Assessing the Speaking Skill: A Study in the Third Level Education

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to get deeper into the concept and process of speaking assessment. The assessment has a significant impact on students' learning because it plays a vital role in fostering students' speaking capability in the learning process. Evaluating and assessing students' achievement in the learning process can give the direct impact toward students learning directly. This study focuses on the speaking assessment at the higher education level, what is the purpose of the speaking assessment, the technique and tools that is used in the assessment. The method used in this study is library research method, by collecting and identifying factual data from various sources and experts' opinions. Researchers found from the study the purpose of speaking skill assessment is to measure the learning impact. Some techniques in conducting speaking assessment are: public speaking assessment, short and answer assessment, peer-assessment, self-assessment, direct, semi-direct, and indirect assessment, and digital formative assessment and the dynamic assessment for both direct and online or technology basis. The tools in conducting the speaking skills assessment are holistic rubric, analytical rubric, computer-based oral exams.

Keywords: assessment, higher-education, speaking

Introduction

To assess the level of students' verbal proficiency, teacher must evaluate the students' English-speaking skills. This is also a strong indication of someone's ability to communicate. English is one of the languages that bears the label of an international language in addition to being the foreign language that people throughout the world use the most. (Fromkin et al., 2009). In addition, it is the responsibility of the instructor to build and enhance the learning environment so that students acquire the understanding and skills necessary for everyday communication. Real-world student performance assessments have a significant impact on how teachers and students acquire these skills. Since the contemporary era requires communicators to be able to talk fluently, English speakers need to have good speaking abilities (Li-ping & Ahmad, 2023). Sari (2019) states that language is something uttered, requiring speakers to use it for conversation rather than just learning about it. There are a number of reasons that affect students' English-speaking abilities, including the fact that they lack confidence when utilizing the language, they have learned outside of the classroom and rarely practice speaking it. The following elements are stated by Liubashenko & Kornieva (2019), including students, instructional practices, curriculum, and environment.

Furthermore, oral proficiency is regarded as the representation of learners speaking ability as their productive skills.

(Köroğlu, 2019) stated that proficiency in foreign languages is commonly assessed through an individual's speaking skills, which are regarded as a primary indicator. The ability to speak in a second language (L2) is widely recognized as an essential skill for learners also teachers particularly, those who intend to instruct the target language in the future. Since anxiety is the major problem found among the learners, a dynamic and relaxing mode should be employed. The Interventionist dynamic assessment (IDA) created an environment that was authentic, creative, and conducive to relaxation, resulting in a reduction in their level of speaking anxiety. The administration of Direct Assessment (DA) can be utilized as a means to evaluate the speaking performance of foreign language learners inside language classroom settings (Köroğlu, 2019). Furthermore, it was also determined that the interventionist strategy maintained and improved student teachers' oral skills achievement. A lesson's assessment is a crucial component (Magnan, 1986). Without assessment, it will be impossible to accurately determine how one's skills or learning outcomes are progressing. Quality assessment methods, instruments, or rubrics are required to ascertain learning outcomes (Sari et al., 2019). The caliber of the assessment instrument, tool, or rubric has an advantage over the caliber of the assessment outcomes. The quality of the tools, instruments, or assessment rubric has an

impact on the assessment (Sanjaya, 2022) the speaking ability assessment, and this has an impact on the quality of the speaking ability assessment results. To ascertain a person's speaking ability, an examination of speaking ability is conducted (Kornieva & Vashchylo, 2021).

Many significant studies also revealed that the dynamic assessment more promising and produced a more positive test environment during speaking skills assessment by using mediation, facilitating aids, and technology (Matthew, 2005). Dynamic assessment also more humanist and successful for an L2 learners. DA can be used as an alternative assessment to promote students English speaking ability, The findings imply that DA can be implemented in the classroom to foster the development of students' English-speaking skills (Siwathaworn, 2018).

Another study from (Haez, 2022) and (Safa & Malek, 2015) revealed that the two main models of dynamic assessment, interactionist DA with mediation and sharing engagement between examiner an examiner and interventionist DA by employing standardized administration measurements and various sorts of assistance to create scientific data that can be used to compare and contrast other measures within and between groups, as well as to anticipate the learners' performance in other activities, had a positive effects for Iranian learner. Engaging in online Dynamic assessment has

the potential to impact the cognitive development of individuals. Based on the Social Constructivist Theory (SCT), the findings of this study provide evidence that online Dynamic Assessment (DA), as a method of evaluating communication skills, can effectively facilitate the readiness of language learners for real-life communicative situations (Haez, 2022).

