

TEACHERS' AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT CLASSROOM-BASED SPEAKING TESTS

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***Abstract.** As it is clear for everyone, teaching a foreign language is considerably important mission in such active days that communicating in foreign language is being required highly. That means we should deal with the latest innovative teaching methods not limiting with only inherited stable trends in our classroom.*

For this aim, testing is considered as an indispensable part of the teaching and learning processes. Since testing, teaching, and learning are closely related, it is inevitable for them to have an influence on each other. Tests are thought to affect teaching and learning positively or negatively. Direct testing is seen to have greater effect on productive and receptive skills than other tests do. Speaking skills is one of the English language skills which is tested through direct tests. And it is believed that getting ready for speaking tests improves the general speaking skills of students. From this point of view, this article is conducted to deal with the issues of classroom based speaking tests through pointing teachers' and students' perceptions on it.

Introduction. All teachers want what they teach to be learnt by their students. They have been looking for ways to make our classes more important for students. One way which has been heavily used is to test what you teach to make students learn. If there is a test at the end of a period of instruction and students are graded accordingly, they have a good reason to study. Teaching and testing go hand in hand. Thus, testing has an important place in the field of education. It is the same case in language teaching. Testing is an indispensable part of second language teaching. Some studies in the science literature [2, 259] have found out a number

of factors of the influences of tests on teaching and learning. For example; there is a term which is called 'washback effect' that can show the influences of tests on teaching and learning. Unfortunately, it has not been studied adequately. The reason for this can stem from the fact that it is a complex phenomenon. It is more sorrowful even though several speaking assessment techniques have been developed thus far, teachers who attempt to conduct speaking tests tend to face many difficulties such as the considerable amount of time necessary for administering and scoring the tests, the special techniques required for rating speaking performance, and the tremendous financial burden either on the students or the school if the available speaking tests in the market are used. These obstacles result in the low practicality of speaking tests, which seems to be of great concern, especially in classroom-based contexts. Owing to the low practicality of speaking tests, even when teachers organize speaking activities in class, they tend to conduct speaking assessments infrequently. However, classroom tests are likely to have just as big an impact cumulatively. With regard to the testing of speaking ability, while a number of studies have looked at ways of improving the reliability and validity of tests and at the tasks used in testing speaking little attention has been given to the influences of these speaking tests on teaching and learning. Additionally, the ability to communicate and to be understood in the English language through different language tasks is more emphasized in classrooms [1, 20]; Some researchers [7, 49] believe that students' speaking fluency and confidence would improve if they are involved in active, engaging, and collaborative language learning activities. Although there are some approaches to teaching speaking from structural, functional and interactional points of view, we look at the issue from interactional perspectives. According to Hughes the ability to interact successfully in that language involves comprehension as well as production. Furthermore, the emphasis is placed on appropriateness rather than on ability to form grammatically correct sentences in testing productive skills. For that reason, for the purpose of testing speaking, teachers should bring meaningful tasks which represent daily life such as description, providing information, explanation,

narration, reporting an event, having a discussion on a topic, and should provide prompts, elicit responses and provide feedback. That's the reason why the present study is dedicated to investigate the impact of various classroom-based speaking tests on teachers' and students' attitudes towards improving their English-speaking skills.

Measurement-driven Instruction and Curriculum Alignment. It is a term related to the „relationship between testing and teaching or learning“. Cheng and Curtis [4, 4] state that „tests or examinations can or should drive teaching, and hence learning“ and that this result is described as ‘measurement-driven instruction’ by Popham. Measurement-driven instruction brings positive connotations to mind, claiming that „testing should drive curriculum and thereby teaching and learning“ [5, 295). Cheng and Curtis state that if driving teaching is the target, there should be a parallelism between the test format and content or curriculum. It refers to this as ‘curriculum alignment’. Since this fact narrows the and teachers“ training practices, it brings negative connotations to mind. According to Cheng and Curtis this alignment, including the situation in which a new examination is added to the 10 education system with the purpose of having a beneficial effect on teaching and learning process, has been labelled differently by different researchers. While Frederiksen and Collins refer to this alignment as systematic validity, Messick (1996) sees it as consequential aspect of construct validity and Bahman and Palmer (1996) and Baker call it test impact.

Techniques on classroom based speaking tests. Story retelling (. First, retelling refers to reproducing a story orally in English. An examinee can retell a story either in a different way or in the same way as the original adapted from Chaudron) [3,779–780] techniques have been widely used not only as a teaching activity but also a speech elicitation tool in second language acquisition. When story retelling is used for reading comprehension, the language of reproduction seems to be the first language (L1) in order to avoid the underestimation of reading comprehension. However, when the target of a story retelling task is the learners' speaking ability, they are asked to retell the content in L2, as in the case of the

SRST. In regular retelling activities, the learners are provided with either a reading or listening text or shown a story using the TV or other related devices and are then asked to retell the content, mostly without looking at the original source. The SRST can also take the form of either reading or listening. However, the present study focuses only on the former, because a reading mode of text presentation would be suitable for learners at the beginning and intermediate levels of proficiency, which are our target groups. In general, when the same text is provided, the learners tend to find it easier to comprehend through reading rather than listening, as they have better control over the pace of their comprehension. The SRST consists of two sections: reading a story and retelling it. In the reading section, we mainly seek to measure reading ability. We predict that if the test takers cannot answer the comprehension questions, they will be determined to be at the pre-speaking level, where they lack basic linguistic knowledge. In addition, this section may inform us whether the level of text difficulty was suited to their ability. In the retelling section, the main construct that we want to measure is speaking ability. This is specifically measured with two functions: retelling the story and stating opinions about it. In the story retelling task, the examinees convey the information they have just received as clearly as possible and narrate as much of the story as they can. This task seems [8,345-376] authentic because there are real-world situations where the examinees tell listeners about what they have read or heard.

Conclusion. From the points that we discussed, it may be summary that there are many techniques both activities, like addressed in the article, based on speaking tests in classroom. All we should do is entering them into teaching process completely. They can have a positive impact on the learners' speaking skills and to the learning of the English language in general. In this process group role-plays, pair work, individual speaking task and group work activities can be seen to be a few of the most engaging and collaborative learning strategies that can be employed in the language classroom. Students may be interested to do any language tasks when they are with their classmates as they may feel the support

from each other. And they feel more relaxing and have strong confidence to their knowledge via individual games acknowledging the importance of it for improving students' speaking skills. By the way, to support the successful speaking tests teachers have more responsibilities on their shoulders basically, being creative and getting great consideration before designing the speaking activities for testing.

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