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ASSESSMENT OF ENGLISH SPEAKING AS A PEDAGOGICAL PROCESS

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this research is to study and evaluate the assessment of English speaking skills as a basic pedagogical process of language education.

The research uses a mixed method approach using qualitative and quantitative research methods. A literature review, classroom observations, and interviews with language teachers were conducted to gather insights into current assessment practices.

The study showed that formative and summative assessment are important for proper assessment of students' English speaking skills. However, challenges such as subjectivity, time constraints, and environmental factors may affect the results.

Assessment of English speaking skills is an important but complex pedagogical process that requires careful consideration of both methodology and criteria. The study highlights the importance of adopting diverse and flexible assessment strategies to ensure fairness and accuracy in assessment.

KEYWORDS

English speaking, language assessment, pedagogical process, language skills, formative assessment, summative assessment, speaking skills.



INTRODUCTION

In language education, the development of speaking skills is a key aspect of achieving communicative competence, especially in learning a foreign language such as English. Speaking, one of the basic language skills, plays a crucial role in real-world communication and is often used as a key indicator of language proficiency. Thus, assessment of English speaking skills has become an important component of language teaching, helping teachers to monitor student progress, provide feedback, and guide future instruction.

Despite its importance, the assessment of speech skills presents its own challenges. Unlike reading and writing, which can be assessed through objective criteria, speaking is more subjective and involves assessment of various factors such as pronunciation, fluency, coherence, grammar and vocabulary. In addition, speech assessment is often influenced by external factors such as the environment, student anxiety, and evaluator bias, which can affect the reliability of the results.

Given these complexities, teachers should use effective and diverse assessment methods that provide a comprehensive assessment of students' speaking skills. The introduction of formative assessment, peer assessment and the use of technology in assessment are gaining popularity as

they offer more dynamic ways of measuring speaking skills.

This article aims to study the pedagogical principles of English speaking assessment, to study the methods currently used in educational settings, and to solve the problems that teachers face in assessing this skill. In addition, it provides insights into how these challenges can be overcome through innovative and practical strategies, thereby contributing to more effective language teaching and learning.

Analysis of literature on the topic.

The assessment of speaking skills in English language education has been the subject of extensive research for many years, and scholars have explored various methods, problems, and pedagogical approaches. This literature review highlights key themes and findings from previous research that contribute to understanding discourse assessment as a pedagogical process.

Speaking is an important skill in second language acquisition and serves as the primary mode of communication. Brown (2004) emphasizes the need for effective speech assessment because speaking skills often reflect general language competence [6]. Fulcher and Davidson (2007) stated that speech assessment is not only an assessment of linguistic



knowledge, but also a measure of the student's ability to convey ideas clearly and communicate meaningfully [8].

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001) also emphasizes the importance of oral communication as one of the key competences in language learning. According to the CEFR, speech assessment should focus on fluency, interactivity and the ability to adapt language use to different contexts, making it a holistic assessment process.

One of the main difficulties in evaluating speech is its subjective nature. Hughes (2002) highlights the difficulty of ensuring fairness and consistency in assessment as oral performance can be influenced by external factors such as assessor bias, student anxiety and classroom environment [3].

Luoma (2004) adds that speaking assessment often requires more time and resources than other forms of language assessment such as reading or writing assessment. He noted that oral assessment, especially in large classes, takes a lot of time to assess individual students, making the process inefficient [4].

Several assessment methods have been proposed to assess speaking skills. As defined by O'Malley and Pearce (1996), formative assessment involves continuous assessment throughout the learning process, which allows teachers to monitor progress

and provide immediate feedback. This type of assessment is commonly used in classroom interactions, group discussions, and impromptu speaking tasks to help students gradually improve their speaking skills [10].

On the other hand, summative assessment is usually conducted at the end of a course or unit to measure overall speaking skills. McNamara (2000) emphasizes the role of summative assessments such as oral exams and presentations in providing a systematic assessment of a learner's ability to use language in a specific context. These assessments often rely on a rubric to provide consistent scoring between different raters [9].

A study by Thornbury (2005) highlights the importance of task-based assessment in the assessment of speaking skills. He argued that role plays, interviews, and debates provide more authentic opportunities for students to demonstrate their speaking skills in realistic communication scenarios [11].

To accurately assess speaking skills, teachers typically use standardized rubrics that include several criteria, such as fluency, pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary range, and coherence. Bachman and Palmer (1996) argue that these criteria must be clearly defined and applied consistently to ensure fairness and reliability in evaluation. Rubrics provide both teachers



and students with a clear understanding of what is being assessed, reducing subjectivity [5].

Weir (2005) discusses the importance of balancing fluency and accuracy in speech assessment. He argued that while grammatical correctness and pronunciation are important to assess, communicative competence, defined as the ability to convey meaning effectively, should be prioritized [12]. This is supported by Luoma's (2004) study, which found that overly strict assessment criteria focused on grammatical accuracy can negatively affect students' self-confidence and willingness to engage in spontaneous communication.

