is measure items of the ability to carry out a conversation in the language.

Ur (1991, p. 120) states that speaking seems as the crucial skill among the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Since, they think that if people master this skill, they will be considered as if they have mastered all of the language skills. In addition, Farabi, Hassanvand, and Gorjian (2017) denote that the importance of speaking is shown with the combination of the other language skills. It can improve students' vocabulary, grammar, and writing skill. The ability to speak appropriately provides students with numerous of featured benefits, such as the ability to put words together in a meaningful way to reflect thoughts, opinions, and feelings. Brown and Yuke (1983) say "Speaking is the skill that the students will be judged upon most in real life situations".

## **1.6. Teaching and learning speaking skill**

One main concern of most language teachers is how to help language learners develop speaking skills, the reason why speaking proficiency recieves great attention among both language teachers and learners. This is because speaking is a crucial part of the language learning process.

The major goal of teaching speaking skill is communicative efficiency. So, language learners should be able to make themselves understood, they should try to avoid confusion in the message because of the faulty pronunciation, grammar, or vocabulary.

To help students develop communicative efficiency in speaking, instructors prepare lessons carefully, an oral lesson is devided into three stages. Presentation, practice, and production (PPP)'which is the most commonly used lesson structure in TEFL and CELTA', and usually, preceded by a warming-up which can be a game.

**Presentation stage**is conducted to introduce the language to the learners, by introducing a context or situation. For example, playing a short audio, showing a clip from a movie or documantary, or presenting newspaper...

The aim of the presentation stage is present the meaning and form of the new language. Make learners understand the context and think deeply about it. As a method, the teacher can start a

discussion to get ideas from learners on the subject the thing that will help them recall their previous knowledge.

**Practice stage**, in this stage, students use the language in a controlled way. It is sometimes divided into two: a controlled practice and a freer practice. Also, it can be done in groups or pairs. In the practice stage teachers can use gap fill exercises, pair work asking and answering questions...

The aim of this stage is accuracy and error correction.

**Production stage** is where the language is used in a more open way. Things like role-plays, communication tasks, collaborative tasks...Learners will use the language in a creative way, they will check how much they learned. In this stage teachers should give clear instructions and not interfere too much.

The aim of the production stage is to develop learners' ability to communicate, using the language as fluently and naturally as possible.

Despite its importance, for many years, teaching speaking has been undervalued and teachers continued to teach speaking just as a repetition of drills or memorization of dialogues. However, today's goal of teaching speaking is improving students' communicative skills so they can express themselves appropriately in each communicative circumstance. For that, some speaking activities are provided below, that can be applied in teaching speaking skills.

- Discussions
- Role-Play
- Simulations
- Gap filling
- Storytelling
- Interviews
- Surveys
- Picture Describing
- Find the Difference

In teaching speaking skills, there are principles that teachers must follow. Anuradha et al (2014), classify them as following:

- Encourage students to speak right from the first day. If not, as early as possible and not to wait till she teaches them a stock of words, phrases, or sentences.
- Tolerate the students if some of them simply repeat what they say.
- If a student gives a one-word answer to any question, bear it for the time being.
- Let the learners speak actively with whatever English knowledge they have.
- Propose structures/phrases/words and let the learners use it in different situations and drill as much as possible.
- Encourage back-chaining or tail-forwarding technique to make long sentences by combining more than ten sentences.
- Organize role-play and pair-work as much as possible and supervise the learners to correct the active ones and activate the passive ones.
- Be well prepared in advance in terms of lesson planning, activities, and tasks.
- Let the learners commit errors and mistakes at the primary stage. Interruption and correction hinder fluency and discourage the learner.
- Individual weaknesses should be taken into account and the teacher should be sympathetic in outlook for individual attention.

In teaching language speaking skills, learners learn to :

- Produce the English speech sounds and sound patterns
- Use word and sentence stress, intonation patterns and the rhythm of the second language.
- Select appropriate words and sentences according to the proper social setting, audience, situation and subject matter.
- Organize their thoughts in a meaningful and logical sequence.
- Use language as a means of expressing values and judgments.
- Use the language quickly and confidently with few unnatural pauses, which is called as fluency. (Nunan, 2003)

## **1.7. Conclusion**

The first chapter presented language skills and focused on speaking skills from different perspectives. It introduced a general overview of the speaking skill, including different definitions, types, functions, as it explains the process of speaking.

Since the learning process goes through the four language skills (reading, writing, and listening), researchers stated the relationship between speaking and the other skills and they chose to explain each separately. Hence, researchers emphasized the importance of speaking skills. They classified the advantages of a good speaker. Finally, researchers described the teaching process of speaking skills, they set teaching goals, in addition, they explained the process of preparing lessons by providing examples. In this chapter, researchers offered activities that can help teachers when teaching speaking skills to promote it. Furthermore, researchers set basic principles every teacher must follow when teaching speaking skills. To conclude, they classified what will learners grasp in this process.

# **Chapter Two:**

# **Standardized Tests**

## **CHAPTER TWO : STANDARDIZED TESTS**

### 2.1 Introduction

### 2.2 Overview of standardized tests

#### 2.2.1 Definition of standardized tests

#### 2.2.2 Types of standardized tests

#### 2.2.3 Characteristics of standardized tests

### 2.3 Overview of TOEFL

#### 2.3.1 Definition of TOEFL

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#### 2.4.3 types of IELTS

### 2.5 Causes behind getting low scores in TOEFL and IELTS speaking tests

### 2.6 Most suitable solutions to achieve better results

### 2.7 Conclusion

## **2.1. Introduction**

Standardized testing plays a significant part in the educational system. Understanding these tests is difficult as they use numerous unfamiliar terms and concepts. Thus, teachers must know basic information and concepts in order to raise their awareness regarding standardized tests.

In the following chapter, researchers highlight various meanings of standardized tests, also they point basic types of these tests. In addition, they identify definitions of TOEFL and IELTS tests.

Accordingly, Researchers classify reasons behind getting low scores in the speaking section of mentioned standardized tests hence, they suggest solutions that may help candidates overcome these obstacles and obtain better scores.

## **2.2. Overview on standardized tests**

### **2.2.1. Definition of standardized tests**

According to Burrows (2020), a standardized test is a test that is given to students in a very consistent manner; meaning that the questions on the test are all the same, the time given to each student is the same, and the way in which the test is scored is the same for all students. For example, in the USA, American students begin taking standardized tests in elementary school. Once students are in high school and considering attending college or university, they will have to determine if they will have to take the SAT or ACT, which are standardized tests that are used to determine students academic readiness for higher education.

In other words, a standardized test is a test that is administered and scored in a consistent manner. Standardized tests are designed in such a way that the questions, conditions for administering, scoring procedures, and interpretations are consistent and are administered and scored in a predetermined, standard manner (Popham, 1999).

In the same context, Kennedy (2003) declares that a standardized test is an examination administered under strictly uniform conditions and interpreted in a consistent manner. The essence of this definition is that all the key aspects of testing are uniform. The same test is administered to all examinees, the conditions under which the test is administered are standardized (time, resources, etc.), and the ways in which scores are interpreted are likewise standardized.

Disha states that standardised tests are carefully constructed tests which have uniformity of procedure in scoring, administering and interpreting the test results. A standardised test is generally made by a professional tester or a group of testers. Standardized tests are not restricted to use in a

school or a few schools but to larger population, so that many schools can use such types of tests to assess their own performance etc.

### **2.2.2. Types of standardized tests**

Standardized tests are used for a wide variety of educational purposes. For example, they may be used to determine a young child's readiness for kindergarten, identify students who need special-education services or specialized academic support, or award diplomas and other educational certificates. The following are the basic types of standardized tests.

- **Achievement tests**

Achievement tests are mainly designed to measure the knowledge and skills of students and to determine the academic progress they have made over a specific period of time. These tests are also used to evaluate the effectiveness of teachers, identify the appropriate academic placement for a student. Achievement tests are backward-looking, therefore they measure how well students have learned what they were expected to learn.

- **Aptitude tests**

Aptitude tests are used to predict a student's ability to succeed, for example, by evaluating mathematical ability, language proficiency, abstract reasoning, motor coordination, or musical talent. Aptitude tests are forward-looking so they typically attempt to forecast how well students will do in a future educational course or job.

- **College-admissions tests**

College-admissions tests are used to determine students' eligibility to enter a college or university. These tests are used as indicators of intellectual and academic potentials, as some consider them predictive of how well students will do in a postsecondary program.

- **Language proficiency tests**

Language proficiency tests are used as a tool for assessing learners' competence in a given language. In addition to their ability to function in different situations in this target language. The purpose of language proficiency tests is to evaluate a candidate's knowledge of the structure, vocabulary, grammar, typically across reading, writing, listening, and speaking activities.

- **Psychological tests**

Psychological tests are used to measure a person's cognitive abilities and mental, emotional, developmental, and social characteristics through performing a series of tasks or solve a set of problems. Psychological tests are often used to identify students with learning disabilities or other special needs that would qualify them for specialized services.

### **2.2.3. Characteristics of standardized tests**

According to Sethi (2012), characteristics of standardized tests are a standardized content, a standardized administration, a standardized scoring, and a standardized interpretation.

A standardized content refers to the test's items and questions that are done by competent judges.

A standardized administration refers to direction and time limits.

A standardized scoring refers to the key scores of the tests.

A standardized interpretation refers to the provided norms.