Based on the findings of the previous study, many assessments method and strategies has been revealed to achieve the goal of learner's speaking skill, but only limited research has been conducted on the oral proficiency of students utilizing Dynamic Analysis (DA) through technology-based approaches. In accordance to this, researchers focus their research to seek and get deeper perspective of what is the novelty of the best method and strategy use for speaking skill assessment in higher level. what kind of technology -based can be integrated into the existing method and strategy.

Theoretical Review

Speaking skill

Speaking, according to Nation & Newton (2009), is the process of converting thoughts or sentiments into words in the form of meaningful linguistic sounds. According to (Richards, 2008), speaking is the act of expressing one's thoughts, ideas, and feelings through the use of articulation sounds or words. Speaking, according to Brown and

Yule (2007), is the act of expressing one's thoughts, ideas, or feelings verbally through the use of language sounds. This related to the conclusion that speaking refers to the act of expressing thoughts, ideas, or innermost feelings through voice or spoken language. Speaking skills in English are the ability to express one's ideas verbally to others. However, speaking abilities are difficult to acquire if they are not regularly practiced with classmates, all English lecturers, or other English-speaking lecturers. The goal is to enhance speaking abilities, increase vocabulary, enhance language structure, perfect English vocabulary and sentence pronunciation, and train listening so that it is simple to understand what the other person is saying (Richards, 2008).

There are two supporting skills that the speaker may employ when speaking. It includes the micro and macro talents that Richards (2008) have to offer. The language chunks, stress patterns, word and phrase forms, lexical units or words, fluent speech at various delivery rates, strategic devices, grammatical words, speech in natural constituents, particular meaning in different grammatical forms, and cohesive devices in spoken discourse make up the micro skills (Richard, 2008). Richard (2008) told that the macro skills "completed the speaking skill components" that comprises of speaking methods, interconnections and connections between events and communication, sociolinguistic aspects, communicative

functions, and nonverbal clues. In the other side, speaking is the only way for people to convey their ideas via communication. They talk because it makes sense to them. They might use imitative, intense, responsive, interactive, or extended speech (Brown and Yule, 2007). However, in order to talk more effectively the following time, particularly for SL learners, speakers need to have some experiences, practices, knowledge, and subskills; micro and macro skills.

Assessment of speaking skill

Grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, pronunciation, and dialogue content are the five parts of the ability to talk (Nation & Newton, 2009). While numerous sections have been examined while they study in class, this theory will be used to evaluate the students' speaking abilities in this study. An efficient speaking test is one that is created for accurate assessment and starts with the definition of the goals and standards (Magnan, 1986). These goals can be divided into several different categories of speaking abilities (Magnan, 1986): (1) Imitative, which refers to the capacity to solely duplicate a word, phrase, or possibly a sentence. Even though this stage is merely a phonetic level of spoken production, the grading criteria can be summarized as prosodic, lexical, and grammatical aspects of language; (2) Extensive, the criteria for speaking skills that are frequently used in assessment contexts are the production of spoken language designed to demonstrate
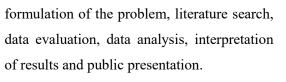
competency short stretches of oral language grammatical, phrasal, and lexical relations from phonological relationships (such as intonation, prosodic elements, stress, rhythm, and intersections) example directed response exercises, reading aloud exercises, phrase and conversation completion exercises, tasks with few image cues, such as sequences and simple relationships down to the level of simple sentences, are all examples of extensive assessment tasks; and (3) Responsive, refers to responsive assessment activities that include interaction and knowledge of the exam, but only at a very basic level, such as simple greetings and small talk, simple questioning and comments, and the like.

Method

Research method

Since the source of the data is collected by identifying various factual data and opinion from experts, library research method is applied in this research. Library research method involves identifying and locating sources that provide factual information or personal/expert opinion on a research question; necessary component of every other research method at some point. (George, 2008). Synthesis research will be the design of this research, by extracting and integrating the data from many related studies and sources to get a conclusion regarding the research issue. According to Cooper & Hedges (2009) the steps are

formulation of the problem, literature search, data evaluation, data analysis, interpretation of results and public presentation.

