Objectivity Vs. Subjectivity in Testing EFL Students' Speaking Skills

The case of First Year Master Students of English at Larbi Ben Mhidi University

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of Letters and Languages, Department of English, in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in Language Sciences and Teaching English as a Foreign Language

by: Souheila MEDJOUDJ

Supervisor: Mr. Abdesslam TAIBI

Examiner: Mr. Haroun MELGANI

2013-2014
I undertake that all material presented for examination is my own work and has not been written for me, in whole or in part, by any other person(s). I also undertake that any quotation or paraphrase from the published or unpublished work by another person has been duly acknowledged. Accordingly, I assume liability for any mistake or inadequacies that may appear in any part of the final product.

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The candidate's name and signature:
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Dedication

I owe a debt of gratitude to my parents whose love and sympathy supported me all time.

Special thanks goes to my brothers and sisters for their help.

To my naughty catlike Montacer, nephews and nieces.

I would express my gratitude for their presence in my life, Mohammed, Soumia.K, Aya, Khoukha, Imene, mimi

I thank my classmate especially Hassna.B for their love, support, and respect.

Thank you all
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I also stand in honor and respect for all my teachers who enlightened my way with knowledge and intellectual curiosity.
Abstract

The assessment of the learners' performance was and remains a crucial part in the teaching/learning process. In order to achieve the desired aims of testing, the instructors have to be objective in scoring their students' achievement and this cannot happen only if tests are established on clear and systematic criteria. Therefore, the study aims at scrutinizing the situation of oral tests by examining both teachers' and students' experiences from conducting/taking oral tests and checking the degree of oral teachers' objectivity in assessing their learners' performance. The study sample consists of seventy (70) first year master students and fourteen (14) teachers who have been teaching or still teaching the oral expression module at English Department, at Larbi Ben Mhidi University. The study is descriptive and the data were gathered through questionnaires administered to both learners and instructors. These questionnaires were designed to collect as much information as possible about the way the oral exams are implemented. The analysis of the data showed the presence of several deficiencies in oral testing process either at the level of designing or at the stage of implementation and scoring. Inevitably, these imperfections impact negatively on the objectivity of the oral test results. Thus, future studies should stress experimentally the feasibility of relying on systematic criteria in conducting the oral examinations and show how this can ensure the objectivity of the oral examination results.
List of Abbreviations

2L: second language
EFL: English as a Foreign Language
ESL: English as a Second Language
FL: Foreign Language
OE: oral expression
SAT: Scholastic Aptitude Test
TL: target language
TOEFL: Testing of English as a Foreign Language.
List of Figures and Tables

Figure 1: Practicality 20
Figure 2: Analytical rubric for a written activity 23
Figure 3: Holistic rubric for a writing assessment 24
Table 1. Students' gender 47
Table 2. Students' choice of English 47
Table 3. Students' level of oral English 48
Table 4. Students' psychological state before and/or during the oral exams 49
Table 5. The effect of shyness and anxiety on students' performance in oral exams 49
Table 6. The effect of students' non-access to the test format and procedure 50
Table 7. The effect of students' access to the exam structure and norm 51
Table 8. Student's access to the exam format and test procedure 51
Table 9. Student's access to the scoring criteria 52
Table 10. Students' perception of the scoring criteria 53
Table 11. Students' contribution in choosing the exam topics 54
Table 12. Students' experiences with oral exams' topics 54
Table 13. Students' psychological preparation before the oral test taking 55
Table 14. Students' estimation of the degree of difficulty of testing the oral skill 56
Table 15. Introvert and shy students' position in oral tests 57
Table 16. Students' estimation to the allotted time 57
Table 17. The problems experienced by students during the oral exams 58
Table 18. The oral tests' forms 59
Table 19. Students' estimation about the raters' performance 60
Table 20. Students' perspective about the teachers' objectivity 61
Table 21. Students' perspective about the diversity of exam structures 61
Table 22. Students' fluctuation scores

Table 23. Students' opinion on the ‘generosity’ of oral teachers

Table 24. Students' estimation about unifying the exam structure and norms

Table 25. Students' suggestions for the improvement of oral tests

Table 26. Oral teachers' gender

Table 27. Oral teachers' Academic degree

Table 28. Oral teachers' years of experience

Table 29. Teachers' perceptions about the students' anxiety and nervousness

Table 30. Teachers' psychological preparations for test-takers

Table 31. Teachers' perspective about informing students about the exam details

Table 32. Teachers' perspectives about accessing students to the exam structure

Table 33. Teachers' perspectives about accessing students to exam criteria

Table34. Teachers' students' discussions about exam topics

Table 35. Teachers' perception of the difficulty of testing speaking skill

Table 36. Teachers' perspective about the potential difficulties of oral exams

Table 37. Teachers' perspectives about the allotted time for students

Table 38. Teachers' consideration of the exams conditions

Table 39. Teachers' training

Table 40. Teachers' preference for the speaking aspects

Table 41. Teachers' preference of the scoring criteria

Table 42. Teachers' coordination

Table 43. Teachers' access to their colleagues' exam structure

Table 44. Nature of oral tests used by teachers

Table 45. Teachers' perspective in revising the teaching method

Table 46. Teachers' perspective in revising the testing method

Table 47. The sources of the oral exam topics
Table 48. Teachers' presumptions about their students  
Table 49. Teachers' estimation of the effect of tiredness and fatigue on their rating  
Table 50. Teachers' perspective about unifying the oral exam structure  
Table 51. Teachers' estimation of their colleagues' scoring  
Table 52. Teachers' frequency in supplying the students with feedback  
Table 53. Teachers' perspectives about improving the oral exams
Table of Contents

Dedication .................................................. I

Acknowledgements ........................................... II

Abstract .................................................. III

List of Abbreviations ....................................... IV

List of Figures and Table ................................ V

Table of Contents ........................................ VIII

Statement of the Problem ................................... 1

Aim of the Study ........................................... 3

Hypothesis ................................................ 3

Methodology ............................................... 3

Literature Review ........................................... 3

Structure of the Study ..................................... 5

Chapter One: Assessment and Testing

Introduction ............................................... 7

1. Definition of Assessment ............................. 7

2. Types of Classroom Assessment .................... 8

   2.1 Formative Versus Summative Assessment ........ 8

   2.2 Informal Versus Formal Assessment .............. 9

3. Teaching, Learning and Assessment ................ 10

4. Purpose of Assessment ............................... 11

5. The Function of Feedback ............................ 11

6. Definition of Test .................................... 12

7. Approaches to Language Testing .................... 13

   7.1 The Essay-Translation Approach ................. 13
Chapter Two: Speaking Skill

Introduction

1. Definition of Speaking
2. Types of Classroom Speaking Performance 29
   2.1 Imitative 29
   2.2 Intensive 29
   2.3 Responsive 29
   2.4 Transactional (Dialogue) 30
   2.5 Interpersonal (Dialogue) 30
   2.6 Extensive (Monologue) 30
3. Functions of Speaking 30
4. The Relationship between Listening and Speaking 31
5. Characteristics of Speaking Performance 32
   5.1 Fluency 33
   5.2 Accuracy 34
      5.2.1 Grammar Accuracy 34
      5.2.2 Vocabulary Accuracy 35
      5.2.3 Phonological Accuracy 36
   5.3 Extralinguistic and Paralinguistic Features 37
6. Oral Communication Strategies 38
   6.1 Achievement Strategies 38
      6.1.1 Guessing Strategies 38
      6.1.2 Paraphrase Strategies 39
      6.1.3 Co-operative Strategies 39
   6.2 Reduction Strategies (Avoidance Strategies ) 39
7. Speaking Difficulties in Foreign Language Learning 40
   7.1 Inhibition 40
   7.2 Nothing to Say 40
   7.3 Law Uneven Participation 40
   7.4 Mother Tongue Use 40
8. Testing Speaking 41
   8.1 Verbal Essay 41
Chapter Three: the Investigation Field

Introduction

1. Students' Questionnaire
   1.1 The Population and Sample
   1.2 Description of the Questionnaire
   1.3 Analysis of the Results

2. Teachers of OE Questionnaire
   2.1 The Population and Sample
   2.2 Description of the Questionnaire
   2.3 Analysis of the Results

3. Pedagogical Recommendations

Conclusion

General Conclusion

References

Appendices

Appendix I: Students' Questionnaire

Appendix II: Teachers of OE Questionnaire

French summary

Arabic summary
1. Statement of the Problem

Assessment, in general, has a fundamental role in EFL learning/teaching. White (2010:7) argues that efficient student learning and teaching process could be enhanced by following efficient assessment. Clearly, the role of assessment in EFL teaching is not restricted to identify learners' level or to classify them according to their abilities only but to provide vigorous information about the effectiveness of the teaching methods and instructions used.

The term test is very often used interchangeably with the term assessment, but a distinction between the two should be drawn. Assessment is an "umbrella" term that embodies test, evaluation, measurement, and so on. The test is defined to be "a method of measuring a person's ability or knowledge in a given area" (Brown, 1987: 219). Testing oral skill is far from being a simple task because it requires a lot of skills. Joughin and Collom (2003) define oral tests as any test in which students respond verbally instead of writing to the required tasks.

Designing a good test is a whole process that needs to engage in very carefully if success is what the tester seeks for; it involves meeting many criteria. According to Harmer (2007), a good test is one that is valid, reliable, practical and engendering positive washback. Being valid, the first criteria of a good test, means that it needs to assess the skill(s) targeted by the assessor. The second criterion of a good test is reliability. A reliability test is one that entails consistent and repeatable results when administered to the same group of students at a different time. In other words, the test should give similar results if it is conducted at a different time. Practicality is another criterion of a good test. For a test to be practical, testers need to consider the time, the length of the test, the requirements, the ease of marking…etc. The final criterion of a good test is to have a positive washback which means that it should positively affect both teaching and learning. For instance, a good test can diagnose effectively students' areas of strengths and
weaknesses; it prompts them to work further on their weaknesses and this would affect their learning process positively. Based on these criteria, basically validity and reliability, teachers would be able to make unbiased and objective decisions about students' performances.

Oral assessment is a challenging task in where teachers are faced with many difficulties that frequently lead them to use inadequate oral tests or to govern them wrongly. It is recognized that oral tests are less reliable because testers involve subjective judgments (Underhill, 1987). Therefore, objections are often made that oral tests lack reliability, and it is subject to bias as examiners rely on their intuitive judgment rather than on clear and understandable criteria.

Being myself a FL learner, I have noticed that most of the oral expression teachers do not preliminarily state clear criteria for the tests they set up so as their students keep an eye on them and perform in accordance to these criteria, this would attest of the test's reliability; therefore, students would be scored objectively as they make their oral performances. Setting up criteria, to which students are assigned to respect, the teacher's test as well as his/her marking would reflect objectivity, i.e. validity, and reliability. These criteria may range from pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary appropriateness to accuracy. I have noticed as well that learners have a vague vision about the test- format, test-taking procedures, and the topic that sometimes is unfamiliar or unfit to their level. Thus, they get confused about the norms taken in scoring as there is no clear marking scale that insures fairness. Another issue with oral testing is the ignorance of the psychological problems of examinees during testing like anxiety and shyness which affect their performances.

It is important to note that students' attitudes and responses to any form of tests are likely to vary, and that students' and teachers' perceptions of oral assessment differ from one another, and in order to highlight these differences, and issues we would raise this question:
- To what extent are teachers objective in testing their students' oral skills in EFL classes?

2. Aim of the Study

Obtaining objective measurement in EFL oral tests would be the ultimate goal for testers; yet this task embodies many difficulties and constraints. Our study aims to examine English instructors' and candidates' experiences from oral tests, and to investigate to what extent English teachers are objective in assessing their students' oral skills.

3. Hypothesis

Designing oral tests with establishing clear, valid and reliable criteria would reflect the teachers' objectivity; therefore, makes it easier and unbiased for their learners.

4. Methodology

The data for the study will be collected from some instructors who teach at the English department and Students as majors in EFL classes of the same department. The study relies on a qualitative research where the data collection would be carried out through questionnaires for both students and teachers. The questionnaires seem to be the most appropriate means in that both protagonists would provide elements and classifications about not only the conception of the tests, but also the objectivity of the scoring as well.

5. Literature Review

As testing is a major component of teaching/learning process, many researches have been carried in which they brought new perspectives about language testing process. Testers, in fact, are often faced with complex problems in both theoretical and practical implications especially at the level of taking decisions about students' performances. One of the most and persistent problem in language testing is the ability of marking students objectively without any bias tendency. To achieve such a goal, several amendment and refinement have occurred in the testing system.
Before 1950's, tests were constructed and conducted without respecting the norms of reliability and validity. Therefore, this period is called to be "the pre-scientific era" as the testing process was not based on systematic procedures; rather, it was relied on the testers' intuitive judgment. The scorers were very biased and subjective in scoring their students' works. The test-tasks used in this era were varied between translation, essay writing, and grammar.

After 1950's, new language testing methods have emerged with more emphasis on the objectivity and reliability of the tests. On the one hand, the psychometric-structuralists approach which influenced by the mainstream of the structuralism behaviourism advocates the use of discrete-point testing to guarantee the reliability and validity of results (Alduais, 2012). It is claimed that "Discrete-point testing refers to the testing of one element at a time, item, by item. This might involve, for example, a series of items each testing a particular grammatical structure" (Hughes, 2003: 19). This approach is strongly criticized as it is based on structuralism that deals with the language as isolated items and this does not reflect the nature of the language. On the other hand, the integrative testing approach has appeared to overcome the weaknesses of the previous one. Oller (1979, cited in Brown, 2004: 8) states that "language competence is a unified act of interacting abilities that cannot be tested separately". This approach is based on the fact that language does not consist of separate items but it is a tool of communication (emphasize the language use).

Since then, many studies have led to a better understanding of the new ways of designing tests, developing and measuring students' works objectively. In fact, many studies have emphasized the "role of the raters" where there are many factors that influence testers' judgments about students' speaking performance such as their "background, native language and amount of prior training or experience", etc. Taking these factors into consideration while designing the test will, effectively, diminish the degree of subjectivity. In addition, many studies have focused on what they called "measurement qualities" which
can be reduced mainly to validity, reliability, and impact (Bachman, 2000). Moreover, it is argued that constructing tests should be based on "professional morality" which "is concerned with codes, contract, professional training, professional ethical norms and standards, and the systematic attempt to illuminate the ethos of profession and to elaborate its norms" (Davies, 1997: cited in Bachman, Ibid). By stressing those qualities and professional morality instructors can build effective tests and insure their objectivity.

Inevitably, objective measurement and fairness of scoring are issues that will occupy a large pace in the coming researches. A great sensitivity to ethical issues associated with designing testing is increasing and this urges researchers to find efficient solutions to ensure fairness, unbiased and objective methods of measurement. And since there is no perfect testing method, all doors wide open.

6. Structure of the Study

This study is made up of three chapters. The first two chapters constitute the literature survey. The first one deals with the theoretical perspectives about assessment and testing in EFL classes; definition of the same issues, types, approaches of testing, etc. The second chapter is devoted to the oral and speaking skills which constitute an essential element in the study, their definitions, importance, and performances, etc. The last chapter is concerned with the analysis of the collected data of the teachers' and the students' questionnaires. The same chapter includes some pedagogical implications that would be discussed with regard to the main issues raised throughout the study as well as a general conclusion drawn from the analysis.
Chapter One
Assessment and Testing
Introduction

The term "test" and "assessment" are often used interchangeably. But in educational research the two terms are used separately because they connote two different meanings. In fact, tests are one of the most familiar methods of assessment that teachers rely on to assess their students' achievements and tasks (Brown, 2004).

