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Assessing Business English speaking skill

The case of BE students of Kasdi Merbah

University career centre

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to:

My Mother and my Father

My Brothers and Sisters

And To all my friends

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I would like to express my thanks and appreciations to the following people who helped me achieve my goal:

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List of Abbreviations

BE: Business English

CLT: Communicative Language Teaching

EAP: English for academic purposes

EBP: English for Business Purposes

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ELT: English Language Teaching

ELTS: English Language Teaching Service

EOP: English for occupational purposes

ESBP: English for Business Purposes

ESP: English for specific purpose

L_2: Second Language

UKMO: University of Kasdi Merbah Ouargla

Q: Question

%: rate

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General introduction

1.1 overview of the study

While it is obvious to devote much time to testing grammar and vocabulary, assessing speaking has not included in teaching/ learning process. "Speaking is a neglected language skill in many classrooms". (Baker& Westrup, 2003, p. 5) With the advent of new approaches to English language teaching (henceforth ELT), such as the Communicative Language Teaching (henceforth CLT) speaking skill practise and assessment is to form a considerable part of language education. According to Fulcher (2003) "The theory and practice of testing second language speaking is the youngest subfield of language testing". (p.1) Today's scholars and practitioners in teaching/learning generally agree that, of all macro skills of language, speaking, is extremely difficult to assess. Yet, Assessing speaking is problematic for numerous theoretical and practical reasons. Very often, tests for assessing speaking lack theoretical grounds. At times, such tests also are not suitable for the conditions and requirements of the learning process. Subjective characteristics of teachers and examiners have huge impacts on the way students display their language abilities and the way these language abilities are assessed. Therefore, assessing students' speaking remains one of the greatest challenges facing teachers in doing their work. The goal of this study is to consider the theoretical underpinnings of speaking assessments/tests and understand what contemporary researchers have to say about the major components of assessing speaking skill in the field of business English.

1.2 objectives of the study

Through the present research, we aim at investigating to what extent the speaking test is reliable at the career centre. Thus, our main aim is to contribute to our understanding of how they assess students' speaking skill and to what extent could help BE students in performing real life tasks.

1.3 The problematic

In language teaching and learning aspect, the speaking skill belongs to productive skills together with writing. Speaking skills form an important part of an EFL course, yet the difficulties that face teachers in assessing oral skills lead them using inappropriate tests or even not testing speaking at all. (Knight, 1992) Therefore, the problem we are confronted within this research is to know how the speaking skill is assessed and what are the different

speaking tasks used in the test. This leads us to hypothesize that: the interview is a suitable task for assessing BE students' speaking skill and the speaking test in the career centre is valid and reliable.

1.4 Contribution of the dissertation

For better understanding of the speaking skill at the proficiency level of BE students in the career centre, this study can help the course planners of career centre in designing appropriate tests in assessing the speaking skill. Furthermore, this study can be a guideline for learners as they are future teachers since it provides them with the appropriate ways to assess the speaking skill.

1.5 Definition of terms

The following terms are emphasised in this study:

Assessment: a systematic approach to collecting information and making inferences about the ability of a student or the quality or success of a teaching course on the basis of various sources of evidence. Assessment may be done by test, interview, questionnaire, observation, etc. For example, assessment of the comprehension ability of an immigrant student may be necessary to discover if the student is able to follow a course of study in a school, or whether extra language teaching is needed. Students may be tested at the beginning and again at the end of a course to assess the quality of the teaching on the course. The term "testing" is often associated with large-scale standardized tests, whereas the term "assessment" is used in a much wider sense to mean a variety of approaches in testing and assessment. (Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics, 6th edition)

Assessment criteria: n the features of a student's performance on an activity which will be used as the basis for judging a student's performance. For example in assessing a student's writing, assessment criteria might include grammatical accuracy, punctuation, and organization of ideas. (ibid)

rating scale: n (in testing) a technique for measuring language proficiency in which aspects of a person's language use are judged using scales that go from worst to best performance in a number of steps. For example, the components of fluency in a foreign language could be rated on the following scales: naturalness of language unnatural   1 2 3 4 5   natural

Style of expression   foreign   1 2 3 4 5   native-speaker-like

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<div align="center">Clarity of expression   unclear   1 2 3 4 5   clear</div>

For each component skill, the listener rates the speaker on a scale of 1 to 5. Overall fluency can then be measured by taking account of the three scores for each speaker. (ibid)

Scoring: n is procedures for giving numerical values or scores to the responses in a test. (ibid)

Task: (in teaching) an activity which is designed to help achieve a particular learning goal.In assessment refers to how success on the task will be determined. (ibid)

1.6 Dissertation organisation

The present research is basically divided into three main chapters. Chapter one is devoted to the literature review, chapter two and three are concerned with the analysis of both teachers' interview and learners' questionnaire and their discussion.