Article search and selection

Data collection technique in this study is the documentation of the article related to the research issue. Documentation is a technique in finding the data or the variables from book, article, journal, paper etc. (Arikunto, 2010). The instruments of the research are the articles which related to speaking assessment in the higher education level with published date range between 2015-2023. Total 8 articles then classified onto the speaking assessment with the targeted on the process including method, technique and tools.

Data analysis

The data analysis technique used in this research is content analysis. It is a technique that enables researchers to study human behavior in an indirect way.

Result

Based on the analysis revealed that there are several dominant topics in the sample of 15 articles. This research focused on the issues related to the assessing speaking skills, especially at the university level. The used samples of this research were the articles from 2015 until 2023.

Purpose of speaking skill assessment

Measure learning impact, referring to the article from Baleni (2015) who mentioned that assessment has a direct impact on students' learning since the students typically focus on the topics covered in the assessment stage. So, whether an assessment should be used to measure learning or learning itself should be a key factor to take into account.

Formative, illuminative, and summative assessment, an article by Gultom (2016) who reviewed about three different purposes of assessment were referred as; formative, illuminative, and summative assessment. Formative assessment is carried out to determine what is working and what is not, as well as what issues require resolution and it focuses on continual development and improvement activities. Then, illuminative assessment is carried out to learn more about how various components of the programs operate and it offers a greater comprehension of the teaching and learning processes that take place in the program. Lastly, summative assessment is focused with figuring out a program's efficiency, efficacy, and to some degree acceptability.

Objective and subjective purpose, the purpose of speaking abilities can be valued both objectively and subjectively, corresponding to an article written by Ulker (2017). Students must genuinely feel adequately assessed during the assessment process. The exam then gives professors the opportunity to assess students' analytical ability, inventiveness, etc. subjectively.

Authentic Purpose, according to an article by Rukmini & Saputri (2017),

speaking skills assessment is used to decipher and express meanings for practical applications purposes in interactive contexts.

Techniques of speaking skill assessment

Dynamic assessment (DA), there is three articles by (Köroğlu, 2019), (Safa & Malek, 2015), and thesis research by (Matthew, 2005) who reviewed about the dynamic assessment which has two main models: interactionist DA with process of mediation and sharing engagement between examiner an examinee and interventionist DA. The model that employs the standardized administration measurements and various sorts of assistance to create scientific data that can be used to compare and contrast other measures within and between groups, as well as to anticipate the learners' performance in other activities.

Public speaking assessment, cited from an article by Nash, et.al., (2016), public speaking assessment is a typical method of assessment used in higher education and is used to determine a student's ability to formulate and present a persuasive argument.

Peer-Assessment, there were two articles by Spiller (2012), and Wenny & Fajar (2019) who studied about peer-assessment. In article from Spiller (2012), peer assessment can assist students in filling in the gaps in their knowledge and comprehension so they can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the learning process. Moreover, an article from Wenny & Fajar (2009) reported that peer-assessment

was more effective than teacher's assessment since it encourages students to participate more actively in exchanging ideas.

Short questions and answer assessment, an article written by Sahyoni & Zaim (2017) reported that short questions and answers in a speaking skills assessment technique can motivate students to talk enthusiastically and promptly and boost their confidence.

Self-assessment, an article by Alek, et.al (2020) explained the result of using self-assessment could increase the communication between the teachers and the students since it allows the students to have some clarification during the self-assessment process. Also, the students' motivations to get a better performance were increased.

Direct, semi-direct, and indirect assessment, according to an article by Musa (2021), a teacher can evaluate students' speaking abilities using three different assessment techniques, which are: indirect (such as multiple-choice tests), semi-direct (such as pre-recorded questions), and direct measurement. Face-to-face testing is more engaging to test-takers and may produce a more accurate assessment.

Digital formative assessment, according to a study published by Körolu (2021), students speaking fluency and correctness could be improved by adopting digital formative assessment. This method made use of online exercises that mimicked those seen in a classroom. It engaged both

teachers and students during the assessment and is very successful in enhancing students' speaking abilities in a variety of ways.