Since tests are one feature of assessment, we cannot talk about testing without mentioning assessment. Thus, this chapter is divided into two sections. The first one is concerned with the basic elements of assessment where we try to know about the role played by assessment in teaching and learning process, its definition, types, purpose, and the role of feedback.

The second section of this chapter is devoted to testing. We begin by giving its definition, its approaches, its types, and the qualities of a good test. Then, we will deal with the scoring rubrics.

1. Definition of Assessment

It is worth mentioning that the term assessment has been used differently in current educational research. In fact, there is no agreement on a consistent definition of what assessment exactly is because each educator uses it in a specific area to reach a given goal (Bachman, 2004).

Bachman (Ibid. 7) sees assessment as "the process of collecting information about a given object of interest according to procedures that are systematic and substantively grounded". By systematic, the author implies that assessment is done in an organized method with fixed and explicit standards so that other persons can repeat it whenever they want. In other words, assessment is conducted in clear procedures that are subjected to "public scrutiny", i.e. those procedures make a liaison between things we wish to assess and our observations. To illustrate this situation, we may describe someone's qualities depending on a dialogue we have done with him, but this would not be an assessment
because it is nearly impossible to re-describe him exactly as the first time. Also, someone would describe the same person in a different way, so there is no systematicity in the description. This systematicity in assessment is largely represented by reliability. Furthermore, assessment should be ‘substantively grounded’ where it should be controlled with a clear theory about the language use, language learning, language ability, ex-studies in the domain, etc. Clearly, in the previous example, the description of the person is not based on substantive condition because people generally do not describe other people to assess their language abilities. The substantive quality in assessment is largely represented by validity (Bachman, Ibid. 7).

The Assessment Reform Group (ARG, 2002; cited in Gardner, 2006: 2 ), on the other hand, considers assessment as "the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers, to identify where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there". So assessment is a process of gathering information that help both teachers and students to have a clear image about their current achievements as well as about their shortages to work on them in future.

2. Types of Classroom Assessment

Assessment can take a variety of forms. Classroom assessment is generally divided into four major categories which are: formative versus summative assessment, informal versus formal assessment. There exists other types of assessment but they are rather types of short tests. They would be presented shortly after in the coming.

2.1 Formative Versus Summative Assessment

Formative assessment has been defined as: "the process of appraising, judging or evaluating students’ work or performance and using this to shape and improve students’ competence" (Bell and Cowie, 2002: 11). In fact, formative assessment is an ongoing assessment that allows instructors to check their learners' progress and identify the areas of troubles or the skills that students have not developed well, so they take steps to overcome
them and improve student learning. Also, the information gained could be used to revise the teaching method used.

Summative assessment, on the other hand, is used to classify candidates according to their performances and marks, deciding who will succeed and moving to the next year or getting the diploma and who will fail, etc. Gipps (1994: 17) holds that "Summative assessment takes place at the end of a term or a course and is used to provide information about how much students have learned and how well a course has worked". Cizek (2010: 3) states that any "test or other system" of collecting data is considered as summative assessment if it fulfills the following two conditions: firstly, it is conducted at the end of the instructional term such as semester or the year. Secondly, it provides data for selection. This is why the validity and reliability of summative assessment have more importance than the other type of classroom assessment.

### 2.2 Informal Versus Formal Assessment

Informal assessment aims to find out how a learner can accomplish a given task. It is interested by the process of learning itself. It includes systematic observation where the teachers can assess their student's work indirectly without making use of standardized tests and scoring patterns. For instance, the teachers can comment on their students' work by telling them that they can do better, so the students would be assessed without noticing that.

On the other hand, formal assessment is a formal tool that is used to know how much a student has learnt or improved during the instructional period; it is concerned with how well a learner has learned concepts and developed the target skills. Formative assessment relies on standardized methods of administering the tests, and it is based on clear criteria for evaluation. Unlike the informal type, the results of the formal assessments are published (Farr and Beck, 2003).
3. Teaching, Learning and Assessment

In EFL/ESL classes, assessment goes hand in hand with instruction. We cannot teach without relying on assessment (Brown, Op.cit). Assessment is a planned process designed to accomplish a specific educational purpose. In fact, the role of assessment now is not confined only to test the students, but it extends to assess the whole educational system.

It is worthwhile pointing out here that the role of assessment has shifted from traditional "strategies" such as standardized tests, chapter-end exams or year-end exams, etc., and which have been applied to fit the purposes of persons who function outside the classroom such as: school-masters, parents, supervisors, etc. To more overall role which is no longer limited in discriminating and ranking students but to assess syllabus and the teaching method to help students overcome deficiencies. The assessment process, therefore, should be continuous and progressive; it should not be constrained only to the end of the semester or the term (Gitomer and Duschl, 1995). As Brown (Op.cit: 4) argues "A good teacher never ceases to assess students, whether those assessments are incidental or intended".

In order to understand more the relationship between assessment and the learning/teaching process, James and Gipps (1998) state that there are four ways in which assessment affects learning. Firstly, assessment is a good tool for motivating students. That is, it gives them the sense of accomplishment and success, so they feel confident. Secondly, assessment provides an opportunity for students to determine what to learn by spotlighting their weaknesses. Thirdly, assessment helps students to know how to "learn" by knowing the learning style that fits their needs. It affects, also, their choice to the learning strategies used. In addition, it teaches students how to manage and control their skills and helps them to develop their knowledge, skills and their understanding in general. Finally, assessment affects learning by giving students the chance to evaluate their
progress by assessing their current level, boosting their "existing learning", or by encouraging the new one.

4. Purpose of Assessment

There are several purposes behind assessment. The National Research Council, in the USA, (1999; cited in Bell and Cowie, Op.cit) summarized these purposes under three points. First of all, it has the aims of *summative assessment* as it enables instructors, administration, parents, and government, etc, to check learners' development and to make judgments about a student's level of performance, and certify which students may pass to the next level of their studies. Summative assessment is very important since it urges government to introduce reforms and make decisions about staffing and resourcing. The second objective of assessment is named *formative* where it is used to assess both instructors and learners to identify the area of weakness to build on in order to improve the quality of learning. The last purpose is called *accountability assessment*. In this case, assessment information can be used to undertake policy review and development at a national level, so the government intervention is targeted appropriately to change the global educational policy of the whole state.

5. The Function of Feedback

Feedback is recognized to be an important part of the learning cycle. Feedback is defined as "information that is given to the learner about his or her performance of a learning task, usually with the objective of improving this performance"(Ur, 1996:242). So, it is the comments given by the teacher to tell their students how well or bad they perform.

Feedback affects learning/teaching in two aspects: cognitive and motivational. On the one hand, feedback influences learning cognitively by making the students more aware about their progress, and about what is necessary to perform better in the coming stages.
On the other hand, feedback can impact students' motivation by developing the sense of accomplishment as they have a clear image about their learning.

Feedback plays a significant role in promoting learning and achievement if it respects some strategies namely: timing, amount, mode and audience. Firstly, by timing, teachers should know when and how to submit feedback. It should be immediate so that the students find the opportunity to use it at the right time before they forget something about the work done. Secondly, the amount of feedback should be considered where the teachers have to select the required information to give, and the level of students where some students need to receive much more feedback than the others. Thirdly, the teachers have to choose the suitable mode of feedback either orally, written or visually. For example, it is advisable to supply the students with oral feedback in interaction works. Finally, feedback is affected by the audience which can be single student, a group, or the whole class (Brookhart, 2008).

6. Definition of Test

Many definitions have been given to the term test. One of the overall definitions is provided by Brown (Op.cit. 3) where he defines it as: "a method of measuring a person's ability, knowledge, or performance in a given domain". By method the writer means that test is composed of particular "techniques, and procedures, or items" that should be clear, obvious and organized. For instance, if we use multiple choices questions, we ought to enclose them with a list of potential correct responses. In addition, test is an instrument of measuring. The measurement can be general where the focus is on evaluating general abilities such as writing texts and essays or specific when the focus is on measuring specific skills such as the appropriate use of articles in writing texts. A test is designed to evaluate a learner's ability, knowledge, or performance. That's why test-makers have to consider the test-takers' background, the validity of the test, and the examinees' interpretation of their scores. Testing examinees' performances display the level of their
competence. Generally speaking, tests are designed to evaluate one capacity of performing the language such as to speak, to read, to write, or to listen of the target language. In fact, the "Performance-based tests" are used to survey test-takers' use of the language, and from this survey the examiners can deduce the level of their general competence. To illustrate, reading comprehension tests that are constituted of several passages followed by quizzes about the general understanding may use to deduce the level of the reading competence. Next, the test targets a given domain. For example, in vocabulary test, examiners have to cover a list of items or words studied in a given unit, and the phonetic test might deal with minimal pairs.

7. Approaches to Language Testing

Language testing as a crucial component of language teaching has been influenced by many other fields and sciences such as: psychology, psycho-pedagogy, applied linguistics, sociology, statistics, etc. In fact, language testing has undergone four major stages: the essay-translation approach, the structuralist approach, the integrative approach, and the communicative approach (Heaton, 1988).

7.1 The Essay-Translation Approach

This stage is considered to be pre-scientific era of language testing because the tests are designed intuitively without depending on scientific principles and procedures. As its name indicates, the tests of this approach focus on writing essays, translation, and grammar. It should be noted that the tests of such an approach are characterized by high extent of bias to culture and literature, as well as, the judgment was described to be intuitive, subjective and unreliable.

7.2 The Structuralist Approach

As a consequence to the failure of the previous era to fit the aim of both language teachers and learners and as a result to the development in the field of linguistics and psychology, a new approach has emerged and which is called the structuralist approach, in
other books psychometric- structuralist approach. Actually, this approach has been influenced by the structural linguistics and by the behaviourism theory. This approach based on the claim that each language component (grammar, phonology, and vocabulary) as well as each language skill (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) should be tested at a time to ensure the effectiveness of measurement. The structuralist tests are more valid, reliable as they are statistics-based exams.

7.3 The Integrative Approach

This approach involves testing the language skills and components integrally, i.e., tests designed under the basics of such approach combine two or more skills at a time with the emphasis on the meaning and context. Integrative tests commonly use cloze testing, dictation, oral interview, translation and essay writing (Heaton, Ibid).

Cloze testing is " a reading passage (perhaps 150 to 300 words) in which roughly every sixth or seventh word has been deleted; the test-taker is required to supply words that fit into those blanks" (Brown, Op.cit.: 8). These tests reflect the testees’ competence such as: "knowledge of vocabulary, grammatical structure, discourse structure, reading skills and strategies, and an internalized "expectancy” grammar”.

Another major type of integrative test is dictation where the teacher reads a passage of hundred words and learners write it down. Dictation requires the use of many language abilities as the examinees are going to receive the information, "analyse and synthesize” them. Moreover, both listening and writing skills are stimulated (Aslam, 1992).

7.4 The Communicative Approach

The need for tests that are constructed of real language use which simulates real life context makes the new perspective of language testing. This new trend has produced the so-called communicative approach. The crucial aim of communicative tests is testing the learners’ abilities to communicate effectively. This approach is based on the idea that communicative competence could be tested through examinees’ communicative
performance. By communicative competence it is meant both grammatical competence which presents the language usage and the socio-linguistic and strategic competence which presents the language use (Aslam, ibid).

8. Types of Test

The language tests can be embodied in several types. The distinction between test types generally is based on different criteria, purpose, the way of response, and the scores interpretations, etc. Accordingly, we distinguish achievement versus proficiency tests, diagnostic tests, Direct versus Indirect tests, Norm-Referenced and Criterion-Referenced tests, and Subjective versus objective tests.

8.1 Achievement Versus Proficiency Tests

The achievement test, as its name indicates, is a method which attempts to measure how much students earned or achieved linguistic knowledge and skills during an educational unit. The tasks used mirror what the learners' have studied. Also, it is used to check the efficacy of teaching method used. (Sharma, 2002; Davies, 1999).

The proficiency test; however, is defined by Allisson (1999: 80) as tests which are used to "measure a person's language ability, irrespective of how this ability has come about". In other words, this type does not adhere to a particular course of study or a special book; rather it measures general skills, whatever its source. Actually, there are several examples of this type, including the TOEFL, and the Cambridge Proficiency Examination (CPE).

8.2 Aptitude Tests

Aptitude test is usually applied to give a look at the general linguistic capacities and skills the examinees have. It specifies whether a student has "any special aptitude" to learn the target language in future or not (Saraswati, 2004).

8.3 Diagnostic Tests

Diagnostic tests are prepared to indicate and reveal any difficulties the learners' have. Using this test allows instructors to know their learners' "strengths and weaknesses".
Subsequently, based on those results, the teachers review their syllabi, or teaching method to remedy this shortage (Saraswati, Ibid).

8.4 Norm-Referenced Versus Criterion-Referenced Tests

In fact, the norm-referenced tests are designed to classify the examinees according to their level. The results obtained from this kind of test are used to "compare" between the test-takers' performances. Then, "discrimination" is set to "rank" students' work from the best to the least (Allison, 1999; Brown, Op.cit). The Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and TOEFL are considered to be norm-referenced tests (Brown, Op.cit).

The criterion-referenced tests, on the other side, are used to "determine how an individual performs with respect to some "criterion"" (Allison, Op.cit, 82). So the ultimate aim is to know if the examinee has developed the required skill or not compared to a specific criterion. According to Brown (Op.cit) this type of tests allows test developers to supply the examinees with precise "feedback" presented in marks.

8.5 Subjective Versus Objective Tests

In the case of subjective tests, the testers are going to correct the testees' answers and supplying scores depending on their own estimation as there is no one fixed correct answer to the tasks given. In other words, scorers rely on subjective judgment in correcting the examiners' responses. In fact, a well known example of this kind is essay test.

Whereas the objective tests determine one answer to each question, so when correcting this test, there would be no room for any kind of subjectivity. There are various types of objective questions such as: true/ false questions and multiple-choice questions, etc. Unlike the previous type, the objective tests supply consistent scores as correctors depend on uniform and precise rating scale (Taiwo, 1995).

It is worth mentioning that there other types of testing, but these types are the common used ones. In fact, the test developers can combine several kinds in the same test. For example, the testers can put together the subjective and objective tests to ensure validity as
the dominant feature in subjective tests, and reliability which is also the dominant feature in objective tests.

9. Criteria of a Good Test

Since test results affect individuals, as well as the educational system, a great consideration should be given to its qualities. In order to judge any test to be good enough, it should respect a number of criteria. These criteria can be summarized as follows: reliability, validity, practicality, authenticity, and washback.

9.1 Reliability

A given test is considered to be reliable if it gives unchangeable results to test-takers. That is to say, the same learner should get the same score if the same test is repeated (Brown, Op.cit; Bachman and Palmer, 1996; Broughton et.al, 2003; Heaton, Op.cit). Bachman and Palmer (Op.cit) state that there are many factors that may affect test reliability, so the scorers should know them in order to avoid them and guarantee the "consistency of scoring". Brown (Op.cit), in his turn, sums up those factors under four types namely: Student-related reliability, rater reliability, test administration reliability, test reliability.