From a different point of view, a good standardized test is built upon four important characteristics. Reliability, validity, objectivity, usability.

First, reliability is consistency, depend-ence, or trust. So in measurement reliability is the consistency with which a test yields the same result in measuring whatever it does measure. Second, in selecting or constructing an evaluation instrument, the most important question is; to what extent will the results serve the particular uses for which they are intended? This is the essence of validity (Gronlund). Validity refers to the appropriateness of the interpretation made from test scores and other evaluation results with regard to a particular use (Gronlund & Linn, 1995). Third, Good (1973) defines objectivity in testing as the extent to which the instrument is free from personal error (personal bias), that is subjectivity on the part of the scorer. Also, Gronlund and Linn (1995) states that the objectivity of a test refers to the degree to which equally competent scores obtain the same results. So a test is considered objective when it makes for the elimination of the scorer's personal opinion and bias judgment. Fourth, Usability is another important characteristic of measuring instruments due to the practical considerations of the evaluation instruments that cannot be neglected. The test must have practical value from time, economy, and administration side.

In other words, standardized tests are never exactly alike. Each test measures certain specific aspects of behavior and serves a slightly different purpose. Thus, characteristics of standardized tests can be summarized in the following points:

- Standardized Tests consist of high-quality items. These items are selected on the basis of difficulty value, discrimination power, and its relationship to behavioral objectives.
- Standardized tests have directions for administration, time limit, and scoring process.
- In standardized tests, norms are based on representative groups of individuals, these norms aid in interpreting the test scores. They are frequently based on age, grade, sex, etc.
- A manual is offered in standardized tests, it explains the purposes and uses of the test, describes briefly its structure, provides specific directions for administering, scoring, and interpreting results, contains also tables of norms.

## **2.3. Overview on TOEFL test**

The TOEFL test is the most widely respected English language assessment that is used in more than 130 countries. Since its initial launch in 1964, the TOEFL test has undergone several revisions to pursuit with language ability and changes in English teaching practices.

### **2.3.1. Definition of TOEFL test**

TOEFL is an acronym that stands for “Test of English as a Foreign Language.” However, like many other standardized tests, the TOEFL no longer uses its original name, in fact, it uses other common acronyms such as: IELTS, ETS...(Sarikas, 2017)

TOEFL is dedicated to measuring a student’s ability to understand and use the English language. Over 6,000 universities accept TOEFL test scores worldwide.

Different institutions place varying degrees of importance on standardized tests, such as the TOEFL, and use them along with other factors such as GPA, class rank, community service, and recommendations.

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is a standardized test to measure the English language ability of non-native speakers wishing to enroll in English-speaking academic and professional institutions. It is one of the major English-language tests in the world.

### **2.3.2. Content/structure of the TOEFL test**

The TOEFL test is administered in 2 forms, in-class, and online.

The TOEFL test has 4 sections: reading, listening, speaking, and writing. During the test, tasks that combine these four English communication skills will be performed, such as:

- Reading, listening, and then speaking in response to a question
- Listening and then speaking in response to a question
- Reading, listening, and then writing in response to a question

The total test takes about 03 hours to be completed, but candidates should plan to allow 30 minutes for checking-in.

Section	Time limit	Questions	Tasks
<b>Reading</b>	54–72 minutes	30–40 questions	Read passages and respond to questions
<b>Listening</b>	41–57 minutes	28–39 questions	Answer questions about brief lectures or classroom discussions
<b>Break</b>	10 minutes	-----	-----
<b>Speaking</b>	17 minutes	4 tasks	Talk about a familiar topic and discuss material you read and listened to
<b>Writing</b>	50 minutes	2 tasks	Read a passage, listen to a recording, type your response

### Reading section

The TOEFL reading section is designed to assess how well the candidate can read and understand the materials used in an academic environment. It includes 3 to 4 reading passages, each is approximately 700 words long, with 10 questions per passage.

Reading passages are extracted from university-level textbooks. The passages cover a variety of different topics. Candidates are permitted to take notes and use drafting, to define words not commonly used if needed.

## **Listening section**

The TOEFL listening section is designed to measure the candidate's ability to understand conversations and lectures in English. It includes listening for basic comprehension and pragmatic understanding (speaker's attitude and degree of certainty), connecting and synthesizing information.

It contains 3 to 4 lectures, each is 3 to 5 minutes long, with 6 questions per lecture. Also, 2 to 3 conversations with 2 speakers, each 3 minutes long, with 5 questions per conversation.

Taking notes is allowed on any audio item throughout the test.

## **Speaking section**

The TOEFL speaking section is designed to measure the candidate's ability to speak English effectively in academic settings. It is composed of 4 tasks that resemble real-life situations you might encounter both in and outside of a classroom.

Question 1 is called an "independent speaking task" because candidates rely on their own ideas, opinions, and experiences when responding. Questions 2,3 and 4 are called "integrated speaking tasks" because they require candidates to combine English-language skills, listening and speaking, or listening, reading, and speaking.

15 to 30 seconds of preparation time is given before each response, and the response will be 45 or 60 seconds long.

To respond, the candidate speaks into the microphone on the headset, all responses are recorded.

## **Writing section**

The TOEFL writing section is designed to measure candidates' ability to write in English in an academic manner, and they are expected to be able to present ideas in a clear, well-organized way.

There are 2 writing tasks.

Integrated writing task which is 20 minutes long, candidates read a short passage and listen to a short lecture, then respond to the given questions. Independent writing task which is 30 minutes long, candidates write an essay based on personal experience or opinion in response to a writing topic.

Responses are written on a computer keyboard.

## **2.4. An overview of the IELTS test**

IELTS is one of the two most widely accepted tests of English language proficiency (the other is the TOEFL). The IELTS, which has been offered since 1980, is administered by the British Council and Cambridge English Language Assessment. About 2.4 million students take the IELTS test annually in over 140 countries.

### **2.4.1. Definition of the IELTS test**

IELTS means International English language Testing System, it is an international standardized test of English language proficiency for non-native English language speakers who want to study or work where English is used as a language of communication.

IELTS is one of the major English-language tests in the world where there are currently over 1,100 locations across the world, it is used for higher education and global migration purposes.

International English language Testing System, covers all four language skills; listening, reading, writing, and speaking. The IELTS test focuses on "International English", which includes British English, American English, and other varieties like Australian or South African English.

### **2.4.2. Types of the IELTS test**

There are two types of IELTS exams: IELTS academic and IELTS general training.

The IELTS Academic test is for people applying for higher education or professional registration in an English speaking environment. It reflects some of the features of academic language and assesses whether a candidate is ready to begin studying or training. This approach is widely supported by the institutions that recognize IELTS.

The IELTS General Training test is for those who are going to English speaking countries for secondary education, work experience, or training programs. It is also a requirement for migration to Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the UK. The test focuses on basic survival skills in broad social and workplace contexts.

### **2.4.3. Content/structure of the IELTS test**

<b>Listening</b>	<b>40 dialogues</b>	<b>40 minutes</b>
<b>Reading</b>	3 texts, 40 questions	60 minutes
<b>Writing</b>	2 tasks (describe graph + essay)	60 minutes
<b>Speaking</b>	3 dialogues	15 minutes

The IELTS test consists of four sections: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. The four parts are all taken on the same day one after the other, with no breaks between them. Listening and Speaking are the same in both general training and academic versions of the exam. However, candidates taking the academic test face more complex assignments in IELTS Reading and Writing section.

### **Listening**

In the listening test, there are 4 sections. The first section is a conversation between two people set in an everyday social context. The second section is a monologue set in the exact context. The third section is a conversation between up to four people set in an educational or training context. The fourth section is a monologue on an academic subject. Various native-speaker accents are used and each section is heard only once.

There are 40 questions chosen from the following: multiple choice, matching, plan/map/diagram labeling, form completion, note completion, table completion.

### **Reading**

In the reading test, there are 3 sections. The total text length is ranged from 2150-2750 words.

For the academic reading, each section contains one long text. Texts are authentic and are taken from books, journals, magazines, and newspapers. Texts range from the descriptive and factual to the discursive and analytical. Texts may contain non-verbal materials such as diagrams, graphs, or illustrations. If texts contain technical terms, then a simple dictionary is provided.

For the general training reading, section (1) contains two or three short factual texts, which can consist of (6-8) short texts related to one topic. Topics are relevant to everyday life in an English-speaking country. Section (2) contains two short factual texts focusing on work-related issues. Section (3) contains a long complex text on a general interest topic.

There are 40 questions chosen from the following: multiple choice, identifying information (True/False/Not Given), identifying a writer's views/claims (Yes/No/Not Given), matching information, matching headings, matching features, matching sentence endings, sentence completion, summary completion, diagram label completion...

## **Writing**

In the writing test, there are 2 tasks. For the first task, candidates are required to write at least 150 words, for the second task they are required to write at least 250 words.

For academic writing, in task (1), a graph, table, chart or diagram is presented and candidates are asked to describe, summarise or explain the information in their own words.

In task (2), candidates are asked to write an essay in response to a point of view, argument, or problem. Responses should be written in an academic, semi-formal/neutral style.

For general training writing, in task (1), candidates are presented a situation and are asked to write a letter requesting information or explaining it. The letter should be personal or semi-formal/neutral in style. In task (2), candidates are asked to write an essay in response to a point of view, argument, or problem. The essay can be slightly more personal in style.