Chapter one provides a detailed explanation about the process of assessing the speaking skill. The second chapter deals with research design and methodology. It contains a detailed analysis of the teachers' interview and learners' questionnaire. The last chapter is devoted to the interpretation and discussion of the results obtained from teachers' interview and learners' questionnaire and provides some suggestions about how to develop speaking skill tests.

II. Chapter one: Literature Review

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2.1Introduction

The need to communicate in the English language is the central aim of millions of people around the world. The teaching of speaking seeks develop individual's communicative skills, since speaking is fundamental component in teaching business English. Yet, speaking is considered as a difficult language skill to assess due to several factors. This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section is entitled ESP and assessment it includes an overview of ESP and EBP, the definition of assessment in ESP and EBP and its characteristics. The second section deals with the speaking skill in EBP, tasks and scales of BE assessment.

2.2 ESP and assessment

2.2.1 Definition of ESP

ESP is a part of a great movement of English language teaching. It takes from different disciplines in addition to applied linguistics. There is an overlap between ESP and general English, but it is different from it in many aspects. This difference lies in the fact that ESP courses often have explicit and direct purpose unlike general English courses.

ESP is an approach to language teaching based on learners' needs, their awareness of learning purposes and on language as central component. Therefore, ESP focuses on practical outcomes rather than theoretical matters. (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998)

Hutchinson and waters (1987) assumed that ESP is an approach rather than a product. Thus, ESP is not a product that includes one kind of language or methodology or a specific type of teaching materials, but an approach to language learning.

ESP methodology differs from that of general English, because it is related to specific profession or discipline. As Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) stressed two aspects of ESP methodology: the first one is that ESP methodology should reflect the disciplines and profession it serves. The second one is that learner_ teacher relationship is different from of general English i.e. the teacher of business English is a consultant rather than a controller as in general English. ESP is divided into two main areas: English for Academic purposes EAP, and English for Occupational purposes. (ibid)

2.2.2 Definition of Business English

EBP is an area of greatest activity in ESP. It is required in occupational contexts such as, business, finance, banking, and accounting that is taught to adult learners working or preparing to work in business contexts. These learners have clear purposes and expect high quality and professionally offered courses. (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998)

According to Donna (2000), Business English courses are the most popular courses among adult workers in comparison with those courses of general English because they have very clear purposes and depend on learners occupational purposes.

Generally, business English courses operate within groups as members of transactional world. They are specific and tackle an immense area of business contexts where English is used in order to perform a particular task related to the work place. Moreover, EBP courses offer learners special language knowledge and professional communication skills that they need in their occupations. Such courses focus on both macro skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and micro skills (telephoning, writing memo, etc...) (ibid)

Rogers (1998) assumed that in business English courses, learners can use their personal professional knowledge or experience at work, while teachers do not necessarily have experience and background knowledge about their learners' context.

Finally, EBP courses have very clear straightforward purposes with high quality results. Its primary and main concern is to communicate effectively.

2.2.3 Definition of assessment

Assessment is a fundamental component in learning- teaching process. Therefore, there are several definitions of assessment.

Allen (2004) cited that assessment is to use empirical data on learners to make judgements on programs and improve students' learning. Also, assessment is considered as a process of gathering data from different sources for the sake of understanding what learners know, understand, and what they can do with their knowledge in performing real life tasks. (Huba & Freed, 2000)

According to Erwin (1991), assessment is a systematic way for making decisions about learners' development. This means, that assessment is a process of describing, choosing,

designing, collecting, analysing, and interpreting and taking data to promote student's learning. The fact that ESP focuses on the ability of performing specific tasks; assessment is paramount in it.

2.2.4 Types of assessment in ESP

There are several types of assessment in ESP. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) maintained that there are three types of assessment: placement tests, achievement tests and proficiency tests.