9.1.1 Student-Related Reliability

It is believed that the "physical or psychological" condition of students, such as sickness or test anxiety while test-taking may affect their scores and so the test reliability (Mousavi, 2002, cited in Brown, Op.cit). Anxiety is defined as "an unpleasant emotion experienced as dread, scare, alarm, fright, trepidation, horror or panic". In fact, anxiety could be "facilitative" or "debilitative". A reasonable amount of anxiety may encourage the learners to reach the approval performance. Contrarily, the "excessive amounts of anxiety" debilitate and hinder the learners' performance (Lewis, 1970, cited Birjandi, 2010: 44) Besides, motivation has a crucial impact on test results because less-motivated students towards test-taking are likely to have low marks (Broughton et.al, Op.cit).
9.1.2 Rater Reliability

The reliability can be affected by tester's intuitive judgment or erroneousness. In fact, Brown (Op.cit) splits rater reliability issues into two types: Inter and intra. Inter-rater reliability takes place when the testers do not adopt a uniform scoring scale for the same tests, and this may happen due to the lack of training, focus and expertise, all these factors lead testers to score changeably the same students. The intra-rater reliability occurs during the test-taking when the scorers use an inaccurate and wobbling scoring system, and because of exhaustion, or due to their pre-judging of their learners' level.

9.1.3 Test Administration Reliability

Actually, the way of test administration may impact its reliability. The circumstances surrounding the test setting, such as noise, lighting quality, size of the room, and the placement of tables and seats, etc, might affect the consistency of scoring. For example, conducting oral test based on listening and comprehension of tape recorder with high amount of noise outside would not reflect the reliability especially for students sitting near the windows (Brown, Op.cit).

9.1.4 Test Reliability

The test design in itself may lead to unreliable result. In fact, too long tests cause a state of tiredness for learners and this leads to a lack of focus and affect the accuracy of their answers, noting that time factor exercises an extra pressure. In addition to that, using obscure questions accept several interpretations or answers also affect its reliability (Brown, Op.cit). Moreover, test-takers' ignorance of the topics used or their sensitivity towards them might affect their test answers (Black, 2002). Furthermore, even the type of test items used has crucial impact on learners' scores. To illustrate, discrete item test which ensures diversity of language tasks are likely to give test-takers a greater room to answer, unlike essay tests which are more restricted (Broughton et.al, Op.cit).
9.2 Validity

Validity, as another criterion of a good test, can be defined as "ensuring that the assessment in fact assesses what it purports to assess and provides a fair representation of the student’s performance, achievement, potential, capabilities, knowledge skills etc" (Cohen et.al, 2004: 335). That is to say, a given test is valid if it is able to test what is designed and supposed to test. Validity can be divided into the following types: Face validity, content validity, consequential validity, predictive validity, and construct validity (Cohen et.al, Ibid).

9.2.1 Face Validity

Weiner and Craighead (2010: 637) define face validity as "the degree to which test respondents view the content of a test and its items as relevant to the context in which the test is being administered". This means that face validity is based on the test-takers' subjective opinion about the usefulness and suitability of a test.

9.2.2 Content Validity

To insure content validity, examiners have to adhere to the topics dealt with in the curriculum in designing their tests, so that the examinees would be more familiar with them (Cohen et.al, Op.cit; Black, Op.cit). It is argued that the content validity is achieved if the test assesses effectively the required behaviour (Brown, Op.cit). To illustrate, testing examinee's communication skills should be through involving him in a conversation that stimulates the real life situations. Otherwise, if this test is done through written form, it wouldn't reflect content validity.

9.2.3 Consequential Validity

Before designing and submitting a test to the learners, the examiners have to establish a clear purposes and goals to be achieved by this test. Accordingly, consequential validity means to interpret and employ test results to compass objectives set previously (Cohen et.al, Op.cit). In addition, that testing has a direct impact on examinees' enthusiasm, their
future educational performance, and their learning strategies, so test designers should account for the "consequences" of conducting a test (Brown, Op.cit).

9.2.4 Predictive Validity

This criterion demonstrates the ability of predicting the learners' future achievement based on their current testing outcomes. In other words, based on examinees results, teachers can foresee their future gaining and accomplishment (Cohen et.al, Op.cit).

9.2.5 Construct Validity

Construct is defined to be "any theory, hypothesis, or model that attempts to explain observed phenomena in our universe of perceptions" (Brown, Op.cit: 25) Those constructs could be linguistic such as: "proficiency" and "communicative competence", or psychological like: "self-esteem" and "motivation". Construct validity conveys the degree of success of a test in measuring a given hypothetical concept. To do so, the testers should set up all the aspects of that construct. For example, if we have to assess someone's oral proficiency, we should address all its aspects, "pronunciation, fluency, grammar accuracy, vocabulary use, and socio-linguistic appropriateness". Therefore, if we drop one side, the construct validity would be affected.

9.3 Practicality

The test reflects the practicality if it takes into account many conditions which can be summarized in terms of time and accessible resources. The test is "usable" if it can be used in the allotted time without exceeding the available capabilities (Broughton et.al, Op.cit). To facilitate judging the "usefulness" of a test, Bachman and Palmer (Op.cit) have provided an equation to calculate its practicality:

\[
\text{Practicality} = \frac{\text{Available resources}}{\text{Required resources}}
\]

If practicality $\geq 1$, the test development and use is practical
If practicality $< 1$, the test development and use is not practical

Figure 01: Practicality (Bachman and Palmer, Op.cit: 36)
They also divide resources into three types: "Human resources" that represent the manpower who would conduct the test as test-makers, administer, scorer, etc. "Material resources" which represent the test setting, the tools used like computers, audiovisual tapes, and papers, etc. finally, time which is calculated from the beginning of the preparation and design to the last stage of evaluation and marking.

9.4 Authenticity

Authenticity is a prerequisite to ensure the quality of a test. According to Bachman and Palmer (Op.cit), authentic tests require the use of tasks and problems from real life situations. The scores of this type of tests reflect the test-takers' real achievement and linguistic capacities, so tester can "generalize" their result to predict their performance and flexibility in real life setting. This is confirmed by Spolsky (1985:31, cited in Geranpayeh and Taylor, 2013) "lack of authenticity in the material or method used in the test weakens the generalizability of results". In addition, it is believed that authentic tests have beneficial effects on the learners' performance. The more tasks resemble reality the more test-takers are motivated to perform better.

9.5 Washback

A final characteristic of a good language test is the washback, called also backwash. Washback "refers to the influence of testing on teaching and learning" (Cheng and Watanabe, 2004: 4). In fact, several studies have been conducted to determine its real impact and to discover how possible this impact could be exploited to improve the quality of instruction. According to these studies, tests can have positive as well as negative influence on teaching/learning.

On the one hand, tests can trigger a negative washback on the educational system. When the instructors teach for the exam, the aim would be shifted from teaching and developing the learners' abilities and knowledge to teaching for passing exams. In addition, learners become more interested with the content included in tests and, usually, neglect the
other sides of knowledge. Likewise, Fish (1988, cited in Cheng and Watanabe, Ibid) talks about the great psychological stress faced by teachers because of the exams, especially at the stage of results announcement. This stress is inversely proportional with testers’ age and experience where the younger and less-experienced instructors usually suffer more. Finally, Smith (1991:8 cited in Cheng and Watanabe, Ibid) recapitulates the other negative points where he claims that:

- testing programs substantially reduce the time available for instruction,
- narrow curricular offerings and modes of instruction, and potentially reduce the capacities of teachers to teach content and to use methods and materials that are incompatible with standardized testing formats

On the other hand, no one can deny the positive washback the test may have. In fact, the test results not only used to remedy the weaknesses of the curriculum but also used to review the teaching method as a whole. In addition, Pearson (1988, cited in Cheng and Watanabe, Ibid) argues that the tests can have positive effects only if they succeed in realizing their intended objectives and the course objectives. Besides, Alderson and Wall (1993, cited in Cheng and Watanabe, Ibid) believe that it is worthless to talk about positive or the negative washback as it is related to the quality of the test itself. Clearly, the well considered tests are likely to have a positive washback. Otherwise, the opposite is true.

Alderson and Wall (1993, cited in Cheng and Watanabe, Ibid) suggest not focusing on determining if a test has positive or negative washback, rather the emphasis should be on determining and then avoiding the social and educational conditions that threaten its efficacy.

To conclude, there could be a "conflict" between two or more criteria; for example, between reliability and validity because in some cases it could be a test that is classified to be reliable but it is invalid, and vice versa. To illustrate, multiple choice questions tests are considered as reliable tests; however, they are less valid. This conflict should not make
abandonment of one criterion in the favor of another. On the contrary, the key solution is to create a "balance" which varies from one test type to another and from one situation to another (Bachman and Palmer, Op.cit).

10. Scoring Rubrics

In testing EFL and ESL learners, two broad types of scoring rubrics are distinguished, holistic and analytic rubrics. Each type of them has specific uses in accordance with the circumstances. And as such, each type has its pros and cons.

10.1 Analytic Rubrics

Analytic rubrics "describe work on each criterion separately"(Brookhart, 2013: 6). Understandably, the scorers give each component of performance an independent scores relying on clear and precise criteria. To illustrate, figure 2 presents an example of analytic rubrics. In this example, the examinee can have 3 in mechanics and 4 in word use.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 standard Not met</th>
<th>2 Standard Barely met</th>
<th>3 Meets standard</th>
<th>4 Exceeds standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mechanics</strong></td>
<td>10 or more errors: Overly simple, poorly formed sentences</td>
<td>Under 9 errors: Grammatically incorrect, simple sentences</td>
<td>Under 6 errors: good phrasing. Mostly correct grammar</td>
<td>3 or fewer errors: Well-formed sentences. Proper grammar used at all times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Word Use</strong></td>
<td>Uses English and/or direct translation from dictionary. No attempt to use new vocabulary.</td>
<td>Uses English words. Little attempt to use new vocabulary.</td>
<td>Attempt to use new vocabulary. No English used.</td>
<td>Succeeds in using new vocabulary. No English used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>Ideas are incomprehensible or inappropriate</td>
<td>Ideas are incomplete or copied from other sources</td>
<td>Ideas paraphrased from background sources, mostly complete</td>
<td>Ideas completely explained and examples given. Written with ease.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Analytical rubric for a written activity (Blaz, 2001:28)

Analytic rubrics have several advantages. They supply the teachers with an overview about the areas of "strengths and weaknesses" of their learners' language knowledge and abilities, as well as, they supply students with beneficial feedback. In addition, the scale is often
clear and very detailed, so it allows for a rigorous analysis. However, they are time consuming as a lot of details would be analyzed (Nichols and Nichols, 2005).

10.2 Holistic Rubrics

A holistic rubrics "gives a single score or rating for an entire product or performance based on an overall impression of student's work" (Arter and McTighe, 2001: 18). Accordingly, the holistic rubric has a general impression of the whole performance. It deals with the learner's work as a unit. One example about the holistic rubric is provided in figure 3.

1. The response does not complete the assignment. Information may be missing or inaccurate. There are problems with accuracy and logic. Overall impression: incomplete and unsatisfactory.
2. Standard barely met. Information provided is generally accurate. There may or may not be a conclusion or an opinion. If one or the other is offered, there may be problems with accuracy and logic.
3. Meets standard. Information is accurate. A logical conclusion or an opinion is offered. Writing is fluent but not interesting. The answer is lengthy rather than concise.
4. Exceeds standard. Information is accurate and writing is fluent and lively. Answer is concise and to the point. Conclusions and/or opinions are logical. Overall impression: complete and satisfactory.

Figure 3: Holistic rubric for a writing assessment (Blaz, Op.cit: 28)

This frame is considered to be faster and less consuming of time. On the other side, they have their downside. In fact, holistic rubric is not diagnostic in its nature, so instructors, as students, haven't a clear idea on the area of weaknesses to be remedied.

Brookhart (Op.cit) sees the analytic rubrics as more useful in the instructional classes for both summative and formative assessment. Focusing on testing all the components of examinees' performance provides reliable results to use in discriminating the learners levels (summative purposes). Also, as mentioned before, knowing learners' weaknesses allows them and their teachers to rectify them in future (formative assessment).
Conclusion

In the preceding review, we bring to light the nature of the relationship between language assessment and testing where the later is considered to be one feature of the former. We provided a general view on language assessment including its definition, types, its role in learning/teaching process, its purposes, and the role of feedback. Additionally, we focus on language testing where we moved among its various aspects. We start by giving a definition, its historical developmental stages, and its common forms. Fundamentally, we offered a detailed description of useful test, the well known frame of speaking tests, and scoring rubrics. Finally, we conclude with the common problems associated with tests.
Chapter Two
Assessment and Testing
Introduction

English is a common global language that it has become a language of communication, the internet, science and technology, the language of the scientific references, which is also the language of scientific conferences, etc. The ultimate goal of learning English as a foreign language is to communicate effectively using the oral language. Speaking is considered to be the primary tool of communication; it is, also, a fundamental medium that links individuals with their society. Yet, this skill is disregarded for many decades in the instructional system, but with the transformation of the world into a small village, and with the increasing need to communicate with others and exchange ideas, more emphasis is given to this skill and new teaching methods have appeared to remedy the shortage and to provide practical model for improving the learners' speaking skills.

In this chapter, we would try to treat all the aspects of speaking skills, its definition, its functions, its relationship with the listening skill, the different types of speaking performance within the classroom, its dimensions, the different strategies used in oral communication, and the difficulties that may face the foreign language learners. Finally, we would have a look on tasks used in assessing speaking.

1. Definition of Speaking

Speaking is one of the four major language skills that any foreign learner should master. In fact, it is the hardest skill to be promoted and mastered. Even more, there is a general believe that attaining the same level of natives' speaking proficiency is nearly impossible. Actually, the difficulty of speaking lies to the short time available to respond, ensuring the correct pronunciation, and the way of the intervention the interlocutor does. For instance, the interruption can complicate the task of the speaker (Bada, et.al, 2011). Speaking is defined as "a complex skill requiring the simultaneous use of different abilities which often
develop at different rates" (Harris, 1977: 81). So speaking is not just linking sounds together to form words and utterances, but it is a complicated process that involves not only linguistic capacities but also mental and social ones.

Widdowson (1978: 58), in his turn, offers a different vision for the definition of speaking. The writer argues that a distinction should be set between speaking as "usage" and speaking as "use". On the one hand, speaking as usage means that this process "involves the manifestation either of the phonological system or of the grammatical system or both". To illustrate, if we say "He speaks clearly", this means that the speech reflects the manifestation of phonological system, i.e. the speech belongs to the sound system of the target language. Now, if we say "He speaks correctly", this means that the speech fulfills the grammatical rules of the target language, i.e. the utterances and the sentences used are grammatically correct. On the other hand, speaking as use is "part of a reciprocal exchange in which both reception and production play a part". It means that the speaking as "use" is based on mutual understanding between the interlocutors during the "verbal exchange". For this, at the usage level, speaking is a "productive" skill where it is the "embodiment" of phonological or grammatical systems or both of the target language through "aural medium". But in real life conversations, speaking is a communicative means and does not depend only on aural medium but also on "visual medium" which is clearly evident in the body language of the interlocutors such as gestures and facial expressions, etc. The speaker, therefore, relies on what has been said before and on the body gestures to complete the conversation successfully. It can be said, then, that speaking as a communicative tool is also a "receptive" skill which depends on both aural and visual medium.
2. Types of Classroom Speaking Performance

According to Brown (1994), Speaking can be embodied in six types of performance: imitative, intensive, responsive, transactional (dialogue), interpersonal (dialogue), and extensive (monologue).