## **Speaking**

In the speaking test, there are 3 parts. The first part consists of an introduction and interview (4-5 minutes). The examiner introduces him/herself and asks the candidate to do the same. Then the examiner asks general questions on familiar topics such as home, family, work, studies, and interests. The second part consists of an individual long turn (3-4 minutes). The examiner gives candidates a task card that asks talking about a particular topic and includes points to cover in the talk. Candidates are given one minute to prepare, a pencil, and paper to make notes. Talking takes 1-2 minutes on the topic. The examiner may then ask some questions on the same topic. The third part consists of a two-way discussion (4-5 minutes). The examiner asks further questions which are connected to the topic of part 2. These questions give the candidate an opportunity to discuss more abstract issues and ideas.

## **2.5. Causes behind getting low scores in TOEFL and IELTS speaking tests**

For those planning to study or migrate to an English-speaking country, they will mostly have to submit either an IELTS or TOEFL score.

The IELTS and TOEFL exams are two of the most accepted English proficiency exams around the world. However, both of these standardized tests are different in their structure, approach, and teaching criteria. This means that you need to understand how the two differ before selecting which test to pass.

There is a big difference between the speaking part of the tests. Yet, the reasons behind getting low scores in TOEFL and IELTS speaking test is the same.

Experts classified causes into three categories psychological, linguistic, and managerial.

### **Psychological causes**

Fear, most candidates scare to talk, they scare to be judged, some others suffer from phobias; phobia from examination. In addition to the fear because of a previous bad experience.

Hesitation, hesitation can occur due lack of confidence in skills and knowledge.

Stress and anxiety, some candidates tend to overthink or think negatively. The thing that can distract them and cause them panic attacks.

### **Linguistic causes**

Lack of exposure to the English language, it can lead to having poor vocabulary, using the wrong intonation, no coherence...

Lack of practice, candidates think of speaking as a less important skill comparing to the other language skills, the reason why they do not practice it.

Translating from L1 to L2, candidates think in Arabic and try to produce the speech in English.

No preparation, candidates do not take time to prepare for the test because of the absence of professional centers that organized preparation courses for candidates.

Absence of awareness, candidates do not have enough knowledge about these tests. They have absolutely no idea about how they are run, what they consist of, or about the assessing and scoring process.

### **Managerial causes**

Time management, candidates face a big problem when it comes to managing time during the test due to the short period they are given.

## **2.6. Most suitable solutions to achieve better results**

Annually, over 8 million people pass IELTS and TOEFL tests around the world, to achieve different goals and objectives. Therefore, candidates need to achieve high scores due to the international requested standards.

Hence, in all sections of the test; speaking, writing, reading, and listening candidates should score well, avoiding scoring less in one of the sections. In order to do that, they should overcome obstacles faced in the speaking test, for this sake experts suggested a group of methods and techniques that they found helpful.

Researchers studied these solutions and summarized it into the most useful ones.

- Practicing is the number one key to achieve better results. Practicing improves pronunciation, candidates can practice with partners, by answering sample questions on everyday topics, by recording a video of themselves speaking then watching it to observe the body language, confidence... and noting down areas for improvement.
- Establishing professional training centers, in order to organize preparation courses. The courses must be taught by expert teachers for better results. Additionally, preparation courses must be available in-class and online for easy access to all candidates.
- The most important element that is neglected, is the psychological side of candidates. Candidates must be supported and motivated in order to feel comfortable and relaxed, and to decrease stress and anxiety. That's why professional psychologists must be provided to help candidates throughout the testing process.

## **2.7. Conclusion**

The second chapter presented a general view on standardized tests, it introduced what is meant by a standardized test along with characteristics of these tests. It classified different common types of standardized tests.

Furthermore, this chapter defined both TOEFL and IELTS exams and stated their purposes. additionally, it provided a detailed description of the format of each test and specified the main types of the IELTS test.

Moreover, researchers declared the basic cause behind getting low scores in TOEFL and IELTS speaking test, trying to answer the study question. As a conclusion, researchers suggested methods for candidates to help them for improving their scores.

# **Chapter Three: Fieldwork and Data Analysis**

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## **Introduction**

This chapter deals with the fieldwork and the analysis of the collected data. It presents the theoretical background of the research methodology of our study. It also demonstrates the research approach, research design/strategies, population and sample, in addition to the data collection methods that are used to examine the suggested hypotheses. The present chapter aims to investigate the causes behind getting low scores in the speaking section of standardized tests and the possible solutions.

Furthermore, it provides a detailed analysis and interpretation of the gathered data followed by the discussion and synthesis of the findings in an attempt to confirm the research hypothesis.

### **3.1 Research Methodology**

According to Waltz and Bansell (1981), research is a systematic, formal, rigorous and precise process employed to gain solutions to problems or to discover and interpret new facts and relationships. In other words, Creswell states research is a process of steps used to collect and analyze information to increase our understanding of a topic or issue. It consists of three steps: Pose a question, collect data to answer the question, and present an answer to the question.

Methodology is the systematic, theoretical analysis of the methods applied to a field of study. It comprises the theoretical analysis of the body of methods and principles associated with a branch of knowledge.

Research methodology considers the logic behind the methods, used by the researchers during their research, so that research results are capable of being evaluated either by the researcher himself or by others (Kothari, 2008).

#### **3.1.1 Research Approaches**

Research approaches are plans and the procedures for research that span the steps from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Creswell, 2013). A research project may include one or more approaches based on the nature of the research problem. There are three basic approaches: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods.

Quantitative researchers seek explanations and predictions that will generalize to other persons and places. The intent is to establish, confirm, or validate relationships and to develop generalizations that contribute to theory (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001, p. 102). Quantitative approach is a methodology for testing target hypotheses by looking at the relationship among variables. Dornyei (2007, p. 24) states that:

It involves data collection procedures that result primarily in numerical data which is then analysed primarily by statistical methods.

Typical example can be a survey research using a questionnaire, analysed by statistical software such as SPSS

According to Dornyei (2007, p. 24) qualitative approach involves data collection strategies that result in open-ended, non-numerical data analysed by non- statistical methods like interviews. Leedy and Ormrod (2001) alleged that qualitative research is less structured in description because it formulates and builds new theories.

The mixed-methods approach involves collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. The combination of these two approaches provides a more complete understanding of a research problem than either approach alone. The mixed methods approach is an extension of rather than a replacement for the quantitative and qualitative approaches to research, as the latter two research approaches will continue to be useful and important (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

As for the research approach for this study, since the target aim is to describe the major reasons behind getting low scores in the speaking section of standardized tests and to find ways to help candidates improve their scores, researchers decide it's more suitable to opt the mixed-methods approach (quantitative approach and qualitative approach) because it serves the nature of the study, it accomplishes a comprehensive understanding of the study and validates the obtained results using different methods. More importantly, the opted approach gives the chance to know the Algerian teachers' and candidates' attitudes towards IELTS and TOEFL tests.

### **3.1.2 Research Designs / Strategies**

Research design is the framework of research methods and techniques chosen by a researcher. It refers to the overall strategy that researchers choose to integrate the different components of the study in a coherent and logical way i.e they effectively address the research problem, it also constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data. Research design can be considered as the structure of research it is the glue that holds all of the elements in a research project together.

According to Jahoda, Deutch & Cook “A research design is the arrangement of conditions for the collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy and procedure”.

Typically, there is a slight confusion between research designs and approaches. Research design/strategy may be a model or a plan that the entire study is set up upon; dictates the style within which the study is conducted and provides the road map of a study in terms of the sample, data collection tools, and analysis procedures. Approaches, on the contrary, are paradigms, analysis frameworks, which can be quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods approach. A specific research design might adopt one approach or more. For example, in a cross-sectional survey design, one may decide to use a quantitative approach or mixed approach. In alternative studies sort of a case study, phenomenological study, content analysis study...are mainly qualitative.

As for the research design for this study, researchers adopt a case study (small-scale study) because it suits the nature of our research. Basically, a case study is an in-depth study of a selected state of affairs instead of a sweeping applied math survey, it's a reliable strategy to narrow down a broad search topic into a simpler and more specific one. According to Creswell (2002, p. 61) a case study is a problem to be studied, which will reveal an in-depth understanding of a “case” or bounded system, which involves understanding an event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. Mitchell (1983, p.192) defines a case study as a “detailed examination of an event (or series of related events) which the analyst believes exhibits (or exhibit) the operation of some identified general theoretical principles”.

## **3.2 Population and sampling**

### **3.2.1 Population**

In research terminology, the population can be explained as a comprehensive group of individuals, institutions, objects, and so forth which has common characteristics that interest the researcher. It also refers to the entire pool from which a statistical sample is taken, a population can thus be said to be an aggregate observation of subjects grouped together by a common feature. In other words, Polit and Hungler (1999, p. 37) refer to the population as a totality of all the objects, subjects or members that conform to a set of specifications.

### **3.2.2 Sample**

It is impossible for a researcher to approach all the individuals\elements in a population for the purpose of data collection, instead they approach a representative group which is called a sample. In research terminology, a sample is a group of people, objects, or items that are taken from a larger population for measurement. The sample must be representative of the population to ensure that the findings can be generalized from the chosen sample to the population as a whole. A sample is a subset of a population selected to participate in the study, it is a fraction of the whole selected to participate in the research project (Brink, 19961; Polit & Hungler, 1999). Sampling is the process through which a sample is extracted from a population (Alvi, 2016).