Tools of speaking skills assessment

Speaking skills assessment rubric, there are two types of rubrics that can be used to evaluate college students: an analytical rubric and a holistic rubric. The holistic rubric concentrates on a general overview of what the kids are capable of and what they are not. Analytical rubrics, on the other hand, take each of the aspects and criteria into account individually. Detecting the students' performance and ability on grammar, vocabulary use, or pronunciation with a different score with each test item during an oral examination is one example of an analytical rubric (Musa, 2021).

Computer-based oral exams, an article written by Sayin (2015) reviewed that computer-based oral exams have grown increasingly prominent, along with the use of skill-based English exams like TOEFL, TOEIC, PTE, and BULATS, as well as related online speaking assessments. Due to the use of these exams, both the evaluation process and the way language skills are taught have had to change. Language education strategies and techniques already place a greater emphasis on teaching abilities than on teaching grammar and vocabulary. However, schools' unique exam policies and their practice exams have not really changed since the switch to a computer-based system. An article by Latifa, et al., (2015) reported

that the speaking test could be assessed by the arrangement of rubric that was called as Practical Rating Rubric of Speaking Test (PRRST). Each component of communicative performance had a band score on one of the four scales provided by the rubric. The usual communication skills used in the P2RST rubric are vocabulary knowledge, grammatical proficiency, pronunciation mastery, discourse mastery, and strategic knowledge. The unique feature of the P2RST rubric was its integration of an analytical and holistic scoring process, which spared the rater from having to waste time rating each participant's test results. The P2RST rubric's applicability may be seen from three different points of view: the simple accumulation of scoring; the P2RST rubric does not operate on extra time; and the P2RST do not work on high costs.

Mobile-based formative assessment (MBFA), a review article by Hasan, et al., (2021) provided few studies which revealed that some MBFA practices in EFL speaking classes are effective to a certain extent than the other tools. Most of them followed the basic formative assessment process and strategies. Moreover, this study also presented research done by Hu & Galagher (2013) which revealed three design principles for implementing MBFA successfully. Those design principles are: (1) learners should have free access to the assessment tool; (2) the assessment should be brief and use as few words or images as possible; and (3) the

work should be created in an approach that allows for revision and modifications in the descriptive feedback. Instead of the conventional end-of-semester preparation, this promotes self-learning, self-testing, and continual learning, which gives students chances to grow their deeper understanding across all of the course's material.

Technology based and online dynamic assessment, research findings from (Haez, 2022) revealed that online with technology based dynamic assessment more effective than traditional mode of assessment. The study highlights the advantageous outcomes of online dynamic assessment (DA), emphasizing its potential as a valuable platform for language learners and instructors alike. It allows students to engage in interactive exchanges with the teacher throughout the learning process. During online dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) treatment sessions, the facilitator assumes an active role in the evaluation process by making observations and drawing inferences. This aligns with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (SCT), which posits that learning takes place through social interactions. This clearly highlights the inherent social aspect of the learning process, emphasizing the significance of collaborative and interactive learning methodologies.

Conclusion

English teachers must determine whether or not their students have acquired competence through the English learning process before they can assess the results of their students' English learning. The aim of this research was to get deeper concept and process of speaking skills assessment at the higher education level, including the purpose, techniques and tools.

According to the results of this research, the researchers took four articles that mentioned the purposes of speaking skills assessment that are divided into four categories, which are; measure learning impact, formative, illuminative, summative assessment, objective and subjective assessment, and authentic purpose. Then, the researchers used seven articles to provide information about the techniques of speaking skills assessments. From the results showed the techniques of speaking skills were; dynamic assessment, public speaking assessment, short and answer assessment, peer-assessment, self-assessment, direct, semi-direct, and indirect assessment, and digital formative assessment. The last point was the tools of speaking skills assessment. The researchers provided four articles, and it can be concluded that there were four tools to assess the students' speaking skills which were; holistic rubric, analytical rubric, computer-based oral exams, practical rating rubric of speaking test (PRRST), and mobile based formative assessment (MBFA). Therefore, those articles were used to review the theories related to speaking skills assessment. Further research is expected to

study specifically on the impact of dynamic assessment on online and technology basis toward the learner speaking skill in higher education.

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