2.1 Imitative

In this case, the learners repeat after their instructor or "human tape recorder" some linguistic structures they heard. The aim behind these drills, as the writer believes, is to enable the students to practice specific forms of the target language, so they overcome the difficulties they may face either at the level of sound system or grammar system. In addition, drills permit the learners to focus on one linguistic form at a time, and help them to connect the drilled forms with their proper context, etc.

2.2 Intensive

This kind of speaking performance involves any practice of the language within the classroom; it is usually focused on some structures of the sound and grammatical systems of the TL. In fact, the linguistic forms to be focused can be in the learners' initiatives or as a part of the task given (Brown, Ibid).

2.3 Responsive

Responsive speaking occurs when the learner responds concisely to the questions or comments submitted by the instructor or the classmates. Example of this type, the student replies "Pretty good, thanks, and you?" to the teacher's question "How are you today?. As Brown (Ibid, 273) argues "these replies are usually sufficient and do not extent to dialogues".
2.4 Transactional (Dialogue)

As its name indicates, this type is used to transmit and reciprocate information between the interlocutors. It is considered to be "an extended form" of responsive speaking, but, unlike the latter, it has a kind of "negotiative nature". Another difference is that transactional speaking occurs in a dialogue form such as conversation (Brown, Ibid).

2.5 Interpersonal (Dialogue)

The interpersonal dialogue includes another type of conversation. Unlike the transactional dialogues that are based on exchanging information, the interpersonal conversations aim to maintain "social relationship". These conversations are a bit challenging for learners because they include many aspects of language such as: "casual register, colloquial language, slang, ellipsis, sarcasm", etc (Brown, Ibid).

2.6 Extensive (Monologue)

The last type of speaking is extensive monologues which are performed by "intermediate" or "advanced" learners. In this case, the students are asked to present monologues which can be in several forms such as: oral presentations, compendiums, and "short speech". It is worth mentioning that these monologues could be carried out without prior preparation or vice versa (Brown, Ibid).

3. Functions of Speaking

Speaking is the most common tool of communication between human beings; it is through the process of speaking that individuals can express their views, thoughts and feelings and transfer information to the people surrounding them. Brown and Yule (1983 cited in Richards, 2008) have classified the functions of speaking under three types: interactional, transactional and performance. The interactional function has communicative
purposes where the ultimate goal is establishing and maintaining the social relationships by interaction. The main form of this type of speaking is "conversation". In this case, the interlocutors pay attention to their way of talking, the way of introducing themselves, and the way of greeting, etc. speaking as interactional function has many characteristics mainly: social interaction is the fundamental aim, mirror the type of social relationships, can be "formal or casual", and based on politeness strategies, etc. unlike the previous type, the transactional function is based primarily on the message transmitted. The transactional function, in its turn, has two kinds. In the first kind, the speaker's aim is to transmit or receive a given information. For instance, the speaker asks about information of the "directions". The second type focuses on "obtaining goods or services". For example, requesting the menu in a restaurant. The main characteristics of transactional function are: focusing on information transmitted, the message is the core of interaction, and depending on "communicative strategies" to make the messages clear, etc. The last function of speaking is performance. It refers to public speaking where the speaker "transmits information before an audience. The well known type of public talk in the classroom is oral presentations. The main features of this function are: using "monologue" rather than dialogue, emphasizing on "message and audience", and emphasizing accurate language, etc. it is worth pointing that, in the same speaking performance we can use all the functions mentioned above. That is to say, the speaker can talk to maintain a social relationship and transmit information at the same time.

4. The Relationship between Listening and Speaking

It is recognized that listening and speaking skills are inseparable; they are "positively correlated". It is argued that the right development of speaking skills is linked unconditionally with the effectiveness of listening ability (Brilhart, 1965). This was confirmed by Brown (Op.cit) who states that any problems affect listening abilities affect
adversely and directly speaking skills. Anderson and Lynch (1988), on the other hand, stress the importance of listening in the communicative interaction. It is nearly impossible to continue the conversation effectively if the verbal message does not sound up correctly to the recipient. Therefore, the foreign learners must parallelly develop both speaking and listening abilities, so they can perform effectively in the interactional operation. Additionally, Franklin (anonymous) advocates the importance of "active" listening in accordance with speaking skills in the communication. Noting that, the writer distinguishes between hearing and listening. Hearing means that there is someone speaking; however, listening is deeper. Listening means that the interlocutor receives the message analyse and understand it and then reply basing on what is said before. Therefore, active listener is the one who receive the verbal message and analyse it to reach the speaker's attitude and feelings. Heaton (Op.cit) indicates that one of the potential problems faced by the moderators is the difficulty of separating the speaking and listening skills. Admittedly, in casual conversations, there is a dynamic interaction between the interlocutors in which it is based on reception of the massages, understanding and reply. This overlap in skills makes the testing process difficult. Thus, it is pointless to assess these two skills separately.

5. Characteristics of Speaking Performance

When we look deeper to speaking, we find it very complex; it is, in fact, an integrated system comprising several skills which can be distributed on several levels. Luoma (2004) points out that speaking is one of the hardest skills to be refined and mastered that's why its development takes a long time. Speaking in FL requires different skills and knowledge. In fact, the language users should be familiar with the phonological system of the TL, as well as they should have an easy access to their vocabulary repertoire, so they can utter correct words and sentences without hesitation or stutter. This is not only, as the main aims of speaking is to communicate effectively or to maintain the social relationships, the speakers
should have a good understanding and build on what is said before in the dialogue to reply effectively. For all this, we can say, then, that speaking, as a prime skill, is based on several dimensions mainly: fluency, accuracy, comprehension, and paralinguistic features.

5.1 Fluency

Fluency has gained a prominent status between foreign language learners as the dream of many of them is speaking fluently. Crystal (1987:421, cited in Götz, 2013) refers to fluency as "smooth, rapid, effortless use of language". Also, Odhams Dictionary of the English Language (Smith and O'Loughlin, 1946, cited in Guillot, 1999: 13 ) defines fluency in terms of its adjective (fluent) as: "having a ready command and flow of words; voluble, glib; spoken easily, rapidly and without hesitation; flowing smoothly and continuous; proceeding readily and naturally without effort". So fluency is the ability to rapidly produce words and spoken expressive units within the verbal exchange and evoke them easily to fit the context without stuttering. Thornbury (2005), in his part, stresses the traits of fluency where he sums them up in pauses and the amplitude of syllabuses and words between pauses. Importantly, the author notes that "speed" of speaking is crucial to guarantee fluency, but any speaker needs to make a pause and take a breath. Those pauses should not be arbitrary. For this, the utterer has to consider the place and the number of pauses while speaking. In fact, the more pauses is made, the more fluency is negatively affected. Generally speaking, the "natural pauses" are made after meaningful utterance (s). Even more, the other feature of fluency is the number of syllabuses and words used between the pauses, where we can say that the more the number is large, the more the speaker is fluent. In order to give the impression of fluency, the same writer provides some strategies. Firstly, he suggests using the "production" strategy where the speaker is advocated to close the pauses using specific utterances like "uh and um", or by using
"vagueness" utterances such as "sort of and I mean". Moreover, repeating the same word offers time to the speaker to think and carry on his speech.

5.2 Accuracy

Generally, fluency has been given more importance at the expense of accuracy in speaking (Farhathullah, 2002). Yet, this does not diminish the importance of accuracy. According to Rizvi (2005), accuracy is a key element to ensure an effective communication. It is worth bearing in mind that the accuracy should be manifested in the correctness of the language used and, also, in the correctness of the information to be conveyed. Fahim et.al (2011: 4) define accuracy as "the ability to avoid error in performance, possibly reflecting higher levels of control in the language, as well as a conservative orientation, that is, avoidance of challenging structures that might provoke error". Accuracy is often assessed in accordance to two terms, global accuracy where the focus is on any error committed, and the focus on a specific type of errors (Kaneko, 2008). In fact, speaking accuracy is concerned with grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation.

5.2.1 Grammar Accuracy

Grammatical accuracy is referred to "correct use of linguistic structures" (Stein and Schools, 1999: 2). That is to say, the focus of grammatical accuracy is on the form; it looks at the grammatical correctness of sentences or utterances uttered at the level of the word order, and appropriate use of tenses, etc. Bearing in mind, grammatical accuracy in oral performance differs from that of written works. This fact is supported by Beattie (1983: 33 cited in Ting, et.al, 2010) who claims that “spontaneous speech is unlike written text". Therefore, Thornbury (Op.cit) mentions the following characteristics of spoken grammar:

- Spoken grammar is clause-based units.

- Clauses are "usually added (co-ordination)".
- "Head+ body+ tail" forms.

- "Direct speech favored".

- The large use of "ellipses".

- The use of "question tags".

- The presence of "performance effects" (hesitation, repeats, false starts, etc).

### 5.2.2 Vocabulary Accuracy

Most of vocabularies used in English conversations are, in fact, frequent such as: well, yeah, but, I know, etc. After analyzing "large databases (corpora) of transcribed speech", the results show that half of the vocabularies used mainly consist of fifty most common words in spoken English. In addition, it was also found that a large percentage of expressions are used to transmit the interlocutors' opinions and positions like: probably and maybe. Besides, generally speaking, utterers use "appraisal" terms or utterances either positively to convey admiration like saying very nice or negatively to express dissatisfaction like saying ridiculously. Moreover, speakers use much extensively the "deictic" terms which are used to "point" a place, time or a person such as: here, now, I, your, etc (Thornbury, Op.cit).

The same writer notes that foreign learners need at least 1500 English words and items to interact appropriately in educational and professional setting, and less than that in "casual conversation". This list of vocabularies contains the 200 most frequent items used in English conversations such as: "wh" questions, personal, demonstrative and possessive pronouns, and prepositions, etc (Thornbury, Op.cit).
5.2.3 Phonological Accuracy

It is well known that the phonological system of English is very difficult to be mastered by foreign learners as there is no fixed correlation between the sounds and their signals. Therefore, pronunciation occupies a great attention because mispronunciation can lead to misinterpretation of the message transmitted (Integrate Ireland Language and Training, 2004). For that, phonological accuracy requires accurate pronunciation and intonation (National Qualifications Modern Languages, anonymous). The pronunciation is defined as "the production of significant sound", it is used to fulfill two major purposes. The first purpose is to distinguish between the different phonological systems of languages. In other words, it distinguishes between the sounds of English, for example, and other language like French. In this case, arguably, pronunciation is "the production and reception of sounds of speech". The second purpose is to combine sounds to convey a specific meanings and, therefore, to communicate effectively (Dalton and Seidlhofer, 1994: 3).

In order to reach the phonological accuracy, the speakers have to consider the adequate stress, and intonation. The stress denotes "the emphasis laid on a particular syllable or word during pronunciation"; therefore, we have two types of syllables "stressed" syllables which we emphasize while pronouncing and "unstressed" ones without emphasis. Moreover, there are two types of stress, the "primary" and "secondary" stress. In the former, the stress is set above the syllable, while the latter is placed under it. On the other side, intonation is defined as "the manner of applying pitch variations in spoken sentence or phrase". In its part, intonation has two types "fall" and "rise" (Gangal, 2011: 29). Stress and intonation has a crucial function in language interaction. The speakers can lower or raise their voice to convey a particular meaning. By stressing a particular part(s) of the utterance, the utterer wants the interlocutor to pay attention to this information. Noting
that, the same parts of a given sentence can be stressed differently to achieve different meanings according to the speakers' needs (Nolan, 2006).

### 5.3 Extralinguistic and Paralinguistic Features

Real interaction is not constituted only of linguistic aspect, but also extralinguistic and paralinguistic features. Marasek (1997, cited in Schötz, 2002: 2) identifies paralinguistic feature as "non-linguistic and non-verbal information about the speaker's attitudes, emotions, regional dialect and sociolect". So paralinguistic aspect is primarily associated with the interpretation of the "tone of voice" where we can know if the speaker is satisfied or whiny, for example. Also, with the "pitch" which indicates if the interlocutor is excited or not; with the "distinctive pronunciation" that reflects the dialect and the social class of the speaker, etc (Jin and Nida, 2006). On the other side, extra-linguistic features reflects "the speaker's individuality, gender and age, i.e., the characteristics of a certain speaker" (Chollet, 2005). Thus, extralinguistic aspect is related mainly to the state of the interlocutor' body such as facial expressions, body movement, and "degree of nervousness", etc (Jin and Nida, Op.cit). Thornbury (Op.cit) states that "extralinguistic knowledge" may impact verbal interaction. This type of knowledge is divided into: the knowledge of the subject matter, knowing about the culture, about the context, and the degree of domesticity with the other interlocutors and so the speaker can choose to talk in formal or informal way. In addition, the sociocultural knowledge plays a significant role in speaking. Sharing the same sociocultural knowledge, or at least knowing them, means sharing the same sociocultural norms, beliefs and values. Knowing the way of greeting, and the distance should be left between the interlocutors, etc, are examples of the sociocultural norms of a given society.

It is worth pointing out that, the learner cannot master all the features of speaking performance at the same speed and at the same time. Therefore, a foreign speaker can be
fluent by making the meaning conveyed clear but not accurate where he/she makes a lot of mistakes.

6. Oral Communication Strategies

Communication is the basis and mainstay of our daily lives; we share data and information; we exchange our feelings and communicate ideas; we report views and news, and so on. So communication becomes the bridge that connects individuals together. The need to communicate effectively in real life paves the way for new teaching methods to emerge. Those methods, unlike the traditional methods, give more emphasis to oral communicative skills. Swain (1984: 189 cited in Mariani, 2010) notes that the communicative strategies are used "either to enhance the effectiveness of communication or to compensate for breakdowns in communication". Since the foreign language learners are likely to face troubles in interaction, they adopt several communicative strategies. Bygate (1987 cited in Dagarin, 2004) distinguishes between two major types of communicative strategies: achievement strategies which include guessing, paraphrase, and co-operative strategies, and reduction strategies which include the avoidance strategies.

6.1 Achievement Strategies

The achievement strategies are used "to compensate for a language gap". In this case, the speakers follow these strategies when they adhere to the message they desire to send.

6.1.1 Guessing Strategies

The speakers have several options to use in guessing strategies. For example, they can rely on their native language. To illustrate, the learner can "foreignize" a word from his mother tongue and pronounce it as if it belongs to the foreign language. In addition, they can use a word from their mother tongue and place it during the speech when they do not have the word that conveys that meaning in the foreign language. Moreover, the
interlocutors can use a "literal translation" from their native language. For example, they say "Big Britain" rather than "Great Britain". Another guessing strategy used by the learners is inventing new words depending on their linguistic knowledge, for example, to invent the expression "zero tail" for a gorilla as it has no tail (Dagarin, Ibid).

6.1.2 Paraphrase Strategies

In this type of strategies, we distinguish two sub-strategies. The first one is called "lexical substitution" where the speaker is going to look for an equivalent word or a "general" item to convey the message. The second strategy is called "circumlocution" where the utterer is going to use an expression to say something, for example, saying "you clean your teeth with it" to mean "tooth brush" (Dagarin, Ibid).

6.1.3 Co-operative Strategies

As their name indicates, these strategies are based on demanding the assistance from the others. For instance, the learner can utter a word in the mother language and asks the others to provide him with the corresponding word in the foreign language (Dagarin, Ibid).

6.1.4 Reduction Strategies (Avoidance Strategies)

The reduction strategies, like the achievement ones, also, are used "to compensate for a language gap", but in this case, the learners may abandon their message.