In order to gather information to help with answering research questions, researchers deal with very professional and qualified English teachers, in addition, to IELTS and TOEFL test candidates.

About the population and sample for this study, from forty (40) we collaborated with fifteen (15) volunteer teachers working between the British Council and the Wizard Language Centre, they were chosen randomly. These teachers have different teaching backgrounds and hold different teaching certifications. For candidates, we dealt with the ones who passed one of these tests (or both) and the ones who are willing to pass them. As a sample, we randomly took twenty-five (25) among seventy-five (75) candidates.

### **3.3 Data collection methods**

The data are information or facts used in discussing or deciding the answer of research question, the source of data in the study is the subjects from which the data can be collected for the purpose of research (Arikunto, 2010, p. 129).

Data collection is the systematic approach to gathering and measuring information from a variety of sources to get a complete and accurate picture of an area of interest. Data collection enables the researcher to answer research questions, evaluate outcomes, and make predictions about possible hypotheses (Margaret Rouse & Emily McLaughlin, 2016).

According to Laila Gabriel (2019), data collection methods refer to the strategies, ways, and means used in the process of gathering information related to a specific field.

Data collection is an important part of research. Although data can be valuable, using the wrong collection method can turn it from useful to useless, that's why it must be chosen carefully, taking into consideration the nature of the research.

There are various data collection methods, according to (Dornyei, 2007; Kumar, 2011) the common, used data collection methods in research are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods. Initially, structured observation, structured questionnaire...are quantitative data collection methods however, unstructured interview, unstructured focus group discussions...are qualitative data collection methods. Whereas, the mixed-methods data collection methods combine between the use of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. The semi-structured observation, semi-structured questionnaire...are mixed-methods collection data methods.

In this study, The data collection methods that are used are the mixed-methods data collection. We dealt with both, a semi-structured interview addressed to teachers, and a semi-structured questionnaire addressed to IELTS/TOEFL candidates.

### **3.3.1 Interview**

Interviews can be defined as a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program, or situation (Boyce & Neale, 2006). An interview is typically a face-to-face conversation between a researcher and a participant involving a transfer of information to the interviewer (Cresswell, 2012). Usually open-ended questions are asked during interviews in hopes of obtaining impartial answers, while closed ended questions may force participants to answer in a particular way (Creswell, 2012; McNamara, 1999).

#### **3.3.1.1 Structure and content**

The present interview consists of three sections with eighteen questions (18) in total (open-ended and close-ended questions) to limit teachers to the researcher's theme at the same time to give them the chance to give as much of possible details and information; for the sake of enriching the study. Each section is designed to collect specific data about one aspect of our study. The first section is titled background and contains five (05) questions, the second section is titled speaking skill and contains seven questions (07), the last section is titled standardized tests and contains six questions (06).

The background section is devoted to collect information about teachers who take part in the interview; their gender, age, educational degree, teaching experience, and certificates they hold. The speaking skill section is devoted to provide information about speaking as a skill from the point of

view of teachers, it's importance, problems faced when speaking (for candidates ) and when teaching speaking skill, and what can be done to help improve this skill. The standardized tests section is devoted to help us have a deep knowledge about IELTS and TOEFL tests emphasizing on the speaking section, from teachers' answers researchers will be able to recognize obstacles that face candidates before and during taking the tests, so they will offer them solutions to overcome these problems.

### **3.3.1.2. Aim (s)**

Generally, this interview is conducted to help in solving the research problem. Basically, it is designed to collect data from teachers' opinions and experiences about the reasons behind failing the speaking section of IELTS TOEFL tests and what can be done to change this.

### **3.3.1.3 Piloting and validation**

Before the final administration, the held interview went through several steps of construction. This process is referred to as a pilot stage in which data is tested to ensure that it is valid and reliable. The main objective behind the piloting stage is to check if the interview questions are comprehensible, repeated, ambiguous, or lengthy.

The piloting stage took place in April 2020, in collaboration with three experts it took almost a month because teachers were busy. The interview was online due to the lockdown and quarantine that the government imposed. When interviewing teachers we observed that they were comfortable, kind, helpful, and motivational as well. At the end of the interview, they provided us with a piece of advice concerning our work.

### **3.3.1.4 Administration**

For the administration phase, the semi-structured interview was administrated to the fifteen volunteer teachers of the British Council and the Wizard Language Centre accompanied by a written form of the interview questions. The interview was conducted online via Google Meet because of the coronavirus pandemic, and the written copies were sent via LinkedIn. Except for two teachers that we had to use email and WhatsApp with them as they asked.

In addition to that, the interviewing process took from two to three weeks in May 2020, the average time per interview was between 05 to 20 minutes with each teacher. Answers were different from one teacher to another on account of their experience in the field.

### 3.3.1.5 Analysis and interpretation of teachers' interview

This interview is designed to gather information, opinions, and thoughts from teachers. The gathered data will be analyzed, interpreted to be used to promote and strengthen our study. This interview is designed to gather information, opinions, and thoughts from teachers. The gathered data will be analyzed, interpreted to be used to promote and strengthen our study.

#### Section one : background

##### First question : Teachers' gender

**Table 3.1: Teachers' gender distribution**

Gender	Male	Female
Number	06	09

From teachers' answers on this question, researchers observed that the majority of teachers nine (n=9) teachers are females while the rest six (n=6) are males. This help us to collect data from both genders which means different perspectives.

##### Second question: Teachers' age

**Table 3.2: Teachers' age distribution**

Age	20-25	25-35	35 and more
Number	03	06	06

From teachers' answers to this question, researchers observed that among teachers there are three (n=3) aged between twenty and twenty-five years old. Six (n=6) teachers aged between twenty-five and thirty-five years old and six (n=6) teachers aged thirty-five, and more.

### Third question: Teachers' degree

**Table 3.3: Teachers' educational degree**

Degree	License	Master	Magister	Doctorate
<b>Number</b>	05	08	02	00

From teachers' answers to this question, researchers observed that most of teachers hold a master's degree, eight (n=8), while five of them hold a License degree (n=5), and just two (n=2) have a Magister degree. The surprising fact is that none of them hold a Doctorate degree. This is beneficial to collect data from teachers with different degrees.

### Fourth question: Teachers' certificates

**Table 3.4: Teachers' teaching certificates**

Certificate	TEFL	TESOL	CELTA	NONE	OTHER
<b>Number</b>	05	00	10	00	05

From teachers' answers to this question, researchers observed that the majority of teachers hold a CELTA certificate (n=10) in addition to other certificates, it was a DELTA certificate (n=5) for most of them. Five teachers (n=5) hold a TEFL certification. No teacher obtained the TESOL certificate.

### Fifth question: Teachers' experience

**Table 3.5: Teachers' experience in teaching English**

Years	Less than 5 years	From 5 to 10 years	More than 10 years
<b>Number</b>	00	08	07

From teachers' answers to this question, researchers observed that these teachers have a quite good experience teaching English. Eight (n=8) teachers have been teaching English for 5 to 10 years. The

rest seven (n=7) have more than 10 years of experience. The thing that helped researchers have a good and rich data.

## Section two : speaking skill

### Sixth question: Teachers' comments on speaking skill

When teachers' were asked about the speaking skill, their answers were similar but delivered through different words. Teachers agreed that speaking skill is the ability to communicate a message orally that would not only include the use of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, but also fluency, which makes speaking different from all the other skills. In other words, it is the ability to convey messages and engaging in meaningful interactions. This involves many skills among which turn-taking, intonation, coherence, etc.

### Seventh question: Teachers comments on the importance of speaking skill

**Table 3.6: The importance of the speaking skill**

Importance	Yes	No
<b>Number</b>	15	00

From teachers' answers to this question, researchers observed that all teachers (n=15) agreed that speaking is a very important skill. They justified their answers saying that speaking skill reflects the students listening skills, grammar knowledge, and vocabulary, as it also demonstrates students fluency and accuracy on many levels. On the communicative level, it is important because it enables students to be in touch with people from different countries. It is a means of completing certain tasks while on holidays: asking for directions, checking in at the airport, shopping, etc. Most importantly, it boosts students' confidence once they see they can produce utterances and engage in chats.

Some other teachers agreed on the importance of the speaking skill stating that all skills are equally important, depending on the level and the needs of the students.

### Eighth question: Teachers' comments on the difficulty of speaking skill

From teachers' answers to this question, researchers found that teachers focused on Algerian students pointing out the main problem as never giving the chance to students to speak. Others, relied on the silent period theory, stating that students take some time intaking information before they can

produce any input. This is one of the reasons why speaking can be tricky for students to struggle to put into practice knowledge they are very comfortable with writing and reading discourses.

From a different perspective, teachers said that people in general find it difficult to communicate in real life, so communication in a foreign language makes it even more challenging. In addition, people often think that it is important to learn grammar and vocabulary first for them to have enough language to use when speaking. However, learning a grammatical rule does not guarantee using it correctly when speaking, so people end up struggling between accuracy and fluency.

#### **Ninth question: Teachers' comments on problems they face when teaching speaking**

When asked this question, all teachers had one standard answer. Teachers summarized their answers into one basic problem which is fear to talk, how to get learners to talk in the first place is the biggest issue.

#### **Tenth question: Teachers' comments on their students' level**

Teachers did not give answers to this questions according to the options provided. Some teachers stated that it is impossible to know because every student speaks differently. Other teachers, said that assessing students' level is done according to this example: A1, B1, C1...