METHODOLOGY

The research methodology of this study is designed to comprehensively study the assessment of English speaking skills in pedagogical settings. A mixed-methods approach combining qualitative and quantitative research methods was adopted to gather rich data on current assessment practices, challenges and potential improvements. Below are the main components of the research methodology.

RESULTS

The findings of this study were drawn from qualitative data collected through interviews and audience observations, as well as quantitative analysis of student performance in oral exams and other speaking tasks. The results provide insight into the effectiveness

of different assessment methods, the challenges teachers face in assessing speaking skills, and the role of rubrics and technology in improving assessment fairness and accuracy.

Speech evaluation methods

The research showed that both formative and summative assessment are widely used by pedagogues to assess students' speaking ability. However, the balance between the two approaches varies considerably across institutions.

Formative assessments are used more often in informal classroom settings, such as group discussions, role plays, and impromptu speaking tasks. Teachers report that formative assessment allows them to provide immediate feedback that helps improve students' speaking skills over time. At the same time, they also noted that it is difficult to objectively evaluate each student due to time constraints.

Summative Assessment - Formal assessments such as oral exams and presentations are usually used at the end of a unit or term. These assessments allowed for more structured assessment, with most teachers using standardized rubrics to assess students on fluency, pronunciation, grammar, and coherence. The results of the overall assessment were usually used for the final assessment.

Speech evaluation criteria



An analysis of the assessment rubrics showed that teachers generally focused on five main criteria:

- fluency
- pronunciation
- grammatical correctness
- vocabulary
- consistency.

When evaluating student performance:

Fluency and consistency were the most emphasized criteria in formative and summative assessment. Students who performed well in these areas were generally able to express ideas fluently and logically, which increased their chances of obtaining high scores.

Pronunciation—Teachers noted that pronunciation is a very difficult aspect to assess due to different regional accents and student backgrounds. Some teachers were more lenient in this area, focusing on whether or not the students understood.

Grammar and Vocabulary—Although grammar was consistently assessed, teachers reported variability in their emphasis on vocabulary. In some cases, students with limited vocabulary who could still communicate effectively were given positive feedback.

Student performance in speech tasks

Quantitative analysis of student performance data on oral exams and speaking assignments revealed several trends:

- High-Achieving Students: High-Achieving students generally demonstrated strong fluency and coherence along with correct use of grammar. These students were able to master complex topics with ease and showed confidence in their speaking skills.
- Average performing students: These students usually had difficulty speaking fluently, often pausing to think about correct vocabulary or grammatical structure. Although they were generally intelligible, their speech lacked smoothness and flow, resulting in an average score.
- Low-achieving students: Students in this category often displayed self-doubt, had difficulty with pronunciation, and often made grammatical errors. Their speech was often fragmented and they could not carry on a coherent conversation.

The results of this study confirm that the assessment of English speaking skills requires a multifaceted approach that takes into account objective and subjective factors. While formative assessment provides valuable feedback and helps improve, summative assessment offers a more structured way of assessing overall competence. The use of standardized rubrics and technology-enhanced assessments helps address some of the issues of



subjectivity and time constraints, but there are still areas for improvement.

One of the most notable results is the importance of balancing fluency, pronunciation, grammar and consistency in assessment. Students who were able to communicate effectively, even with minor grammatical or pronunciation errors, usually performed successfully on speaking tasks. This suggests that communicative competence should be the focus of speech assessment rather than strict adherence to grammatical accuracy.

CONCLUSION

Assessment of English speaking skills as a pedagogical process is important and complex. This study has shown that although the assessment of speaking ability is challenging, it is an important element of language education that can have a significant impact on a learner's communicative competence. A combination of formative and summative assessment provides a balanced approach that allows for both continuous feedback and systematic assessment of student performance.

The use of standardized rubrics has proven to be an effective tool in reducing subjectivity in grading and ensuring consistency between different raters. Additionally, the integration of technologies such as speech recognition software and recording tools offer promising solutions to the time constraints and

objectivity challenges teachers face when assessing large groups of students.

At the same time, the research emphasized that assessment methods should be tailored to the individual needs of students, especially for low-achieving students who may struggle with standardized assessment methods. The results suggest that although grammar and pronunciation are important, teachers should prioritize communicative competence by focusing on students' ability to convey meaning effectively.

In conclusion, the assessment of English speaking skills requires a flexible, holistic approach that includes a variety of methods and tools to improve the accuracy, fairness and efficiency of the assessment process. Continued research and innovation in this area is needed, especially in the use of technology and addressing issues related to student anxiety and large class sizes. By continually improving assessment practices, teachers can create a more conducive environment that promotes language development and improves learning outcomes.

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