The speakers who use the avoidance strategies may change the whole message to obviate the linguistic and communicative troubles. To do so, they may answer questions in short utterances, depending on "non-verbal" language, taking less risk in talking, and abandon the conversation and give excuses for leaving, etc (Dagarin, Ibid).

By using these communicative strategies learners, by time, develop their speaking and communicative skills. Naturally, the learners can mix several strategies simultaneously.
7. Speaking Difficulties in Foreign Language Learning

Learners face plenty of difficulties in learning EFL, especially when it comes to speaking skills which are very difficult to master. Ur (Op.cit) sums up four major problems students may exhibit namely: inhibition, nothing to say, law uneven participation, and mother tongue use.

7.1 Inhibition

Speaking requires dealing with the audience and this constitutes a burden on the speaker. Generally speaking, foreign learners feel shy to commit verbal mistakes in front of their classmates, and to avoid the embarrassment, they choose to keep silent (Ur, Op.cit).

7.2 Nothing to Say

Speakers' feeling that they have nothing to say is another issue associated with speaking. This feeling is an inevitable result of the absence of motivation which can urge them to express their view, thoughts and feelings (Ur, Op.cit).

7.3 Law Uneven Participation

This problem appears clearly in large classes. As the number of students is huge, it means that each student has a little if any chance to speak. Also, it means that some speakers would have many opportunities at the expense of their classmates (Ur, Op.cit).

7.4 Mother Tongue Use

Using the mother tongue within the classroom is another factor that delays the mastery of speaking skill. Usually, students tend to use their native language when interacting with
each other as it is easier, and understandable. This situation gets worse with the learners who are less-motivated in learning and speaking the FL (Ur, Op.cit).

8. Testing Speaking

Weir (1990) suggests several well-known activities used in assessing students' speaking skills namely: verbal essay, oral presentation, the free interview, the controlled interview, description of a picture sequence, question on a single picture, interaction tasks, and role play.

8.1 Verbal Essay

In this format of tests, test-takers are involved in speaking at about three minutes about one particular topic or more. Using this type permits testers to have an overview about all the aspects of peaking skills, including "fluency". Among its shortcomings, testees may face less interested topics, and the lack of time available. In addition, recording testees' speech, which is useful in supplying accurate scores, might be uncomfortable for some of them (Weir, Ibid).

8.2 Oral Presentation

Unlike the previous format, the test-takers have the opportunity to talk about subjects they have already groomed them, or they have been told about before entering the exam. Among the disadvantages, some candidates, instead of preparing the topic, "learn it by heart" and this affects the reliability of the exam (Weir, Ibid).

8.3 The Free Interview

The candidates are engaged in an "unstructured conversation" without pre-determined procedures. The free interview is widely used as it reflects the face and content validity, also because it resembles the real life conversations. However, it is unpractical in case of large number of examinees as well as the diversity of topics and the absence of clear procedures. All this makes it difficult to assess the candidate's performance (Weir, Ibid).
8.4 The Controlled Interview

In this type, the conversation is guided by pre-determined steps and procedures. This type of test is useful in testing the testee's linguistic as well as cognitive abilities. Moreover, as all examinees undergo the same procedure, this test provides a good frame to compare their performances (Weir, Ibid).

8.5 Information Transfer: Description of a Picture Sequence

In this frame, the examinee is going to recite a story using the past tense. Its events are formulated from a set of pictures presented by the examiner in a chronological order. The success of this method depends on the type of pictures provided. Where the more the pictures are carefully selected and culturally unbiased, the more the results would be satisfactory. Since all students will be exposed to the same pictures, teachers can use the test results to compare their performances. However, in some cases it is criticized to be less reliable in scoring testees as each one of them may tell different story (Weir, Ibid).

8.6 Information Transfer: Question on a Single Picture

The test-taker, after having time to consider and analyse a given picture, is going to answer set of questions which may include analyzing the characters' ideas and principles, or even giving a potential evolution of the event presented in the picture. Like the previous type, a great consideration should be given when selecting the picture. Also, the test developer should consider time and the number of students. In addition, with different interpretations, the scoring would be less reliable (Weir, Ibid).

8.7 Interaction Tasks

Information Gap Student-Student

This type is based on giving two testees missing information where the missing information of the first candidate is available for the other one and vice versa. In order to accomplish the task, the two testees have to talk together to find the omitting information.
This method provides a good opportunity for practicing speaking, and simulates the real communication. However, the difference between the learner's levels can make one of them more "dominant" (Weir, Ibid).

**Information Gap Teacher-Student**

In this case, the tester is the second part, and the examinee would be supplied with diagram or notes with missing information. To complete the task, the examinee has to ask his teacher about the required information. This frame is designed to avoid the dominance of one part on the interaction and to give all testees an equal chance to demonstrate their oral abilities (Weir, Ibid).

**8.8 Role Play**

The learner is asked "to play one of the roles in an interaction which might be reasonably expected of him in the real world" (Weir, Ibid: 79). Noting that, the tester may engage in playing a role with the other testee. This format allows examinees to demonstrate their communication skills more easily (Weir, Ibid).

**Conclusion**

The speaking skill remains a major means of communication over times. It is a complex skill that implies the use of different skills and abilities. It can be used in different functions to achieve different objectives. Like the other language skill, the speaking performance has different forms within the classroom; and it has different features and characteristics. In fact, mastering and developing the speaking performance is not without its difficulties and obstacles; therefore, foreign language learners adopt different strategies to master it. Still, the main challenging task that faces instructors is to find an effective way to assess this skill objectively and effectively.
Chapter Three
Field of Investigation
Introduction

This study relies on a descriptive research method which is the questionnaire. It is recognized that the latter is considered to be one of the well known means of scientific research; it is used on a large scale in order to obtain data or information about people's opinions, orientations, and attitudes, etc (Leung, 2001). The questionnaire differs from the other research tools in that it allows the opportunity to gather as much views and opinions about a particular subject, a person, or a particular goal, and it does take a short time compared to other research means (Mitchell and Jolley, 2012). Compatible with our goal, the questionnaire is conducted with both learners and teachers in order to dive deeply and determine the circumstances and conditions behind holding oral examinations. The aim behind selecting the questionnaire is to get closer to our subject matter and to obtain an accurate detailed description about the reality of oral examinations in our universities; in addition, to know about the instructors' views about oral tests as designers and submitters on the one hand, and to demonstrate the test-takers experiences on the other one.

Chapter three is devoted to the analysis of the data that is carried out through the students' and teachers' questionnaires. It is divided into two parts. The first one deals with students' questionnaire and the second part is devoted to teachers of OE' questionnaire; both parts include population and sample, description of the questionnaires, and the analysis of the results. Besides, the same chapter addresses some pedagogical implications, and a conclusion.

1. Students' Questionnaire

1.1 The Population and Sample

The population targeted for the study is the First Year Master Student in the English Department, at Larbi Ben Mhidi University. The participants consisted of seventy (70)
students out of (140) students. In fact, the First Year Master Students have been selected for the following reasons. Firstly, they have experienced a good number of oral examinations during their seven semesters ($3 \frac{1}{2}$ years). Secondly, they are considered as not only advanced learners and have acquired a good deal of knowledge, but also as more intellectually mature in terms of experience and age. Thirdly, there is no pre-acquaintance with the participants and they would feel at ease and answer the questions freely. For these reasons we assume that the participants' answers would be qualitatively and quantitatively sufficient enough to meet our expectations.

1.2 Description of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire starts with an introduction explaining the nature of the subject and the aim behind conducting this study with assuring the confidentiality of respondents' answers and emphasizing the importance of their participation. The questionnaire consists of twenty-seven (27) questions in which students are asked to choose one answer among the choices and to complete the sentences if necessary. The items varied between the closed-ended questions where the participants are restricted to a fixed set of choices, and one contingency question where they are asked to justify their answer.

The questionnaire consists mainly of four parts. The first one collects the personnel information of the participants such as gender, reasons for choosing English, and their oral English level, etc. the second part contains eleven (11) items that aim chiefly at collecting the necessary data about the kind of the preparation they often have before the oral examinations. The third part, in its turn, is composed of thirteen (13) questions from which we try to get a maximum of information about the circumstances and conditions in which the oral exams take place. The latter has been also designed to reflect the students' estimation of the scoring process of oral tests through answering eight (08) questions.
1.3 Analysis of the Results

The results would be presented in tables where (n) indicates the number of a sample portion members, (N) indicates the total number of the sample members, and (%) is the percentage.

Personal Information

Q1. Gender:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>gender</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Students' gender

Table 1 shows that the number of female (90%) outnumbers the male (10%). The female number is in constant increase because of some socio-cultural factors; it may be that the females have a much more tendency and desire to learn foreign languages than the males. Knowing the number of female and males adds nothing to the study except giving more information about the selected sample, and ensuring the diversity of views from the two categories.

Q2. Your choice of English was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>choice</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Students' choice of English
Fifty-six students (80%) admit that their choice of English is personal. Whereas, seven students (10%) say they choose English according to their parents' will. The remaining students (10%) claim to have other reasons that prompted them to choose English; some of them admitted that their Baccalaureate average did fit only the choice of English. The other participants chose it for professional reasons; to get a job in foreign companies, or the desire to immigrate, etc. The results reveal that the majority of the respondents announced that their English choice stems from their personal desire; this means that they are motivated to study English.

**Q4. How good is your oral English?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The level</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>34.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>47.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than average</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Students' level of oral English

The majority of participants claim they have no problems with oral English as (34.29%) state they hold good oral English; (11.43%) say their oral English is very good, and (47.14%) claims their level in oral English is average. However, others (17.5%) admit their oral English is less than average, and (2.85%) to be low; this is due to the fact they didn't choose to study English at all.

The result of this section reveal that there is a diversity of opinions as the sample contains both genders; the participants are motivated to study English as wished choice, and they have positive opinion of their oral English. This means that their answers would be neutral and not influenced by any negative feelings or attitude.
Section One: Test-takers and Testers

Q4. Do you feel nervous and anxious before and/or during the oral tests/exams?

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<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>24.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>65.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Students' psychological state before and/or during the oral exams

All respondents admit being subjected to nervousness and anxiety before and/or during the oral tests with varying degrees. While forty-six respondents (65.71%) state that they always suffer from anxiety and nervousness, seventeen other subjects (24.29%) confess to be often anxious and nervous. In addition, eleven students (10%) say they sometimes are. The results show that nervousness and anxiety are effective factors experienced by the test takers during the oral tests, a fact which may affect greatly their scoring.

Q5. Shyness and test anxiety prevent you from showing your real oral abilities during the test taking.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>21.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>58.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. The effect of shyness and anxiety on students' performance in oral exams
The aim of this question is to know about the influence of test anxiety and shyness on the examinees' oral performance. The analysis of data shows that (58.57%) respondents believe these factors always hinder their performance; (21.43%) participants state they often prevent them from showing their real abilities, and to a less degree (15.71%) of the sample say that shyness and test anxiety sometimes affect them as well. On the other hand, (4.29%) of students state they rarely allow these feelings to dominate them and weaken their performance; this occurs may be because they are more experienced in dealing with exams. We deduce that shyness and test anxiety reflect the highest proportion which admits they always affect negatively their performance, i.e. these factors are debilitative.

Thus the student-related reliability is negatively affected.

**Q6.** Anxiety, nervousness, and other factors increase when you don’t have a clear vision about the test format and the test procedures.

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<th>Options</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>88.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100</td>
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</table>

Table 6. The effect of students’ non-access to the test format and procedure

The majority of students (88.57%) admit that the amount of anxiety increases when the students do not have a clear and comprehensive picture about the exam structure, so they do not know what awaits them. Therefore, the amount of anxiety and nervousness increase and control them. Bearing in mind that the more the examinees know about the test, the more they can conquer these factors, and the less test anxiety can control their performance. Only eight students (11.43%) claim the opposite; this is probably because they are well prepared and the structure doesn't matter, or because they do not care about the module.
Q7. Being informed by the test format, test procedure and the criteria used in scoring, may produce a better performance.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>95.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100</td>
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</table>

Table 7. The effect of students’ access to the exam structure and norm

Compatible with the results of the previous item, sixty-seven respondents (95.71%) believe they would perform better during the exams if they had the chance to access to its format, procedures and the criteria of scoring. The other three respondents (4.29%) claim the opposite; the latter may be a little more experienced with the oral tests and speculate the norms they often used.

Q8. Do your teachers inform you about the test format (video/audio tape discussion, conversation, and role play, etc) and the test procedure before taking the oral exam?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>24.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
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<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 8. Student’s access to the exam format and test procedure

On the real ground, the majority claims they have never (50%) or rarely (24.29%) been informed about the test structure; this explains the significant impact of the test anxiety on the majority of learners. On the other hand, fourteen students (20%) claim their oral
expression teachers sometimes give them ‘glimpses’ about the exams, and four subjects (5.71%) often know in advance the format and the procedure. A likely possible explanation for this disparity is that learners have been studying this module with different instructors.

**Q9.** Do your teachers of oral inform you about the criteria used in scoring your speaking skills before taking your exam?

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>51.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>24.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15.71</td>
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<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Always</td>
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<td>4.29</td>
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<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100</td>
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</table>

Table 9. Student’s access to the scoring criteria

Table 9 indicates that more than half of the participants (51.43%) do not get informed about the criteria of scoring, and (24.28%) are rarely informed. However, (15.71%) of the participants state sometimes their oral teachers inform them about these criteria. Only (4.29%) of respondents say their oral testers often inform them and the other (4.29%) claim they are always informed. The non-access to the scoring criteria makes the examinees unaware of what is exactly required and which criterion is selected for the assessment, thus the test anxiety would be increased and control the test-takers. However, giving them a hint would help them to know what they are expected to do thus perform in accordance to these standards as well as they can predict or interpret their marks.

**Q10.** According to your experience, what are the criteria often used to score your speaking skills:
As the majority of the examinees do not know about the scoring criteria, a discrepancy between the students' point of view is clearly demonstrated in the results of this question; hence while eighteen participants (25.71%) believe that only fluency determines their scores, thirteen respondents (18.57%) consider pronunciation as the main scoring criterion, and nine students (12.86%) consider vocabulary appropriateness as the first criterion testers take into account. On the other hand, seven students (10%) consider grammar rules as the main criterion testers often use to score their speaking abilities. Only two respondents (2.86%) state other criteria such as body language, self-confidence, and the correctness of the responses. Whereas, twenty-one subjects (30%) claim that all criteria are included. These results illustrate that the examinees have a vague vision about the scoring standards. Inevitably, they would be anxious and unsure about what they ought to do during the oral exam.

**Q11. Do you have some discussion with your teachers of oral about the topics to be used in the oral exams?**
In order to help the students to manage their anxiety, the test designer ought to establish conversations about the kind of exams topics, so that they would not, psychologically speaking, feel stressed or get surprised in the day of exam. Unfortunately all the participants, with varying degree, say they do not get involved in making decisions about exam topics. Twenty-six participants (37.14%) claim they have never had such a discussion; twenty-four of them (34.29%) say they rarely have, and twenty subjects (28.57%) claim they sometimes experience some discussion with their instructors about the exam topics. Those teachers don't want to inform their students about the exam topics, or they are not asked by the examinees about these matters thinking it's an exclusively teachers' responsibility.