First, placement tests are tests at the beginning of the ESP course. These kinds of tests aim at placing learners' state of knowledge before the beginning of the course .Placement tests determine if the learner needs the course, and what sort of course should take. Also, they have formative role in the sense that its results help in setting the content of the ESP course. Yet, a good placement test does not show only what the learners lack, but also what capacities have to be used in promoting the ESP course. (ibid)

Second, achievement tests are tests that show how well the learner is developing during the course. The test results can motivates the learner to go further, and show how successful is the course in achieving objectives. (ibid) As it is mentioned by McNamara (2000) "achievement tests accumulate evidence during, or at the end of a course of study in order to see whether and where progress has been made in terms of the goal of learning". (p.26) This means that achievement tests gather information during or at the end of the course to see the development of learning. Generally, achievement tests are based on the taught syllabus and the teaching methods used in the course: their content is related to the course content, to the materials and books that were used and the testing techniques reflect the course methodology. (Sarosdy, Bencze , Poór & Vadnay, 2000)

Finally, proficiency tests are designed to test learners' proficiency in performing particular task. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) maintained that proficiency tests are most commonly used in ESP in the sense that ESP gives learners the opportunity to perform specific tasks. They added that this kind of tests give valuable information if test takers are proficient enough to carry out tasks that are required in specific situation. Moreover, such tests are considered to be criterion-referenced tests in terms that learners are measured against defined range of explicit criteria.

2.2.5 An overview of testing language for business purposes

Although there have been tests of general proficiency for many years, language for specific purposes has little interest. Changes and developments in theories of language learning and teaching led to the development of ESP as well as led to an awareness of the necessity to construct a set of testing measurements. O'Sullivan (2006)

In the case of testing language for business purposes Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) was the first test to emerge. It was established by Educational Testing Service (ETS) in the USA in 1979.This test was based on psychometric[1]-structuralist[2] theory. The failure of the TOEIC because of its underlying theory, other tests of business English were beginning to raise specially those developed in the UK since they were influenced by the communicative model. (ibid)

In the mid 1980s, testing language for business purposes in the UK began to develop by the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) of the Certificate in English as Foreign Language Secretaries (CEFLS), and by the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry Examinations Board (LCCIEB) that create language tests with a business focus. (ibid)

In the early 1990s, two new examinations were introduced by University of Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate (UCLES) .In addition, during the mid to late 1990s, other tests of other languages for Business developed. These involved JETRO (Japanese), Test de français international (TFI), the Certificate in Italian for Commerce (CIC) and in the BULATS series in French, German and Spanish versions. (ibid)

2.2.6 Characteristics of sound assessment

There are three criteria of a good test that the tester has to bear in mind. These criteria are: validity, reliability and practicality. (Sarosdy et al., 2000)

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[1] A branch of psychology concerned with the application of the principles of mathematics and statistics to the analysis of data.

[2] An approach to linguistics which stresses the importance of language as a system and which investigates the place that linguistic units such as sounds, words, sentences have within this system.

2.2.6.1 Validity

Henning (1987, cited in Alderson, Clapham & Wall, 1995) defines validity as follows:

> Validity in general refers to the appropriateness of a given test or any of its
> component parts as a measure of what is purported to measure. A test is said to
> be valid to the extent that it measures what is supposed to measure. It follows that
> the term valid when used to describe a test should usually be accompanied by the
> preposition for. Any test then may be valid for some purposed but not for others.
> (P.89)

It means that a test can be described as valid if it tests what is intended to test, and if a test
is used for which was not intended, therefore its validity is not demonstrated. There are three
types of validity: internal validity, external validity and construct validity. (Alderson, et al
1995)

First, internal validity relates to the perceived content of the test and its perceived
results, and there are three aspects of it that can be distinguished: face validity, content
validity and response validity. Face validity means the surface acceptability of the test that
involves judgements about the test content by people who are not experts like students,
administrators an soon. Moreover, content validity refers to the representative sample of the
content. It can be proved by experts who make systematic judgments on the test content, in
terms that they analyse the content of the test and compare it with the syllabus or curriculum.
Furthermore, response validity is to gather information on how candidates respond to the test:
to ask them about their behaviour during the test, their reasoning and process when
responding. (ibid)

Second, external validity relates to procedures which compare students' test scores with
measures of their ability taken from outside the test. There are two types of external validity:
concurrent validity and predictive validity. The former is to take the candidate's scores, and
compare it with the other measure for the same candidate at the same time as the test. This
measure can be scores from other test. The latter involves a comparison of the learner's test
scores taken some time after the test is administered. Yet, predictive validity is most common
within proficiency tests when the test administrators are intended to predict how well a
candidate is able to perform in the future. (ibid)

Third, construct validity, relates to what extent the test reflects its underlying theory. Gronlund (1985, cited in Alderson, et al., 1995) defines construct validity as follows: "how well test performance can be interpreted as a meaningful measure of some characteristics or quality" (p, 58). The term 'construct' refers to a psychological construct, a theoretical concept about language behaviour that the test makers want to measure. Examples of constructs are intelligence, achievement, attitude and soon. (ibid)