#### **Eleventh question: Teachers' comments on problems faced by learners' when speaking**

From the interpretation of teachers' answers on this question, researchers classified problems into the following list:

- ✓ Hesitation
- ✓ Repetition
- ✓ Lack of vocabulary,
- ✓ Lack of coherence
- ✓ Wrong intonation and stress patterns
- ✓ Translation, students tend to translate from L1/L2
- ✓ Fear
- ✓ Stress

#### **Twelveth question: Teachers' comments on the ways of helping students**

In order to help students face the mentioned problems, teachers emphasized on feedback because their feedback can improve students' performance. Teachers suggested the use of relaxation

techniques to help students speak more clearly, increase the given time for speaking activities, and the use of different methods such as debates role-plays and so on.

**Section three: standardized tests**

**Thirteenth question: Description of the speaking section of IELTS and TOEFL tests**

The speaking section of the IELTS and TOEFL tests assesses learners' accuracy, fluency, and comprehension.

The TOEFL exam assesses the ability to speak about familiar topics as well as the ability to verbally summarize information, 20 minutes is given to the speaking test. It is divided into two sections with four tasks.

The IELTS speaking test is a face-to-face interview with one examiner, consisting of 3 parts and lasts 11-14 minutes. The test is recorded, but the examiner assesses your performance during the test and decides on your band score as soon as the test has finished.

**Fourteenth question: Teaching speaking for these exams**

**Table 3.7: Teaching speaking for TOEFL and IELTS exams**

Does it differ	Yes	No
Number	07	08

As the table show, some teachers said teaching speaking for these tests definitely differ according to their types and purposes, on the other hand, teachers said it does not differ because according to them "Examiners never ask candidates the reason why they are taking the test".

**Fifteenth question: Obstacles candidates faced before the test**

From the interpretation of teachers' answers on this question, researchers classified problems that face candidates before the test into the following list:

- ✓ Not having an in-depth idea about the test, how it is run, and how they are evaluated
- ✓ Anxiety
- ✓ Not attending preparation courses
- ✓ Phobias of examinations and bad experiences of past exam takers
- ✓ Careless attitude of students

- ✓ Students' over-confidence

### **Sixteenth question: Obstacles candidates faced during the test**

From the interpretation of teachers' answers on this question, researchers found that teachers focused on the main problem which is time-management. Many candidates get panic attacks from the fear of not finishing on time. They do not know how to manage the given time for this test. They spent a lot of time on one task forgetting about the others.

### **Seventeenth question: Reasons why candidates get low scores in the speaking section of IELTS and TOEFL exams**

From the interpretation of teachers' answers on this question, researchers classified reasons behind getting low scores in the speaking section of TOEFL and IELTS exams into the following list:

- ✓ The short period of time devoted to the speaking test
- ✓ Candidates do not practice enough for the test
- ✓ Candidates can be overconfident and assess themselves
- ✓ Candidates do not join preparation classes
- ✓ Candidates do not think critically, the thing that is needed in the test
- ✓ Candidates are not familiar with the structure of the test
- ✓ Candidates do not Spend enough time into learning about topics like politics, science, sport, history, literature, economy in order to grasp an idea of what's going on in the world and mainly in the UK or the US, to learn technical words that help to enrich the speech
- ✓ Candidates should pay attention to non-verbal communication, such as pauses, exclamations, thinking sound, body language... Etc

In the case of joining preparation classes, candidates suffer from:

- ✓ The overuse of the teacher-centered approach
- ✓ The poor quality of materials
- ✓ Lack of authenticity

### **Eighteenth question: Ways to help candidates**

Among fifteen (n=15) teachers, ten agreed on providing candidates with preparation courses both online and in-class, with more authentic materials, they even suggested to establish language training centers for this matter. Three teachers (n=3) stated that practice is the key answer, candidates must be urged to practice speaking as much as possible before the test. The last two (n=2) focused on the

psychological side for the candidate, they said teachers should be a source of support and motivation for them.

### **3.3.1.6. Discussion and interpretation of the findings**

Based on the analysis of teachers' interview, researchers understood what follows:

The study relies on a sample from two different centers in Algeria, in which the majority of them are females that indicates that females' interest in teaching the English language is more than males. Moreover, the results show that teachers' ages ranged from twenty to more than thirty-five years old, which symbolizes that this diversity in their ages may lead to sharing their different viewpoints.

Besides, teachers hold different teaching certificates which means each has different training and knowledge. Moreover, the majority of them hold master's degrees the thing that indicates that not a specific certificate and educational degree is required to be an instructor in standardized tests. Although, like many positions in Algeria experience is a requirement as researchers observed that teachers are experienced for 5 to more than 10 years.

Additionally, the obtained results revealed clear ideas concerning the teachers' understanding and awareness about the speaking skill. So that they declared that speaking skill is the ability to communicate a message orally and it is uniquely different from all the other skills.

From teachers' responses, we deduced that speaking skill is a very important skill because it reflects listening skills, grammar knowledge, and vocabulary, so it demonstrates students fluency and accuracy on many levels. More importantly, all the interviewed teachers agreed that speaking skill is considered a difficult task because learners are never given the chance to speak. Also, they highlighted that learning grammatical rules does not guarantee accuracy and fluency when speaking. Moreover, teachers declared "fear of talking" as the biggest problem that faces them when delivering speaking lessons. They referred it to learners anxiety and fear of judgment. And when asking about problems that face learners they gave various reasons like, fear, stress, hesitation, repetition, lack of vocabulary, lack of coherence, using the wrong intonation, and stress patterns, and translating from their native language (which is Arabic in our case) to the English language.

Hence, teachers suggested plenty of methods to help learners face problems that accrue when speaking an overcome it.

Teachers emphasized on feedback regarding its influence on students' performance, it is considered the best way to improve students achievements. Another method that was suggested is the use of relaxation techniques to help students speak more clearly and freely, it provides them with time to

manage their own feelings and emotions and calm themselves. Teachers also advised the increase of the given time for speaking activities, and the use of different methods such as debates role-plays and so on.

Teachers granted that the speaking section of the IELTS and TOEFL tests assesses learners' accuracy, fluency, and comprehension. AS they agreed that anxiety, lack of knowledge about the test, careless attitude, time management, and students' overconfidence are the major reasons why they get low scores in these tests. Thus, teachers gave some solutions that can be helpful such as providing preparation courses and urging candidates to practice as much as they can.

To sum up, from the analyzed and interpreted data, it was found that speaking skill plays an important roll in the learning process. Whereas students do not give the speaking skill the needed attention, teachers suggested them various methods and techniques to improve their performance.

### **3.3.2 Questionnaire**

A questionnaire is a data collection tool that consists of a set of questions or other types of prompts that aims to collect information from respondents. Questionnaires can consist of close-ended, open-ended questions, or a mixture of the two. According to Kothari (2004), the use of questionnaires is one of the most common data collection tools in research. Questionnaires are used extensively to gather data on current conditions, practices, opinions, and attitudes quickly and in a precise way (Orodho, 2008). Questionnaires as argued by Mugenda & Mugenda (2003) provide a relatively cheap way of obtaining information, they are structured based on the objectives of the study. Questionnaires are the most used data collection tools because they are an efficient way of obtaining large amounts of information from a large population. Data can be collected quickly because the researcher would not need to be present when conducting questionnaires. However, a problem with questionnaires is that respondents may lie due to social desirability. Most people want to present a positive image of themselves and so may lie or bend the truth to look good.

#### **3.3.2.1 Structure and content**

The present questionnaire is the second data collection tool that researchers used in our study. It was a semi-structured questionnaire divided into three sections. The first section is titled background information and contains six (06) questions, the second section is titled speaking skill and contains four questions (04), the last section is titled standardized tests and contains eight questions (08).

The background section is devoted to collect information about candidates who answered this questionnaire; their gender, age, educational level...The speaking skill section is devoted to providing

information about speaking as a skill from the point of view of candidates. The standardized tests section is devoted to helping us know how candidates prepare for these tests, the problems they face, and some advice they offer to future candidates.

### **3.3.2.2. Aims**

The purpose of the under-investigated questionnaire was to collect data from TOEFL and IELTS candidates. It was used to know about candidates journeys in learning English. In addition, it aimed to check students familiarity with standardized tests. Furthermore, it attempted to figure out the problems that candidates face before and during the test, so researchers will provide them with solutions and ways to improve their scores.

### **3.3.2.3. Piloting and validation**

After designing the first draft of the questionnaire, it was piloted to verify its validity before the administration stage. Due to the pandemic, the piloting drafts were sent via email to five candidates (5) students from our population. In fact, the main aim of the piloting stage of the questionnaire was to check the questions difficulty, ambiguity, to verify the attractiveness of its layout, and to check if there were any repeated questions.

The piloting stage took place in April 2020, fortunately candidates did not take too much time to fill the form. They agreed that there was no ambiguity and no repeated questions.

### **3.3.2.4. Administration**

For the administration phase, we sent the questionnaires online via email to twenty-five candidates from two different language centers. From twenty-five, we received only twenty responses. In addition, the administration process did not take a long time, candidates helped us by giving clear, complete, and rich answers.

### **3.3.2.5. Analysis and interpretation of candidates' questionnaire**

This questionnaire is designed to gather information, opinions, and thoughts from candidates. The gathered data will be analyzed, interpreted to be used to promote and strengthen our study.