**Q12. Did you experience to have nothing to say about the topic of the oral exam?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
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<th>%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>47.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>52.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unsurprisingly, the analysis of this item shows that more than half of respondents (52.86%) acknowledge they 'have nothing to say about the topic'; this means they are
unfamiliar with the topics of the oral exam, or they unfit their level. This is probably because the teachers either adopt topics are not appropriately selected, or they deliberately choose such topics to challenge the students' oral abilities. In fact, using topics which are beyond the students' level affects negatively the content validity of oral exams.

**Q13.** Does your teacher suggest any strategies to manage test anxiety, shyness and nervousness, etc, before taking your oral exams?

It is recognized that a low level of anxiety can motivate the learner to perform effectively. Therefore, it is very useful to supply the learners with some strategies that help them to control the amount of anxiety they feel before and during the oral exams.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>68.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>24.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13. Students' psychological preparation before the oral test taking

Unfortunately, table 13 shows that the majority of this sample (68.57%) state that their teachers never discuss any strategies to manage test anxiety, shyness and nervousness before test-taking. In addition, seventeen students (24.29%) say they rarely do, and only five subjects (7.14%) claim their instructors sometimes discuss some of these strategies. I think that teachers do not discuss such matters because of time constraint, or because they simply neglect them and their importance in the exams.

In sum, we deduce that one of learners' major problems with tests/exams is the factor of anxiety which dominates the respondents' answers; a fact which affects them in performing
well during their exams. The results show that test anxiety and nervousness have a debilitating impact which, inevitably, affects the student-related reliability. The root of these factors is lying principally the poor preparation to the oral exams. For instance, the teachers of OE do not inform their students about the exam format, procedure, and scoring standards, so they do not know what is expected to do. In addition, they do not get involved in discussing the exams' topics, so that they make use of topics sometimes unfit their level as it is inappropriately selected and this flouts the content validity. Finally, I notice that the test anxiety and the other factors are not perceived by the test designer as the results show that the majority of test-takers claim they do not have any kind of discussion with their instructors about test anxiety strategies.

Section Two: Test-takers and the Oral Test

Q14. You feel that the speaking skill is the most difficult one to be tested in EFL learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>77.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14. Students' estimation of the degree of difficulty of testing the oral skill

The results denote that fifty-four students (77.14%) agree that oral skill is the most difficult to be test in EFL learning, and five respondents (7.14%) strongly agree with this statement. However eleven participants (15.72%) disagree. This might be explained because the examinees often experience different problems during the oral tests; they get unexpected results, or because they do not know what they are required to do.
Q15. Do you think that your teacher take into consideration the introvert and shy students in the oral exams?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>74.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15. Introvert and shy students’ position in oral tests

According to fifty-two respondents (74.29%), the oral expression teachers do not take into account the category of introvert and shy students. On the contrary, eighteen subjects (25.71%) believe their oral testers take them into account in oral tests. Probably the impression that the examiners do not take them into consideration comes from the fact that they do not make them feel at ease, or maybe they make use of inadequate exam format that is based, for instance, on social activities.

Q16. You feel that the time allotted to you in the oral exam is not enough to judge your speaking abilities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>35.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>27.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>32.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 16. Students’ estimation to the allotted time

Table 16 shows that twenty-five participants (35.71%) feel the allotted time is sometimes insufficient; twenty-three respondents (32.86%) say they always feel that, and
nineteen students (27.14%) claim they often have this impression may be because the learners feel that the questions asked require a discussion and a synthesis. However, only two subjects (2.86%) state they never feel that the time is not enough, and the (1.43%) say they rarely feel so.

Q17. Did you experience one of these problems during an oral test-taking?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bad quality of the video/audio tape</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bad quality of the pictures used</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High or low room temperature</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noise outside the doors</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>32.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least two of the mentioned problems</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>35.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of them</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other problems</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17. The problems experienced by students during the oral exams

The results show that (35.72%) claim they experienced at least two of the mentioned problems; (32.86%) say they suffered from the noise outside the doors; eleven subjects, on the other hand, state they faced problems with the bad quality of video/audio tapes. Only seven learners (10%) claim they didn't face any of these problems. The other participants (5.71%) indicate that sometimes the classroom management as well as other factors prevent from good exam conditions. Bearing in mind that these problems and others impact the test administration reliability as the scores would not be consistent if the same test is repeated in better circumstances.

Q18. Did you pass an oral test in written form?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>74.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 18. The oral tests' forms

A good number of students (74.29%) say they did pass an oral test in written form; however, eighteen of them (25.71%) claim they didn't encounter this case may be because they have studied OE module with different teachers.

Summarily, section two shows that the majority of subjects are aware of the difficulty of testing the oral skill. This might be because the examinees often experience different problems during the oral tests. For example, the majority of respondents complain of the fact of not taking into account the shy and introvert learners while designing and conducting the oral examination. In addition, the results indicate that a good percentage of participants consider the allotted time to the exam as insufficient, a fact which violates the test reliability. On the other hand, the test administration reliability is violated as the majority of the examinees suffer from the bad conditions surrounding the test setting. Another problem the participants suffer from is the violation of face validity of the oral exams. Indeed, the aim of the oral exams is to assess the oral production of learners; the written exams seem to be inappropriate to assess the oral performance, yet the absolute majority (74.29%) admits that they passed oral exams in the written form.

Section Three: Test-takers and Scores

Q19. You feel that oral testers' tiredness and time constraints affect the assessment of your speaking skills in oral exams.
The reliability of the oral exams can be affected by the poor rater reliability. As Brown (2004) argues that among the factors that affect the rater consistency are exhaustion and tiredness. It is difficult to match the standard all the period of the exam especially with the large number of student. Thus, the aim of this question is to investigate to what extent the rater reliability is effective from students' perspectives. The results are presented in Table 19.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>28.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>31.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>total</strong></td>
<td><strong>70</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 19. Students' estimation about the raters' performance

Twenty-two participants (31.43%) feel that tiredness and time constraints always affect their oral teachers' assessment while twenty participants (28.57%) believe that these factors affect it, often. Twenty-one subjects (30%) state they believe these factors sometimes have an impact on the effectiveness of testers' assessment. On the other hand, only four learners (5.71%) claim that their teachers' psycho-physiological state never affects their performance during the exam, and the remaining participants (4.29%) believe they rarely do. On the basis of the results, we deduce that the rater consistency is low.

**Q20.** You feel that your teachers of oral may 'score you in their mind’ before taking the oral exam.
Table 20. Students’ perspective about the teachers’ objectivity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>62.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>37.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 20 shows that forty-four respondents (62.86%) feel that their oral testers have presumptions about their level before taking the exam. However, twenty-six (37.14%) do not think so. In fact, some educators form a kind of stereotypes about their learners' level, thus they prejudge them to fail or succeed before they perform. This prejudgment has a strong influence on examinees' self-esteem as well as on the rater reliability.

Q21. The teachers of oral expression use different test-format, and test procedures in scoring their learners' oral skill.

Table 21. Students’ perspective about the diversity of exam structures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>34.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>38.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 21 reveals that the majority of the respondents state that their teachers adopt different test structure. Where twenty-four students (34.28%) say the diversity of test forma and procedure is often existed, and twenty-seven participants (38.57%) state they always use different test structure. Besides, (22.86%) say they sometimes do. However, two learners (2.86%) state their teachers rarely rely on different formats and procedures, and only one (1.43%) believe there is no diversity in the oral exam formats and procedures.
These results demonstrate the absence of real coordination between the different oral instructors or any common ‘syllabus’ designed for that purpose.

**Q22.** Did you get different scores with different teachers of oral expression in a short period of time?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 22. Students’ fluctuation scores

Seventy percent (70%) of subjects did experience a fluctuation of scores in a limited period of time where they got different scores with different oral expression teachers. While the remaining ones (30%) hold they don't fit this case. I assume that the reason behind such fluctuation is due to the use of different exam structures and scoring rubrics and methodologies.

**Q23.** You feel that the other teachers of oral are more ‘generous’in scoring than yours.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>67.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>32.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 23. Students’ opinion on the ‘generosity’ of oral teachers

Forty-seven subjects (67.14%) do believe the other oral teachers are more ‘generous’ than their teachers; however, twenty-three participants (32.86%) don't feel that. This is due to the fact that some instructors are more tolerant than others in terms of the marking rubrics and to their ignorance to it, and this leads to the weakening of rater reliability.
Q24. To ensure fairness in scoring, teachers of oral expression have to unify the test format, topic(s), and the scoring rubrics with all learners in the oral test.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>62.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>32.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 24. Students' estimation about unifying the exam structure and norms

The results show that a good percentage of subjects (62.86%) strongly agree that the unification of the test format, topic(s), and the scoring rubrics would reflect the objectivity and fairness of the results. Twenty-three of the respondents (32.85%), also, agrees with this statement; however, only one participant (1.43%) disagrees and two students (1.43%) strongly do this is because they think these actions do not affect much on their results.

Q25. Do you have any suggestions for the improvement of oral tests?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 25. Students' suggestions for the improvement of oral tests

Only forty percent of the respondents (40%) have some suggestions for the improvement of oral tests.

Q26. If yes, please state them

Among the twenty-eight participants who answered positively, sixteen (57.14%) have suggested some comments which are in line with the answers they gave throughout this questionnaire and they reflect their needs. Their comments revolved mainly around the
limitations and constraints of the oral exams where they suggest to allocate a sufficient time for all the examinees to display their skills; choosing the appropriate topics; unifying the rating rubrics, exam format and procedures, and finally, reducing the anxiety and shyness factors by assessing more than one learner at a time.

This section reveals that the rater reliability is low, and that the participants are unsatisfied with the scoring process. To illustrate, the majority of the students believe that their examiners' efficacy in rating is influenced by tiredness and fatigue and this would affect their marks. Besides, as a result of using different test structure and rating rubrics, the learners' confidence in scoring is shaky because they feel that the scorers prejudge them as they know them well, and because they experience to have different marks in a given period of time from different raters as well as they believe that some teachers are more 'generous' than the others. These factors and others have a negative impact on the reliability of the oral exams; therefore, the majority of the participants expressed their desire to unify the test format and scoring rubrics which would be enough to remedy most of the deficiencies of scoring process.

**Teachers of OE Questionnaire**

**1.4 The Population and Sample**

The study was carried out at English Department, in Larbi Ben Mhidi University. The participants consisted of fourteen (14) teachers, out of twenty-nine, who have been teaching OE module. Of the respondents, nine (09) are male and five (05) are female.

**1.5 Description of the Questionnaire**

The questionnaire consists of an introduction and four sections. The introduction gives an idea about the research topic, the aim of the study, and the importance of the participant's contribution. The first section intends to collect personal information (gender,
academic degree, and the year of experience). The second section includes seven questions seeks to clarify the circumstances in which the preparation stage to oral examinations happens. The third one consists of seventeen (17) items deal with the way of designing and managing the oral exams. The last part ends with six (06) questions that clarify the testers' perspectives about the scoring process and their suggestions to improve oral assessment.

1.6 Analysis of the Results

Personal Information

Q1 Gender:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>gender</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>64.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>35.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 26. Oral teachers' gender

The respondents are of two genders: nine (64.29%) males and five (35.71%) females. This denotes the presence of two ‘opinions’ about the same point. In other words, is females' method of teaching the OE similar or different of that of the males?

Q2 Degree (s) held:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Held degree</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BA (Licence)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magister</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>57.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHD (Doctorate)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 27. Oral teachers' Academic degree
Eight teachers (57.14%) hold the magister degree which is a high degree that enables them to teach English as foreign language at this level. In addition, four instructors have the Master degree, and only two teachers (14.29%) have the BA (Licence). relying on teachers having only Master and BA could be due to the shortage of teachers of OE.

Q3. For how many years have you been teaching oral expression module?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>x_i</th>
<th>n_i</th>
<th>f_i</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 28. Oral teachers' years of experience

Teachers’ answers to this question ranged from one year to plus five years. The answers are presented in table 28 where (x_i) is the years of the experience; (n_i) is the number of the instructors providing the same answer; f_i (f_i = n_i/N) is the frequency, and (i) is the number of the cases that changes between 1 and 5. By extracting the mode (M_0), which is the modality that corresponds to the highest frequency Max (f_i) = 0.5. The mode is given by this equation: f(M_0) = Max (f_i) where Max (f_i) = 0.5. In order to know the average experience of the instructor, we calculate the mean (\( \bar{X} \)), where 
\[
\bar{X} = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^{n} n_i x_i \rightarrow \bar{X} = 2.21.
\]
So the average experience is 2.21 years, this implies that they have a short experience in teaching oral expression which could explain the deficiencies of the oral examination process.

Section One: Testers and Test-takers

Q4. Test/exam anxiety and nervousness affect negatively learners' oral performance.
**Table 29. Teachers' perceptions about the students' anxiety and nervousness**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>35.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>64.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All the instructors consent with varying degree with this statement where (35.71%) agrees and (64.29%) agrees strongly. This confirms that the examiners accept these feelings as a reality. Moreover, this result implies that the teachers are aware about the significant influence test anxiety and the other factors have on the learners' performance.

**Q5.** Do you allocate any session(s) with the test-takers before the oral exams to provide some strategies to manage test anxiety, shyness and nervousness, etc?

**Table 30. Teachers' psychological preparations for test-takers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>57.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The high amount of test anxiety and nervousness may hinder the examinees from displaying their real cognitive abilities. Therefore, to sensitize them about the anxiety strategies can have a good effect on their academic outcomes. On the real ground, the majority of instructors do not take into account such strategies. This is evident in the results of table 30 where the eight participants (57.14%) admit to never devote any session
for preparing psychologically the examinees before exams, and three teachers (21.43%) says they rarely do. In addition, two respondents (14.29%) state they sometimes have such sessions; however, only one teacher (7.14%) claims he/she often does. This neglect for such sessions can be due to time constraint because they are not scheduled in the curriculum as it is also thought they are less important than linguistic knowledge.

Q6. Informing your students about the norms and the format of the oral tests would lead them to perform better and can manage their anxiety and nervousness?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A little</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>92.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1. Teachers' perspective about informing students about the exam details

Table 3 shows that the absolute majority (92.86%) believes that accessing the learners to the exam structure and the qualities of scoring would help them much to manage the anxiety and nervousness because they might develop a clear picture about what they are expected to do. Only one teacher (7.14%) claims that the difference would be a little. These results reflect the instructors' awareness about the importance of informing the learners about the test structure. Psychologically speaking, the test-takers who have an access to the oral exams in advance feel reassurance and have the sense of control over the situation, thus they can control their anxiety and stress easier.

Q7. Do you inform your learners about the test format and the test procedure of the oral exam before having it?
### Table 3. Teachers’ perspectives about accessing students to the exam structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>57.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contradictory with the results of the previous item, table 32 shows a lack of the test designers’ commitment in informing the students about the exam structure where a high proportion of the respondents (57.14%) admit that sometimes they give their examinees a hint about the oral tests, and two teachers (14.29%) state that they often do. However, only four participants (35.71%) contend that they always make them informed.

**Q8.** Do you inform the learners about the criteria used in scoring their speaking skills before taking their exam?

### Table 33. Teachers’ perspectives about accessing students to exam criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data indicate that the majority of the teachers of OE (50%) admit they sometimes inform the examinees about the scoring criteria of the oral exams. The instructors may feel unnecessary to tell them each time as the norms are often known. On the other side, four
participants (28.57%) say that the learners are often informed, and only three instructors (21.43%) claim that they always keep them informed. Still these results reflect a kind of contradiction with the results of the item six where, in spite the importance of informing the students about the standards, the results do not display the necessary commitment.