2.2.6.2 Reliability

Reliability refers to the consistency of measurement of individuals. This consistency is from time to time or place to place. It means that a test is reliable if it achieves a standard scoring from occasion to occasion. There are two types of scores reliability: intra-rater reliability and inter-rater reliability. The former is achieved if the same scorer gives the same test the same scores in two different occasions. The latter refers to the similarity of scores between different examiners. (Sarosdy, et al., 2000)

2.2.6.3 Practicality

Practicality refers to the effectiveness of the necessary tools: the time needed for administering the test, that is how easy to score the test, how simple it is and to what extent the test is easy to administer. (ibid)

2.2.7 Communicative language testing

Communicative language testing provides the tester with information about the test taker's ability to perform a communicative task in certain context. It is noticed that one cannot collect the entire candidate's language however realistic the task may be, because the candidate's performance is directed by the test conditions. Before the advent of communicative language testing Spolsky (1975) identified three periods of language testing: the pre-scientific, the psychometric-structuralist and the psycholinguistic-sociolinguistic. (Miyata-Boddy & S.Langham, 2000)

The pre-scientific era was dating back to the Chinese civil service exams in the 18th century. This method of testing was characterised with the use of essays, open- ended questions, and oral examination judged intuitively by examiners. Also, testing in this era did not rely on linguistic theory. This means that this method of assessment is less reliable. (ibid)

After the pre-scientific era came the psychometric-structuralist era, that is mixture of structuralism and psychometric. Lado was a pioneer who claimed to put these two sources worked together resulting in the discrete point approach. This latter broke down language into small testable segments using structural contrastive analysis. Each test item gave information about the candidate's ability to carry out specific aspect of language. (ibid) But, Morrow (1981), said that the knowledge of the discrete elements is misleading unless the user can structure those elements according to the linguistic demands of the context. Consequently, by the 1970s discrete point testing came to an end because it failed in providing sufficient measure of language ability.

The psycholinguistic-sociolinguistic testing came after the discrete point testing. With the advent of global integrative testing Oller (1979, cited in Miyata-Boddy & S.Langham, 2000) argued that global integrative testing, such as cloze tests, and dictation, provided a closer measure of the ability since they measure competence rather than performance.

Thus, the failure of the discrete point and the integrative testing led to the birth of the communicative language testing which is mainly based on the models of communicative competence. According to Spolsky (1989):

> Language tests involve measuring a subject's knowledge of, and proficiency in, the use of a language. A theory of communicative competence is a theory of the nature of such knowledge and proficiency. One cannot develop sound language tests without a method of defining what it means to know a language, for until you have decided what you are measuring, you cannot claim to have measured it. (p.140)

This means that language tests provide information to measure language proficiency, and communicative competence is a theory that provides such information. To develop good language tests it should be a method to know what language is.

To understand what means language Canale and Swain (1980) proposed three competences that build up the communicative competence: the first was the grammatical competence which consists of rules of phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. The second was the sociolinguistic competence which is made up of rules of discourse. The third one was the strategic competence which is related to verbal and non-verbal communication. In 1983, Canal reviewed the model by dividing sociolinguistic competence into sociocultural

and discoursal competences. This latter refers to rules of cohesion and coherence. Thus, the implication of this model in communicative language teaching lies in that it provided a theoretical distinction between competence and performance, so that the learner has to be tested on his/here ability of using knowledge of language in communicative contexts. (Miyata-Boddy & S.Langham, 2000)

Alternatively, Bachman framework (1990) was an addition to the earlier model. The framework consisted of three components: language competence, strategic competence and psychological mechanisms. (ibid)

Language competence includes organisational competence and pragmatic competence each of which he further breaks down, with organisational competence comprising grammatical and textual competence, and pragmatic competence comprising illocutionary and sociolinguistic competence. (ibid)

Strategic competence contains three components; assessment planning and execution. It is a mental capacity to utilise language competence appropriately in the context which communication takes place. Psychological mechanisms refer to the neurological and psychological processes engaged in producing and perceiving language. (ibid)

In this model Bachman admits that test design and scoring may have an effect on the candidate's performance as a result of strategic competence. Also, there are some activities that require using strategic competence to compensate for a lack of competence in other situation, while tests which are assessed according to the practical outcome of the language performance may be influenced by the strategic competence factor. (ibid)

Generally, Canale and Swain, and Bachman's are the most effective models of language competence that provide a valuable scope for designing communicative language tests.(ibid)

Authenticity is one of the main characteristics of communicative language testing that is proposed by Hawkey (1982) and Morrow (1977) (cited in Weir, 1990). Bachman and Palmer defined 'authenticity' as a critical quality of language tests and an aspect of usefulness. They claimed that authenticity has a strong effect on candidates' test performance. (Milanovic & Weir, 2004) they introduced two views of authenticity: situational and interactional authenticity. Situational authenticity refers to some form of simulation of actual speech events in language-use situations. Interactional authenticity is a function of the extent

and type of involvement of candidates' language ability in performing a test task. (ibid) Thus, in the process of creating speaking skill tests, authenticity is recommended to be involved to raise candidates' awareness of speaking tasks' usefulness.