## Section one : background information

### First question: Candidates' gender

**Table 3.8: Candidates' gender distribution**

Gender	Males	Females
<b>Number</b>	05	15

From candidates' responses to this question, we observable that 15 respondents are females, whereas five (05) respondents are males, which defines that the majority of our sample are females.

### Second question : Candidates' age

**Table 3.9: Candidates' age distribution**

Age	18-25	25-more
<b>Number</b>	13	07

From candidates' responses to this question, the majority of candidates (13) are aged between 18 and 25 years old, while the rest (07), is 25 years old or older.

### Third question : Candidates' study level

**Table 3.10: Candidates' study level**

Study level	High school	University	Higher studies	Vocational studies
<b>Number</b>	06	07	03	04

From candidates' responses to this question, researchers observed that (06) candidates are students' at high school or graduated, (07) candidates are university students or graduates, (03) candidates are pursuing higher education or already hold a higher education degree, and (04) are pursuing a different kind of education that is vocational studies.

### Fourth question : Candidates' journey learning English

**Table 3.11: Number of years candidates' spend learning English**

Years	02-05	05-10	10-more
<b>Number</b>	03	14	03

From candidates' responses to this question, researchers observed that (03) candidates have been learning English for less than 05 years, While (14) other candidates have been learning the English language for a period of time ranges from 05 to 10 years. As for the (03) left candidates, they have more than 10 years of experience in learning English.

Fifth question : Candidates' journey learning English

**Table 3.12: Candidates' opinions about the difficulty of learning English**

Option	Easy	Hard	In-between
<b>Number</b>	05	05	10

From candidates' responses to this question, we found that answers range among the three options. (05) Candidates described learning English as an easy task. Other (05) candidates declared that learning the English language is not easy in fact it is a hard task to do. The rest (10) candidates said that learning English is not that easy but it needs a lot of effort.

From their justifications, researchers concluded that the category that classified learning English as an easy task started learning the language at a young age, the category that found learning English difficult, they were whether old or suffer from problems like anxiety, lack of focus, lack of commitment...

Sixth question: Candidates' English level

**Table 3.13: Candidates' English level**

Level	Elementary	Intermediate	Upper-intermediate	Advanced
	Able to say and understand a	Able to speak and understand	Able to communicate	Able to speak and understand

	few things in English	reasonably well and, use basic tenses but have problems with more complex grammar and vocabulary	without much difficulty but still make quite a lot of mistakes and misunderstand sometimes	very well but sometimes have problems with unfamiliar situations and vocabulary
<b>Number</b>	00	04	09	07

From candidates' responses to this question, researchers remarked that none of the candidates is below the intermediate level. There are (04) candidates that can speak, understand but when facing complex grammar and vocabulary they stop, this category fall into the intermediate level. There are (09) candidates who can communicate easily but sometimes they misunderstand and make various mistakes, these candidates fall into the upper-intermediate level.

There are (07) candidates among our sample that can speak and understand very well in English but sometimes they are uncomfortable with unfamiliar situations and vocabulary, these are the category that fall into the advanced level.

#### Section two: Speaking skill

Seventh question: Candidates' English practice

**Table 3.14: The Frequency of candidates' English practice**

Option	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
<b>Number</b>	01	01	02	07	09

From candidates' answers to this question, researchers noticed that the majority of candidates (09) do not practice speaking, while (07) rarely practice. There are two candidates that practice speaking on certain occasions, one candidate who practices often and one that does not miss a chance to practice, this candidate practice speaking regularly.

Eighth question: Candidates' ability to express themselves when speaking

**Table 3.15: Candidates' ability to express themselves when speaking in English**

Option	Yes	No
<b>Number</b>	20	00

When asked this question, all candidates agreed on their ability to express their ideas through speaking, and no one of them disagreed.

Ninth question: Difficulties candidates face when they speak

From candidates' answers, researchers concluded that there are main difficulties most of English learners face when speaking. Firstly, fear to talk, they fear making mistakes and to be judged, or made fun of. Additionally, hesitation of talking, they hesitate because of the lack of vocabulary and lack of knowledge about language linguistics and phonology...Stress and anxiety in addition to always referring to the mother language when trying to produce speech in the English language.

Tenth question: How candidates prefer to practice speaking

**Table 3.16: How candidates prefer to practice speaking**

Way of practicing	Face-to-face	Online
<b>Number</b>	10	10

From the analysis of candidates' answers, we found that they are divided into two groups, (10) candidates who prefer practicing speaking online and, (10) candidates who prefer practicing face-to-face.

When asked for the reason, candidates who prefer to practice speaking online gave the following reasons:

- ✓ They are shy
- ✓ They get stressed and nervous
- ✓ There are varieties of speaking activities online
- ✓ They can practice with native speakers

Candidates who prefer to practice speaking face-to-face said it is better, in terms of minimizing the risks of miscommunication, promoting more effective practices, and allowing a better exchange of

information since both speaker and listener are able to see and interpret body language and facial expressions.

Section three: Standardized tests

Eleventh question: Did candidates attend preparation classes

**Table 3.17: Did candidates attend preparation classes**

Attending preparation classes	Yes	No
<b>Number</b>	05	15

From candidates' answers to this question, researchers observed that the majority (15) of them passed the test without receiving professional training and aid. Moreover, five candidates enrolled in preparation courses.

Twelveth question: Purpose behind passing the test

**Table 3.18: Purposes of passing the test**

Purpose	Immigration purposes	Work purposes	Education purposes
<b>Number</b>	05	07	08

This table shows the distribution of candidates based on the objectives of passing the test, after analyzing these data researchers noticed that most candidates passed the test for educational purposes; to pursue further education abroad, and work purposes; to start a professional career in an English speaking country. Eight (08) candidates for education purposes and seven (07) for work purposes. Furthermore, only five candidates (05) passed it for migration purposes; seeking a new life abroad.

Thirteenth question: Number of times candidates passed the test

**Table 3.19: Number of times candidates passed the test**

First time passing the test	Yes	No
<b>Number</b>	08	12

From candidates' answers to this question, researchers observed that twelve (12) candidates among our sample passed the test several times. when the other eight (08) candidates passed it for the first time.

Fourteenth question: Practicing speaking

**Table 3.20 : Candidates speaking practice as a preparation**

Practicing speaking to prepare for the test	Yes	No
<b>Number</b>	05	15

From candidates' answers to this question, researchers observed that fifteen (15) candidates among our sample passed the speaking test without practicing speaking as a preparation for the test. And, five candidates (05) practiced speaking to prepare themselves in order to be ready to pass the test.

Fifteenth question: Candidates feelings before/during the test

When analyzing candidates' answers, we found that they had so much to say. The majority of candidates stated that they were afraid, stressed, and nervous. They declared that they faced ambiguity the reason that distracted and prevented them from delivering good answers. A minority of candidates are the ones who claimed that they were calm and relaxed.

Sixteenth question: Test speaking section

**Table 3.21: Difficulty of speaking test**

Option	Easy	Hard	Average
<b>Number</b>	03	04	13

From candidates' answers on this question, researchers observed that 13 candidates considered the speaking test average difficulty, 4 candidates claimed it was hard and 03 candidates said it was a piece of cake.

Seventeenth question: Problems faced by candidates during the test

When asked candidates about the obstacles they faced during the tests, their answers were similar to teachers' answers. All candidates agreed that the main problem is time management, due to the short period of time given to the speaking test (15-20 minutes).

Candidates complained about not being able to fit 4 long tasks into 20 minutes, the thing that leads them to panic and lose concentration thus, wasting scores.

Eighteenth question: Piece of advice

To conclude the questionnaire, researchers asked candidates to advise candidates who will pass the test in the future. Their answers were gathered into points:

- ✓ Prepare, prepare and prepare because it is the key to success
- ✓ Do your own research on the test; content and structure, how it works...
- ✓ Enhance your vocabulary concerning different topics
- ✓ Manage your time carefully
- ✓ Feel relaxed and confident, not overconfident
- ✓ Keep it simple and avoid complexity
- ✓ Stay focused

### **3.3.2.6. Discussion and interpretation of the findings**

Based on the analysis of the candidates' questionnaire, researchers understood what follows:

The findings provided different and rich information that supported our study hypotheses. Initially, from candidates' responses, we deduced that majority of them are females which indicates that females' interest in these tests is more than males. Also, the dominant age range in the sample is from 18 to 25 years old this, refers to the educational purposes of taking the test. Most candidates are high school and university students the thing that assure that they passed the test to pursue their studies abroad. Not to forget candidates who are older than 35 years old who seek a job or a new fresh start.

Furthermore, the majority of candidates have been learning English for more than 5 years, the learning process was described based on the difficulty as an in-between task, meaning it's not an easy nor a difficult task. It is a task that requires time, effort, commitment, and continuity.

On the same path, from candidates' responses, we found that none of them is on the elementary level of the English language, in fact, most of them are upper-intermediate or advanced as mastering the English language is a requirement in TOEFL and IELTS tests.

In addition, unfortunately, candidates do not consider speaking as an important skill so they do not practice it.

From candidates' answers, researchers concluded that there are difficulties and problems face the English language when they try to speak. Firstly, fear to talk, they fear making mistakes and to be judged, or made fun of. Additionally, hesitation of talking, they hesitate because of the lack of vocabulary and lack of knowledge about language linguistics and phonology...Stress and anxiety in addition to always referring to the mother language when trying to produce speech in the English language. These problems can be the reason why learners do not speak which results in poor speaking skills.