Q9. Do you discuss the topics of the oral tests/exams with your students before the exam?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>35.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table34. Teachers' students' discussions about exam topics

Involving the test-takers in making decisions about the exam topics would make them more responsible and autonomous with leaving no room for any later objections. Table 34 shows that four testers (28.57%) confess they never establish any discussion with their learners about the exam topics, and two teachers (14.29%) hold they rarely do so may be because the test designers feel that such discussion leads to reveal of the exam content; the other five (35.71%) state they sometimes have such a discussion. Only three teachers (21.43%) confirm they always discuss the exam topics with their examinees as a strategy to make them responsible of their decisions.

All in all, we can say that the teachers' role is not designing, conducting, and recording the exam results only; preparing students for passing it safely and properly also falls on their shoulders. As mentioned before, test anxiety, shyness, and nervousness, etc, are often associated with oral exams and affect negatively the examinees' performance. Yet, the
majority of teachers do not care enough about the test-takers' psychological side. The results show that the majority of them confess not supplying the learners with the anxiety strategies that enable them to control its amount after and during the oral exams. Besides, although the testers agree that knowing the test structure, the rating norms, and the kind of exam topics in advance would help the students to perform better, but there is no consistency and continuity in informing them. From what is observed, the examiners seem to be relatively deficient in terms of the prior exam preparations. Also, there is a kind of contradiction between what they think and what they do on the ground.

**Section Two: Tester and the Oral Test**

**Q10.** According to you, the speaking skill is the most difficult one to be tested in EFL classroom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>42.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>35.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 35. Teachers' perception of the difficulty of testing speaking skill

Based on the above results, the highest proportion of the participants (42.86%) agrees with the statement, and five teachers (35.71%) agree strongly. Assessing speaking skill requires knowing which aspect to test specifically, bearing in mind that even paralinguistic factors are included, and how to design and conduct the adequate testing process. In addition, oral tests are usually associated with many which may constitutes hinders. On the other hand, there are three instructors (21.43%) who show their disagreement due probably to the fact that they consider all language skills have the same degree of difficulty.
Q11. Have you met any difficulties in designing and/or conducting the oral exams?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>42.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>57.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 36. Teachers' perspective about the potential difficulties of oral exams

The majority of the respondents (57.14%) declare they don't face any difficulties in designing and conducting the oral exams. However, six teachers (42.86%) say "No".

Q12. If yes, say what type of difficulties?

Among the six teachers who answered "yes", only three teachers state the problems they face. The overall difficulties revolve around the lack of adequate equipment such as data show, recording player, TVs, videos, films, etc; the absence of the appropriate places such as labs, and classrooms, etc; the huge number of examinees and time constraints, and maintaining the efficiency and the fairness of rating, etc. In fact, the existence of these constraints would affect the reliability and validity of the oral exam.

Q13. Do you find that the allocated time is sufficient for learners to demonstrate their oral abilities in the oral tests/exams?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>78.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 37. Teachers' perspectives about the allotted time for students

The highest percentage (78.57%) responds negatively particularly when considering the presence of a large number of students; however, three teachers (21.43%) state they think the allotted time is sufficient possibly because they assess several learners at a time.
Q14. The light used, temperature, the part of the room, and the type of photos or videos used, etc, may affect the learners' performances. Do you take into consideration these variables while designing the test?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>46.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>53.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 38. Teachers' consideration of the exams conditions

Among the fourteen participants, only one of them didn't answer this question, probably, because the inattention. The results reveal that (53.85%) don't take these conditions into account as they are the administrative responsibility, but the presence of such problems surrounding the test setting would weakens the test administration reliability. The remaining (46.15%) claim the opposite.

Q15. Have you received any training about how to test the learners' oral skill?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>71.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 39. Teachers' training

Teacher's qualification is one of the most important factors that may influence students' achievement, and as the teaching process is plenty of challenges, thus training teachers is very helpful especially for the new teachers. Developing the teachers' background and competence helps them to be flexible with the various problems they may face not only when teaching the learners but also when assessing their capacities. The aim of this item is to know to what extent teachers are ready to manage the various constraints in testing.
process. The analysis of this item reveals that the majority of subjects (71.43%) have not receive any training and that only four instructors (28.57%) have answered positively (28.57%). This is means that the majority of the participants are not trained, thus they would not be efficient in handling all the challenging situations.

Q16. Of the following linguistic aspects, which one is the most important in oral expression test/exams? (Please, rank them from the highest to the least: 1-5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>options</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>7.14%</td>
<td>21.43%</td>
<td>42.86%</td>
<td>14.29%</td>
<td>14.29%</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>7.14%</td>
<td>28.57%</td>
<td>28.57%</td>
<td>35.71%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronunciation</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>21.43%</td>
<td>7.14%</td>
<td>28.57%</td>
<td>42.86%</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluency</td>
<td>7.14%</td>
<td>14.29%</td>
<td>21.43%</td>
<td>21.43%</td>
<td>35.71%</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paralinguistic factors</td>
<td>78.57%</td>
<td>14.29%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7.14%</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Teachers' preference for the speaking aspects

The aim of this question is to show the differences between the teachers' perspectives about the most important aspect of oral skill. Table 40 reveals that pronunciation and fluency get the highest percentages (42.86% and 35.71% respectively) mainly because they are most probably among the first requirements related to the oral production. Also, (14.29%) of respondents claims that vocabulary the most significant aspect in oral tests. However, only one subject (7.14%) states that paralinguistic factors are the most important aspect. This diversity in ranking the aspects of speaking skill would lead to adopting different scoring rubrics where each scorer gives the highest mark to the component he/she consider the most important.

Q17. What are the norms you often use to score your students' oral performances during the test/exam?
Compatibly with the result of the previous item, table 4.1 shows that a high percentage of the participants relies on vocabulary appropriateness (57.14%), grammar accuracy (57.14%), pronunciation (57.14%), and fluency (57.14%) to score their students' oral capacities. However, six testers (42.86%) claim they rely on all the mentioned aspects in assessing their learners. The majority of teachers did not choose the paralinguistic factors although they are very important aspects in oral production may be because the testers focus more on the examinees' linguistic competence. The results prove that the scorers don't rely on unified standards and this would reduce the reliability of the oral exams.

### Q18. Do you coordinate with other teachers of the Oral Expression in designing and implementing the exams?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>71.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2. Teachers' coordination
The analysis of this item shows (71.43%) state that they coordination with other oral expression instructors; however, four of them (28.57%) have answered negatively may be they like to work individually, or they follow a specific teaching/testing method.

Q19. If yes, what for?

Only four respondents out of ten who have answered the previous item positively responded. This coordination is mainly related to the content of oral courses; unifying the teaching methods; getting more acknowledged about the module, and asking for advice. They didn't mention anything about any coordination concerning the oral exams. That is to say there is no coordination between the oral testers.

Q20. Do you have an idea about the test format and procedures of the other colleagues?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>42.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>57.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 43. Teachers’ access to their colleagues’ exam structure

Eight teachers (57.14%) state they haven't any access to their colleagues test format and procedures. On the other side, six participants (42.86%) answered positively. The results are logical as there is no coordination between oral instructors about the details of exams.

Q21. What is the nature of your oral testing; are they:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Written</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>64.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>35.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 44. Nature of oral tests used by teachers
As revealed in this table, the highest percentage (67.29%) reflects that their oral exams are conducted orally and this matches more the nature of speaking skill; however, (35.71%) of oral teachers state that they use both oral and written form in their tests. Sometimes the written exam can assess some of the oral aspects such as grammar, but using written activities to assess the learners' speaking capacities seems to be incompatible, thus the face validity is breached.

**Q22.** Do you use the results of the oral exams in assessing the method you use in teaching oral expression?

The aim behind this item is to know if the oral exams have a positive or negative washback on the teaching/learning process. the results are presented in table 45.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>92.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 45. Teachers' perspective in revising the teaching method

The absolute majority (92.86%) of respondents replies positively on this statement as being an efficient standard to check the effectiveness of a given teaching method is the learners' outcomes; only one educator (7.14%) declares the opposite. The results reveal that the oral exams have a positive washback as their results are used to remedy the weaknesses of the educational system.

**Q23.** Your students got bad scores in their exam. Have you ever thought to put in question your testing method of the oral expression?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>78.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 46. Teachers' perspective in revising the testing method
The results of this item show that (78.57%) of participants do revise their testing method of the oral expression after having bad outcomes. Only three teachers (21.43%) state they do not. Conveniently with the previous question, the oral exams have a positive washback on the testing process as well.

**Q24. What are the sources of the topic(s) of your oral exams?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authentic</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>64.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvised</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 47. The sources of the oral exam topics.

The selection of the exam topics should not be arbitrary; it must be subject to several norms. The analysis of this item displays that nine testers (64.29%) adhere to authentic topics in assessing their examinees' speaking skill. The authenticity of oral exams permit the generalization of examinees' results and predict their performance in real life situation. In addition, seven scorers (50%) choose their exam topics from the curriculum; this would reflect the content validity of exams as the test-takers would be familiar with these topics, and only three teachers (21.43%) state they improvise their exams topics.

In sum, this section shows that oral exams have flaws as well as gains. It is worth mentioning that the majority of participants considers speaking as the most difficult skill to be tested as it is usually associated with many constraints either at the level of designing or conducting exams. These problems, mainly the absence of the adequate equipment, affect the practicality of the exam. In addition, the test reliability is breached as the allotted time is not sufficient for their learners to well demonstrate their real capacities. Moreover, the administration reliability of oral exams is breached as the majority of testers do not take...
into account the surrounding circumstances of exams such as the light, the temperature, and the part of the classroom, etc. In fact, these problems are aggravated with the lack of teachers training. Furthermore, the difference in estimating the aspects of speech with the absence of effective coordination between the test designers lead to adopting diverse scoring rubrics, and thus violating the reliability of oral tests. The validity of oral exams, in its turn, is violated as conducting oral tests in written form cannot exhibit the learners' speaking capacities (face validity). On the hand, oral exams have their gains. For instance, they have a positive washback, which is very important criterion of a good test, as their results are used to redress the teaching and testing systems. Further, the oral tests respect the criteria of authenticity and the content validity as the oral exams topics make use of familiar and authentic topics.

**Section Three: Testers and Scores**

**Q25.** Would you have presumptions (positive or negative) about your students when scoring them?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>35.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>64.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 48. Teachers' presumptions about their students

The majority of instructors (64.29%) state they have not any presumptions about their examinees' level when scoring them. On the other side, (35.71%) of examiners confess that they actually know their levels so they predict their performance before taking the exam, and this weakens the rater reliability.
Q26. Through your experience, do you think that the effectiveness of the application of your standards are the same between the first and the last student, don’t you believe that the fatigue and tiredness affect rating?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>53.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>30.77</td>
</tr>
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<td>Always</td>
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<td>15.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 49. Teachers’ estimation of the effect of tiredness and fatigue on their rating

The analysis of the data reveals that most of the participants (53.84%) state that sometimes the fatigue and tiredness influence their rating. In addition, four teachers (30.77%) claim that it is often the case. Only two examiners (15.39%) admit that they always get influenced by tiredness and fatigue. These results match the expectations particularly with the large number of students.

Q27. Adopting the same oral test format, procedures and scoring rubrics guarantee the objectivity of exams’ results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
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<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 50. Teachers’ perspective about unifying the oral exam structure
All the participants show agreement with this statement where seven teachers (50%) state they agree, and the other (50%) strongly agree; this reflect the instructors’ desire to eliminate any differences that might affect the reliability of oral exams.

Q28. Would you think that some of your colleagues' scoring is more ‘generous’ than yours?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>53.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>46.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1. Teachers’ estimation of their colleagues’ scoring

Seven teachers (53.86%) believe that their colleagues are more generous; however, six instructors (46.15%) do not think so. One subject declined to answer and commented that he/she never tried to see who is more generous. This difference in views is mainly due to the use of different scoring criteria and the lack of the sincere coordination.

Q29. After having the oral tests, do you provide any feedback about your students’ performances?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2. Teachers’ frequency in supplying the students with feedback

The results are as follows: three teachers (21.43%) admit that they never supply their test-takers with feedback; four of them (28.57%) state they rarely do, and two participants (14.29%) say they sometimes give them feedback. On the other side, two respondents
(14.28%) say they often do, and three subjects (21.43%) claim they are always keen to provide feedback to their learners. This disparity of results implies the difference of the teachers’ views about the importance of feedback as well as reflects the diversity of their objectives of the assessment.

**Q30.** Would you believe that educators and administrators have to care much about the oral tests/exams?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>92.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 53. Teachers’ perspectives about improving the oral exams.

Except one participant (7.14%), all the educators (92.86%) are convinced about the need to give much care to oral exams and this reflects the important position the speaking skill occupies in the teaching/learning process.

**Q31.** If yes, what do you suggest to improve the oral tests/exams?

Among the thirteen teachers who choose the answer "yes", only six have answered this question. Their suggestions are mainly about the limitations of conducting the oral exams. Some instructors suggest having well-elaborated programs; providing certain teaching aids such as TVs, videos, and films; providing the language laboratories for both oral expression sessions and tests; using a variety of methods and techniques for assessing the learners and using authentic tests; providing much time for the oral tests and dividing the examinees in small groups. Also, some teachers stress the importance of being objective and fair when scoring the students and this cannot happen unless they possess a theoretical background and acknowledged. These constraints are discouraging for both students and teachers; therefore, the need to be elaborated and solved is urgent.
Section four reveals many deficiencies in the scoring process. The rater reliability is affected as some testers allow their pre-knowing of their examinees' levels affects their judgment. Besides, committing the examiners to assess huge number of students in a short time would impact negatively the consistency of the application of the same standards. Despite the fact that all the teachers approve that depending on the same exam structure, and scoring norms would reflect the scorers' objectivity; the reality is quite different as there is no serious coordination between the designers. Consequently, more than half the examiners admit that some of their colleagues are more generous. What can be noticed, also, is the absence of supplying feedback to the learners. In fact, feedback doesn't reveal the strengths and weaknesses of the examinees only, yet it could present a convincing explanation for the given marks, thus there would be no room for any ambiguity or protest.

2. **Pedagogical Recommendations**

Based on the analysis and the interpretation of the results, there appears a number of imperfections and incongruencies in terms of oral testing design, implementation and methodology. We feel compelled to make some suggestions and draw some ‘pedagogical recommendations’.

- To ensure that the learners are ready to pass the oral exams, the instructors are invited to help students to get rid of anxiety, stress, and nervousness, etc. Therefore, they have to
  - Devote session(s) to provide some strategies to manage learners' anxiety such as the relaxation.
  - Familiarize them with the test-format, procedures, the criteria of rating system, and the allotted time.
  - Have some discussions about the topics of exams in advance with students and involve them in taking decisions.
• Scorers have to unify the test-format, procedures, score rubrics to guarantee the objectivity and fairness of the results.

• Make the learners feel at ease by providing the appropriate conditions such as the lightening, heating, air conditioning, etc.

• To avoid putting the examiners as well the examinees under the pressure of time and to insure the effectiveness of their assessment, the educators have to:
  - Split the large groups into small sub-groups and conduct the test in several days instead of one day.
  - Making audio/video recording of the testing.
  - Assessing the learners' speaking skill throughout the year.

• Teachers have to access to training courses to gain experience and competence in teaching oral expression as well as to be proficient in testing this skill.

Conclusion

On the light of what has been discussed, the oral exams have gains as well as a lot of losses. The results of the study show a range of deficiencies that can be summarized as follows. Firstly, the poor coordination between the test designers which leads to diversity of test format and scoring rubrics affects the credibility and the reliability of the results. In addition, the absence of communicative channels between the examiners and the examinees in which the latter cannot find out what exactly the requirements are during the oral exams affects greatly their performances. These circumstances affect not only the teachers' objectivity especially their reliability and validity, but also the learners' performances. In fact, establishing a serious dialogue between the learners and the instructors about the kind of the topics, and the structure of the exams, etc, would build a relationship of trust and respect between the two parties and lead to much confidence to the
testees. And as one of the participant in this survey said:"if teachers' programs are well-elaborated, the objectives will be reached and for sure, the student will take the lion's part".

**General Conclusion**

The process of assessment and testing are organically linked to the objectives of language teaching/learning. The assessment is a diagnostic and therapeutic process in
which it aims to find out how much progress made by the individual or the group toward the desired aims. In the light of the results of the assessment, some remedial procedures can be determined for the development and improvement of the educational process.

In oral testing, one of the most debated issues has always been the objectivity of its results as the scorers usually involve their subjectivity and intuition to make decisions about the learners' achievement. The oral tests results are mainly used to discriminate and rank students and certify who is going to pass to the next level, so objectivity is an obligation to ensure the fairness and equality. To be effective, the test designers ought to establish their oral examinations on systematic criteria. As they are mentioned before (chapter one), these standards vary between reliability, validity, practicality, authenticity, and washback. The role of the teacher is to create a balance between these criteria and design an oral exam which guarantees the fairness and equity between the test-takers.

The aim of this study, then, is to highlight the reality of oral examination and to investigate whether the oral tests are based on and respect these criteria or not through examining the examiners' and examinees' experiences. To reach this aim we relied on questionnaires for the protagonists, First Year Master students and oral instructors at the English department in Larbi Ben Mhidi University.

Unfortunately, the results drawn from the study do not make room for doubt that the oral testing system suffer from a number of deficiencies. The analysis of the questionnaire showed a convergence in both students' and teachers' perspectives. Although the teachers' results showed that the oral tests respect the authenticity and the positive washback of oral tests, but still reliability, validity, and practicality are put in questions. Depending on the examinees' results, the oral tests do not take into account a lot of the basic standards especially the reliability where there were no considerations to psychological preparation which has a direct impact on the student-related reliability, surrounding environment that may affect the administration reliability. In addition, the instructors' responses displayed
that the majority confessed that tiredness and fatigue affect their scoring, and that they rely on different scoring criteria and structure, etc; these factors affect the rater reliability. Moreover, the test validity is flouted especially face validity where students passed the oral exams in written forms and content validity where the topics sometimes unfit their level. Thus, the analysis showed that the oral teachers do not follow the correct foundations that ensure their objectivity and fairness in assessing their learners' oral abilities.

To compensate for these shortcomings of oral exams two solutions are provided to guarantee the objectivity of oral exams results. Firstly, the test designers ought to activate a real coordination amongst them, so they have to unify the exam structure, and the scoring qualities, etc. on the other side, they ought to establish a real and effective communication relationship with their examinees, so they put them in the picture and bring them to a psychological preparation. Educators and experts are urged to direct future experimental studies to exploit how these criteria can ensure the objectivity of oral exams results.

References


Brookhart, S. M. (2013). *How to Create and Use Rubrics For Formative Assessment and Grading*.* USA: ASCD.*


Appendices

Appendix I: Students' Questionnaire

Appendix II: Teachers of OE Questionnaire
Students' Questionnaire

Dear students

This questionnaire serves as a data collection tool for a thesis which aims at examining your experiences from oral tests as first year master learners at English Department, university of Larbi Ben Mhidi in OEB, and investigate the degree of your oral teachers’ objectivity in scoring your oral abilities.

It would be very kind of you to answer the present questionnaire. Your answers would be kept anonymous and would only be used for a research purpose. Your answers would be of great importance for the completion of our study.

Please tick (✓) one chosen answer in each question and complete sentences when necessary.

Personal Information

1. Gender.
   a. Male ☐  b. Female ☐

2. Your choice of English was
   a. Personal ☐  b. Parental (family) ☐
   b. Other …………………………………………………………………………………………………………

3. How good is your oral English?
   a. Very good ☐  b. Good ☐  c. Average ☐
   b. Less than average ☐  e. Low ☐

Section One: Test-takers and Testers

4. Do you feel nervous and anxious before and/or during the oral tests/exams?
   a. Never ☐  b. Rarely ☐  c. Sometimes ☐
   d. Often ☐  e. Always ☐
5. Shyness and test anxiety prevent you from showing your real oral abilities during the test taking.
   a. Never ☐   b. Rarely ☐   c. Sometimes ☐
   d. Often ☐   e. Always ☐

6. Anxiety, nervousness, and other factors increase when you don’t have a clear vision about the test format and the test procedures.
   a. Yes ☐   b. No ☐

7. Being informed by the test format, test procedure and the criteria used in scoring, may produce a better performance.
   a. Yes ☐   b. No ☐

8. Do your teachers inform you about the test format (video/audio tape discussion, conversation, and role play, etc) and the test procedure before taking the oral exam?
   a. Never ☐   b. Rarely ☐   c. Sometimes ☐
   d. Often ☐   e. Always ☐

9. Do your teachers of oral inform you about the criteria used in scoring your speaking skills before taking your exam?
   a. Never ☐   b. Rarely ☐   c. Sometimes ☐
   d. Often ☐   e. Always ☐

10. According to your experience, what are the criteria often used to score your speaking skills:
   a. Fluency ☐   b. Vocabulary appropriateness ☐
   c. Grammar rules ☐   d. Pronunciation ☐
   e. All of them ☐
   Any other …………………………………………………………………………

11. Do you have some discussion with your teachers of oral about the topics to be used in the oral exams?
   a. Never ☐   b. Rarely ☐   c. Sometimes ☐
   d. Often ☐   e. Always ☐

12. Did you experience to have nothing to say about the topic of the oral exam?
   a. Yes ☐   b. No ☐

13. Does your teacher suggest any strategies to manage test anxiety, shyness and nervousness, etc, before taking your oral exams?
   a. Never ☐   b. Rarely ☐   c. Sometimes ☐
   d. Often ☐   e. Always ☐
Section Two: Test-takers and the Oral Test

14. You feel that the speaking skill is the most difficult one to be tested in EFL learning.
   a. Strongly agree                      b. Agree
   c. Strongly disagree                  d. Disagree

15. Do you think that your teacher take into consideration the introvert and shy students in the oral exams?
   a. Yes                                b. No

16. You feel that the time allotted to you in the oral exam is not enough to judge your speaking abilities.
   a. Never                              b. Rarely
   c. Sometimes                          d. Often
   e. Always

17. Did you experience one of these problems during an oral test-taking?
   a. Bad quality of the video/ audio tape
   b. Bad quality of the pictures used
   c. High or low room temperature
   d. Noise outside the doors
   e. At least two of the mentioned problems
   f. None of them
   g. Other problems ..........................

18. Did you pass an oral test in written form?
   a. Yes                                b. No

Section Three: Test-takers and Scores

19. You feel that oral testers' tiredness and time constraints affect the assessment of your speaking skills in oral exams.
   a. Never                              b. Rarely
   c. Sometimes                          d. Often
   e. Always

20. You feel that your teachers of oral may 'score you in their mind’ before taking the oral exam.
   a. Yes                                b. No

21. The teachers of oral expression use different test-format, and test procedures in scoring their learners' oral skill.
   a. Never                              b. Rarely
   c. Sometimes
22. Did you get different scores with different teachers of oral expression in a short period of time?
   a. Yes  
   b. No  

23. You feel that the other teachers of oral are more ‘generous’in scoring than yours.
   a. Yes  
   b. No  

24. To ensure fairness in scoring, teachers of oral expression have to unify the test format, topic(s), and the scoring rubrics with all learners in the oral test.
   b. Strongly agree  
   c. Strongly disagree  
   d. Disagree  

25. Do you have any suggestions for the improvement of oral tests?
   a. Yes  
   b. No  

26. If yes, please state them………………………………………………………………………
       …………………………………………………………………………
       …………………………………………………………………………
       …………………………………………………………………………
       ………
Teachers of OE Questionnaire

Dear teachers

This questionnaire is part of a research work which aims at examining your experiences as a teacher of oral expression and the way you conduct and design the tests/exams sessions at English Department, university of Larbi Ben Mhidi in OEB.

It would be very kind of you to answer the present questionnaire knowing in advance that your answers would be of great importance for the completion of our study.

Please tick (✓) the answer(s) in each question and complete sentences when necessary.

Thank you

Personal Information

1. Gender:
   a. Male ☐ b. Female ☐
2. Degree (s) held:
   a. BA (Licence) ☐
   b. MA (Master/ Magister) ☐
   c. PHD (Doctorate) ☐
3. For how many years have you been teaching oral expression module?
   ………………………………………………………………………

Section One: Testers and Test-takers

4. Test/exam anxiety and nervousness affect negatively learners' oral performance.
   c. Strongly agree ☐ b. Agree ☐
   d. Strongly disagree ☐ d. Disagree ☐
5. Do you allocate any session(s) with the test-takers before the oral exams to provide some strategies to manage test anxiety, shyness and nervousness, etc?
   a. Never ☐ b. Rarely ☐ c. Sometimes ☐
6. Informing your students about the norms and the format of the oral tests would lead them to perform better and can manage their anxiety and nervousness?
   a. A little  
   b. Much  
   c. Not at all  

7. Do you inform your learners about the test format and the test procedure of the oral exam before having it?
   a. Never  
   b. Rarely  
   c. Sometimes  
   d. Often  
   e. Always  

8. Do you inform the learners about the criteria used in scoring their speaking skills before taking their exam?
   b. Never  
   b. Rarely  
   c. Sometimes  
   e. Often  
   e. Always  

9. Do you discuss the topics of the oral tests/exams with your students before the exam?
   a. Never  
   b. Rarely  
   c. Sometimes  
   d. Often  
   e. Always  

**Section Two: Tester and the Oral Test**

10. According to you, the speaking skill is the most difficult one to be tested in EFL classroom.
   a. Strongly agree  
   b. Agree  
   c. Strongly disagree  
   d. Disagree  

11. Have you met any difficulties in designing and/or conducting the oral exams?
   a. Yes  
   b. No  

12. If yes, say what type of difficulties?

…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………

13. Do you find that the allocated time is sufficient for learners to demonstrate their oral abilities in the oral tests/exams?
   a. Yes  
   b. No  

14. The light used, temperature, the part of the room, and the type of photos or videos used, etc, may affect the learners' performances. Do you take into consideration these variables while designing the test?
   a. Yes ☐ b. No ☐

15. Have you received any training about how to test the learners' oral skill?
   a. Yes ☐ b. No ☐

16. Of the following linguistic aspects, which one is the most important in oral expression test/exams? (Please, rank them from the highest to the least: 1-5).
   a. Vocabulary ☐
   b. Grammar ☐
   c. Pronunciation ☐
   d. Fluency ☐
   e. Paralinguistic factors ☐

17. What are the norms you often use to score your students' oral performances during the test/exam?
   a. Vocabulary appropriateness ☐
   b. Grammar accuracy ☐
   c. Pronunciation ☐
   d. Fluency ☐
   e. Paralinguistic factors ☐
   f. All of them ☐
   g. Any other ………………………………………………………………………………………………………

18. Do you coordinate with other teachers of the Oral Expression in designing and implementing the exams?
   a. Yes ☐ b. No ☐

19. If yes, what for? …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

20. Do you have an idea about the test format and procedures of the other colleagues?
21. what is the nature of your oral testing; are they:
   a. Written  
   b. Oral  
   c. Both 

22. Do you use the results of the oral exams in assessing the method you use in teaching oral expression?
   a. Yes  
   b. No 

23. Your students got bad scores in their exam. Have you ever thought to put in question your testing method of the oral expression?
   a. Yes  
   b. No 

24. What are the sources of the topic(s) of your oral exams?
   a. Authentic  
   b. Curriculum  
   c. Improvised  
   d. Any other ……………………………………………………………………………………..

25. Would you have presumptions (positive or negative) about your students when scoring them?
   a. Yes  
   b. No 

**Section Three: Testers and Scores**

26. Through your experience, do you think that the effectiveness of the application of your standards are the same between the first and the last student, don't you believe that the fatigue and tiredness affect rating?
   a. Never  
   b. Rarely  
   c. Sometimes  
   d. Often  
   e. Always 

27. Adopting the same oral test format, procedures and scoring rubrics guarantee the objectivity of exams' results
   a. Strongly agree  
   b. Agree  
   c. Strongly disagree  
   d. Disagree 

28. Would you think that some of your colleagues' scoring is more ‘generous’than yours?
   a. Yes  
   b. No 

29. After having the oral tests, do you provide any feedback about your students' performances?
30. Would you believe that educators and administrators have to care much about the oral tests/exams?
   a. Yes ☐  b. No ☐

31. If yes, what do you suggest to improve the oral tests/exams?
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
Résumé

L'enseignement du module de l'expression orale, l'objectivité des tests et examens élaborés par les enseignants ainsi que les notes attribuées par ces derniers aux étudiants demeurent les mots clés de la présente dissertation. En effet, cette étude descriptive discute plusieurs aspects liés à l'objectivité de la notation des enseignants durant les examens de l'expression orale, notamment la validité, les critères d'évaluation ainsi que les conditions psychologiques préalables qui entourent la tenue de ces examens. Les deux questionnaires, l'un soumis aux enseignants et l'autre aux étudiants de 1ère Année Master universitaire, Anglais, nous ont permis de mettre le doigt sur des défaillances de différents ordres: l'absence et/ou le non-respect des critères d'évaluation, l'absence de la prise en charge psychologique des étudiants avant et durant les examens ainsi que les conditions psycho-pédagogiques lors de la tenue des examens. Ceci nous a amené à émettre des propositions / recommandations pédagogiques qui visent à l'amélioration des conditions de la tenue des examens du module de l'expression orale tant sur le plan méthodologique, que sur le plan psychologique.
تتتناول هذه الدراسة مدى موضوعية نتائج الامتحانات الشفهية الممنوحة من طرف أساتذة هذا المقياس في الجامعات، وتهدف هذه الدراسة إلى إقلاع الوضوء على واقع إجراء الامتحانات الشفهية من منطلق تجارب الطلبة والأساتذة على السواء، كما تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى معرفة مدى احترام الأساتذة المقيمين لمعايير الامتحانات. تعتبر هذه الدراسة وصفية حيث تم الاستعانة بإستبيانان اخترهما وجه لأساتذة مقياس التعبير الشفهي والأخر وجه إلى طلبة السنة الأولى ماستر نظام (اً ل ا م دي) في معهد اللغة الإنجليزية، ويدعوه كل استبيان إلى كشف نوع التحضيرات التي تسلي الامتحانات، كما يلقي الضوء على الظروف المحيطة بإجراء هذه الامتحانات ومدى تطبيق الأساتذة للمعايير اللازمة أثناء تقسيم قدراتهم الشفهية. اعتمادًا على إجابة الفتيين، خلصت الدراسة إلى وجود عدد كبير من النقاط في منظومة التقييم سواء على مستوى أداء الأساتذة أو على مستوى الظروف المحيطة بالامتحانات وذلك فرصة بقترح مجموعة من الأفكار بغرض تحسين مستوى الامتحانات والحصول على نتائج موضوعية.