Candidates prefer practicing their speaking skills both online due to the available multiple activities and face-to-face to avoid communication issues.

From the precise answers that candidates provided, we understood that they do not provide enough time to practice their speaking skills, although the candidates stated that the speaking tests are average based on their difficulty, the absence of preparation led to obtaining poor scores.

From describing their feelings before and during the test, researchers found that stress and anxiety have negative effects on candidates' performance in addition to time management that are considered the main obstacles that face them. Thus, candidates gave some advice to people who are willing to pass the test, they advised them to prepare well, be confident, avoid complex linguistic patterns, have a sufficient knowledge about the test, and learn how to manage the given time carefully.

### **3.4. Data analysis and procedures**

After designing and administering the data collection methods, the collected data were analyzed.

In this study, the researcher adopted a descriptive approach of data analysis in order to describe and interpret the gathered data from both teachers' interviews and candidates' questionnaires, to know the main reasons causing candidates' bad scores and the suitable techniques for improvement.

### **3.5. Summary of the results**

As a recapitulation, the present research is conducted in order to investigate the major reasons behind getting low scores in the speaking TOEFL and IELTS tests. Thus, to accomplish the needed results,

the researcher used different tools to gather data that enriches the study. The used data collection tools are an interview administrated for teachers, and a questionnaire administrated to candidates, both selected from two different language centers.

In addition, this study aimed to point out the main reasons that affect candidates speaking skills. Besides, the study attempted to know what is meant by the speaking skills, its importance, and the process of teaching and learning it. Moreover, it suggested strategies to develop learners' speaking skills.

On one hand, the interview findings revealed teachers' emphasis on the importance of the speaking skill as it affects other skills, findings also showed that teachers agreed on the difficulty of the learning-teaching process of the speaking skills, spotting the mistakes done in the latter process.

Moreover, the interview exposed that lack of exposure to the English language is the main reason which in turn leads to a lack of practicing speaking skills, the thing that has a negative influence on candidates' scores in TOEFL and IELTS exams. In addition, results showed that teachers complain from learners' lack of interest in speaking skill, this can be traced back to boredom, overconfidence, stress, anxiety, or fear.

In the same sense, the conducted interview showed that there are factors that affect the psychological side of the candidates due to the pressure to succeed. Besides, the obtained results highlighted the methods, techniques, and strategies that can be beneficial to prepare candidates for the test and improve their performance during the test. It was proved that preparation courses are a must due to the positive twist that can make, along with language skills practice as they affect one another. In addition, candidates should make efforts to have knowledge about the test to be familiar with its structure, content, and scoring methods so that they will not be nervous, invest more time in speaking skills practice.

On the other hand, candidates' questionnaire results agreed with teachers' interview results; yet, candidates added that the overuse of the teacher-centered approach in the few available preparation courses is not beneficial at all. Because in which, teachers do most of the work i.e teachers speak more than candidates do.

Likewise, the questionnaire's findings proved that candidates do not pay the required attention to speaking skills thinking it does not require practicing. Also, candidates declared that lack of exposure to the English language weakens their vocabulary and familiarity with speech patterns, unavailability of professional training centers which offer preparation classes concerning IELTS / TOEFL exams, even though, preparation course can be rarely found, they are poor from equipment and quality sides.

Furthermore, the obtained data from the candidates' questionnaire highlighted that they are affected by several psychological factors; fear, hesitation, stress, anxiety, low self-confidence, overthinking, and some phobias. Candidates focused the most on time management, findings revealed that time management is considered one of the biggest reasons behind scoring poorly in standardized tests, since it can lead to the other problems. Moreover, candidates agreed with teachers on the necessity to make efforts in order to raise awareness upon IELTS and TOEFL structure, content, and scoring methods so that they will not be nervous, invest more time in speaking skills practice.

All to be said, the obtained results from both interviews and questionnaires were beneficial in enriching the study and validating the research hypotheses. More importantly, it showed that the suggested methods and techniques can be useful in terms of raising awareness concerning standardized test, realizing the importance of practicing speaking skills, thus improving speaking TOEFL and IELTS test scores.

### **3.6. Synthesis of the findings**

The obtained results from the used tools lead to the progress of this synthesis. Both methods provided relatively similar findings that help to answer the research questions and validate the hypothesis concerning the major reasons for getting low scores in the speaking TOEFL and IELTS tests. Teachers and candidates have prior knowledge concerning standardized tests, they are aware of its importance but still, candidates' ignorance about the importance of preparation can be a major reason for their poor scorings.

Both research instruments answered and confirmed the two study questions and hypotheses. Through which, teachers and candidates at the British Council Center and Wizard Language Center emphasized that lack of exposure to the English language, lack of deep knowledge about TOEFL and IELTS structure and content, lack of interest in practice and preparation, and psychological factors, are major reasons that affect candidates negatively when passing these tests.

Furthermore, teachers' and candidates' feedback, provided solutions to help candidates overcome problems they face concerning the speaking skill. The presented solutions are a group of methods, strategies, and techniques which are very beneficial and impact different aspects. More importantly, the obtained feedback confirmed that professional training centers need to be established, more preparation courses with authentic materials must be provided and, highlighting and paying attention to the factors that affect the psychological side.

To conclude, the study results answered research questions and, achieved all the study aims. Furthermore, research hypotheses have been confirmed and validated.

Both teachers and candidates highlighted major reasons and difficulties that affect test scores. Moreover, lack of practice and preparation in addition to the lack of exposure to English are the main two reasons behind getting low scores in standardized speaking tests. Furthermore, it has been confirmed that candidates need to be prepared before and during passing the test. Candidates need to practice all four language skills focusing on speaking skills. They also need to embrace teachers' feedback and guidance. In short, it is essential for candidates to follow the mentioned strategies and techniques in order to improve their performance, thus, have good scores in the speaking section of the standardized test which leads to successfully passing the latter test.

### **3.7. Limitations of the study**

Any researcher is conscious of the various obstacles that may affect progress in any manner. In conducting this study, some hurdles appeared which limited us from gathering more adequate data to our research.

At first, not having experience concerning research, was an obstacle when conducting a study for the first time. In addition, the lack of resources was a big issue because IELTS and TOEFL tests are neither widely known nor widely used in Algeria.

Moreover, the coronavirus pandemic that surrounded us from all sides. So, the data collection process was deeply affected due to the obligatory quarantine. Not forgetting, the devastating psychological side.

Furthermore, the process of contacting teachers and candidates was incredibly hard because it was done online.

Despite all the difficulties that the researcher faced, she tried to accept the challenge, for the sake of presenting a rich and, complete research that is suitable for the master's degree.

### **3.8. Conclusion**

The third chapter was devoted to the fieldwork of the study, it consisted of two parts. The first part focused on the theoretical background of the used research methodology, this part contained research approach, research design, population, sampling, and data collection methods. The second part's aim was to explore the main reasons that lead learners to get low scores in the speaking TOEFL and

IELTS tests and what can be done as a method of improvement from both past candidates and teachers' perspectives. Furthermore, this chapter dealt with detailed data analysis, interpretation, discussion of findings, and the synthesis of the results.

### **Pedagogical implication**

Standardized tests are considered a learner's ticket to further achievement and success. Toefl and IELTS exams are the key that opens doors around the world, they are recognized and accepted by over 10,000 organizations worldwide, including universities, institutes, employers, professional bodies, immigration authorities, and other government agencies.

Unfortunately, in Algeria learners do not give these tests the needed importance, and if they do they get low scores especially in the speaking section. Therefore, to raise learners' awareness about the importance of standardized tests, the researcher introduced some recommendations, which may be beneficial.

### **General suggestions**

- Establishing professional training centers to deliver in-class preparation courses
- Establishing and online platforms concerned with both IELTS and TOEFL exams dedicated to Algerian candidates

### **Suggestions for teachers**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations seem to be appropriate to teachers:

- Avoiding the overuse of the teacher-centered approach that many teachers adopt when teaching speaking skills. In other words, many teachers do most of the talking when delivering speaking activities
- Using more authentic materials i.e exposing learners to natural real English not what is called "artificial English"
- Teach learners test skills such as effective and efficient note-taking, strategies to answer questions
- Support your learners and motivate them
- Be up to date with the test's international changes
- Enroll in teachers' workshops, for further professional development

## **Suggestions for candidates**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations seem to be appropriate for candidates:

- Familiarize yourself with the test format, make sure you find out which test you will be taking before you start preparing
- Research the test score requirements, before you begin studying, find out what the requirements are for the schools, universities, institutions... you are interested in
- Learn academic English
- Use the available practice tests as a preparation method
- Find a mentor, a reliable native English teacher who knows a lot about the test is one of the best resources a candidate can have
- Build up your stamina because the test can be very long with no pauses
- Become an expert note taker, You will be able to take notes in each section of the test
- Strengthen all 4 language skills, because if you do very poorly on one section of the test, you will have to retake the entire test

# **General Conclusion**

## **General Conclusion**

The present study aimed to investigate major reasons that affect negatively on candidates' scores in IELTS and TOEFL speaking tests. Thus, this research attempted to answer all the research questions in addition to the hypotheses validity.

This study comprises three chapters, the two initial chapters were devoted to the theoretical part of the study; whereas, the third chapter shed light on the study framework.

Firstly, the first chapter was devoted to giving a general overview of the speaking skill, it presented various definitions, types, functions, components, and learning-teaching process concerning speaking skills. In addition to highlighting its importance, moreover, this chapter discussed the relationships between speaking and other language skills. Secondly, the second chapter dealt with standardized tests, it presented its different definitions, types, and characteristics. Furthermore, it gave an overview of IELTS and TOEFL exams including; definition, content, and structure. Moreover, the third chapter shed the light on major causes behind getting low scores in the speaking TOEFL and IELTS tests and suggested ways to help them improve. Thirdly, the last chapter is devoted to the fieldwork and data analysis. Initially, the third chapter dealt with the practical part of the study, and it contains two parts. The first part presented the used research methodology including research approach, research design, population and sampling, and data collection methods. The second part presented the data analysis and interpretation process in addition to the discussion and summary of the findings.

To achieve the study aims, the researcher used a mixed-method approach to collect data from both teachers and candidates using both interviews and questionnaires. The sample of this study was teachers and candidates from both The British Council and, Wizard Language Centers. In the same path, the obtained results proved that there are various reasons that affect candidates scores in a negative way, the causes mainly centered on the lack of exposure to English, lack of practice, and lack of awareness. In addition to stress, fear hesitation, anxiety, overconfidence can be obstacles when it comes to candidates' psychology side. A group of recommendations and suggestions were given to both teachers and candidates for the sake of improvement.

To sum up this work, candidates tend to get low scores in the speaking IELTS and TOEFL test due to the lack of exposure to the English language, also the lack of practice and preparation for these tests in addition to many psychological factors such as fear, stress, anxiety, etc. To overcome these obstacles, and achieve better scores, candidates are advised to focus on practicing speaking skills, enroll in preparation courses, raise their awareness concerning the content of these tests, and so on.

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### **Additional resources**

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<https://en.wikipedia.org>

<https://toefl.prepscholar.com/>

<https://global-exam.com/blog/>

<http://i-courses.org/>

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<https://canvas.instructure.com/courses/948551>

<http://www.studyenglishtoday.net/>

<https://www.manhattanreview.com/>

<https://www.ielts.org/>

<https://www.londonschool.com>

# **Appendices**

## Appendix 01: Teachers' Interview

Dear teacher,

This interview is held to collect data as part of our research process; in an attempt to accomplish a master's degree dissertation which tackles the major reasons behind getting low scores in the speaking section of standardized tests. Therefore, we would be grateful if you precise some of your time to answer our questions.

Thank you so much for your help

### Section one : Background

**Q1.** kindly specify your gender :

- a) Male
- b) Female

**Q2.** How old are you :

- a) 20-25
- b) 25-35
- c) 35 and more

**Q3.** Kindly specify your degree :

- a) License
- b) Master
- c) Magister
- d) Doctorat

**Q4.** Which of these certifications you hold :

- a) TEFL
- b) TESOL
- c) CELTA
- d) None
- e) Other

If other, please name it

.....

.....

**Q5.** For how long have you been teaching English :

- a) Less than 5 years
- b) 5-10 years
- c) More than 10 years

**Section two : Speaking skill**

**Q6.** What is speaking skill according to you ?

.....

.....

.....

**Q7.** Is speaking skill important :

- a) Yes
- b) No

Please justify in both cases

.....

.....

.....

**Q8.**Speaking is considered a difficult task, what can you say about that :

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

**Q9.**What are the problems you face in teaching speaking ?

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

**Q10.**How do you assess the learners' speaking level ?

- a) Advanced
- b) Good
- c) Weak

**Q11.**What are the problems learners face when speaking ?

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

**Q12.**How do you help them to face these problems ?

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

### **Section three : Standardized tests**

**Q13.** Kindly tell us about the speaking section of IELTS or TOEFL tests according to you ?

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

**Q14.**Is teaching speaking « for these tests » differ from type to type, and according to the purpose of taking it ?

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

**Q15.**What are the obstacles candidates face before the test ?

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

**Q16.**What are the obstacles candidates face during the test ?

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

**Q17.**From your experience, why candidates get low scores in the speaking section of these tests ?

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

**Q18.**What can be done to help candidates improve their scores ?

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

## Appendix 02: Students' Questionnaire

Dear candidates,

This questionnaire is held to collect data as part of our research process; in an attempt to accomplish a master's degree dissertation which tackles " the major reasons behind getting low scores in the speaking section of standardized tests". Therefore, we would be very grateful if you precise some of your time to answer our questions.

Thank you so much for your help

### Section one : Background information

Q1.kindly specify your gender :

- c) Male
- d) Female

Q2.How old are you :

- d) 18-25
- e) 25 and more

Q3.Kindly specify your study level :

- e) High school
- f) University
- g) Higher studies
- h) Vocational studies

**Q4.**For how many years have you been learning English :

- f) 02 – 05
- g) 05 - 10
- h) More than 10

**Q5.**How did you find learning English :

- d) Easy
- e) Hard
- f) In between

**Q6.**How do you consider your English level ?

- a) Elementary
- b) Intermediate
- c) Upper-intermediate
- d) Advanced

## **Section two : Speaking skill**

**Q7.**How often do you practice speaking ?

- a) Always
- b) Often
- c) Sometimes
- d) Rarely
- e) Never

**Q8.**Are you able to express your self easily when speaking :

- a) Yes
- b) No

**Q9.**What are the difficulties you face when you speak :

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

**Q10.**Do you prefer practicing speaking ?

- a) Online
- b) Face-to-face

### **Section three : Standardized tests**

**Q11.**Did you attend preparation courses for IELTS and TOEFL tests ?

- d) Yes
- e) No

**Q12.**For what purpose have you passed the test ?

- a) Immigration purposes
- b) Work purposes
- c) Education purposes

**Q13.**Was it the first time you pass the test ?

- a) Yes
- b) No

**Q14.**Have you been practicing speaking as a preparation for the test ?

- a) Yes
- b) No

**Q15.**Kindly, describe your feelings before and during the test ?

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

**Q16.**How was the speaking section of the test ?

- a) Easy
- b) Hard
- c) Average

**Q17.**What are the obstacles you faced during the test?

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

**Q18.**Give an advice, a word to people willing to pass the test ?

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.....  
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## Résumé

La présente étude vise à étudier les raisons qui poussent les candidats à obtenir de faibles notes dans la section orale des examens TOEFL et IELTS, elle nous permet de trouver des solutions et des moyens d'aider ces candidats à améliorer leurs performances. En plus, cette recherche cible l'étude de la compétence de parole et d'une profonde concentration sur son importance et de mettre en valeur sa relation avec d'autres compétences linguistiques ; ainsi que la méthode préconisée pour l'apprendre et l'enseignée.

Cette étude traite également des tests dits standardisés, à travers lesquels nous apprenons à connaître leur signification, leurs types, leurs compositions et leurs structures. E outre, les problèmes auxquels les candidats sont confrontés avant et pendant ces tests.

L'étude actuelle se compose de deux parties: la première partie est le côté théorique et la deuxième partie est le côté pratique, qui est l'étude de terrain ceci nous aide à recueillir les informations nécessaires pour établir l'étude. C'est pourquoi les chercheurs se sont basés sur ces deux méthodes: Un entretien avec les professeurs et un questionnaire présenté aux candidats.

L'échantillon avec lequel nous avons travaillé a été prélevé dans deux centres différents en Algérie. **British Council** et **Wizard LanguageCenter**.

Les résultats obtenus ont démontré la présence de conséquences négatives sur les candidats qui a affecté négativement leurs notes ainsi qu'à la disponibilité de solutions et de méthodes très efficaces pour améliorer leurs performances.

En conclusion, quelques conseils et suggestions ont été présentés à chacun des professeurs et des candidats afin de changer leur situation et d'améliorer leurs notes.

## الملخص

تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى البحث في الأسباب التي تؤدي بالمرشحين إلى تحصيل علامات منخفضة في قسم التحدث من إختباري التوفل والأيلتس، كما تهدف إلى إيجاد حلول وطرق لمساعدة هؤلاء المرشحين لتحسين أدائهم. بالإضافة إلى هذا، يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة مهارة التحدث والتعمق فيها بالتركيز على أهميتها، علاقتها مع مهارات اللغة الأخرى، وكيفية تعلمها وتعليمها.

تتناول هذه الدراسة أيضا، ما يسمى بالاختبارات الموحدة، من خلالها نتعرف على معناها، أنواعها، مما تتكون والمشاكل التي يواجهها المرشحين قبل وأثناء هذه الاختبارات.

تتكون الدراسة الحالية من جزئين : الجزء الأول وهو الجانب النظري، أما الجزء الثاني فهو الجانب التطبيقي والتمثل في الدراسة الميدانية . لجمع المعلومات اللازمة إعتد الباحثون على وسيلتين؛ مقابلة أجريت مع الأساتذة واستبيان قدم للمرشحين . أخذت العينة التي عملنا معها من مركزين مختلفين في الجزائر . أسفرت النتائج المتحصل عليها على تواجد عواقب تؤثر سلبا على المرشحين، مما يؤدي إلى حصولهم على علامات منخفضة كما أسفرت على توفر حلول وأساليب جد فعالة لتحسين أداء المرشحين . في الختام تم تقديم بعض النصائح والإقتراحات لكل من الأساتذة والمرشحين من أجل تغيير الوضع وتحسين مستوى العلامات .