2.3 The speaking skill

2.3.1 Definition of speaking

Speaking is in the heart of communication in both general English and Business English. To define speaking, Petrie (1987,p.336) says that : "Speaking is an activity which most of us spend a great deal of time engaged in, apparently without any effort and with not very much thought." Indeed, people all over the world, produce thousands and thousands of words without making any remarkable effort.

The ability to speak has an increasing focus in L2 learning in which a big number of students study English to develop speaking proficiency. Richards and Renandy (2002) asserted that what happens in the speaking process makes of it a complex task to be achieved for L2 learners. Therefore, linguists have done a great contribution in how speakers use language appropriately in different contexts, and what is involved in developing spoken fluency in L2.this means that studying speaking changes from focusing on structural features of language through written controlled dialogues, to study speaking for communication. Speaking a foreign language is difficult for learners because effective oral communication depends on learners' fluency and appropriate language use in social interaction. In this respect, Luoma(2004, p. ix) says " the ability to speak in foreign language is at the very heart of what it means to be able to use a foreign language".

Speaking differs from the other skills since it occurs in real time in life where speakers invest their abilities to plan, process, and produce the target language. Moreover, speaking is different from the other communication skills because it is difficult to assess reliably (Luoma, 2004)

In short, the nature of speaking involves speakers' production of utterances to convey a particular message. This message can be either to give information or interact in society where speaking is an integral part of people's daily lives. (ibid)

2.3.2 Speaking skill in EBP

Speaking is paramount in business English as it is the most frequent used mode of communication in the business world. Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) claimed that spoken monologue or oral presentation is the feature of business English work in which most of teaching speaking in EBP occurs in English context.

A successful oral presentation is based on language, skills and needs confidence. Accordingly the speaker should have self-confidence and appropriate use of language and skills. (Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998)

In this context, Dudley-Evans and St John, (1998) says that "ESP courses are likely to look at: structuring, visuals, voice, and advance signalling as well as language" (p.112).

This means, structuring oral presentation is approximately similar with structuring written communication since it gives the listener the chance to follow and understand. Oral presentation structure should have a start, middle and an end. Although the middle is more complicated, good starts have a role in getting listeners interested in the topic the same as ends that is essential because it is what remains with the listener. Visuals can be used in oral presentation and they should be well developed, appropriately used by clarifying what the visual represents and its purpose. (ibid)

Speaker's voice contains good pronunciation but intonation is the most influencing factors as it affects meaning the same as: phrasing, pausing, and speed of delivery, volume, and tone of variation. In this respect, Dudley-Evans and St John, (1998) point out that: "Voice work may include pronunciation but intonation usually hinders comprehension more. Phrasing, pausing, speed of delivery, volume, and tone of variation all play an important role and may need as much attention as the actual words" (p.113).

Another key feature of oral presentation is advance signalling or sign posts that Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) define in these terms: "advance signalling or sign posts help listeners follow both the structure of the information and argument, and recognise the significance of visuals. For instance through enumeration" (p.113).

Even though, oral presentations are more commonly used in EAP, they are used in EBP mainly in business meetings. Oral presentation is in fact good for learners as Thornbury

(2005) says: "The experience of standing up in front of their colleagues and speaking for a sustained turn is excellent preparation for real-life speaking" (p.94).

Generally, speaking has major role in and business English. It is used interchangeably with listening in spoken interaction.

2.3.3 Speaking task types

According to Carroll (1983), "the language tasks our learners are expected to perform in their future jobs will guide us with the tasks we will set them in our tests" (p. 37) this means that tasks should be constructed based on the examinee's needs. Luoma (2004) divided speaking task types under two headings: open-ended and structured tasks.

First, open-ended tasks its first aim is to allow candidates do something with language as a sign of their skills. They can be long activity such as giving presentation. Also, open-ended speaking tasks can be divided according to their functional purpose. For instance: description narration, instruction, comparison, explanation, justification, prediction and decision tasks. The oral proficiency interview, for example contains description task where the examinee is asked to describe something. Another category of open-ended tasks is role play that aims at simulating the professional context of the examinee and assessing how well they can cope with the language demands of their profession. (ibid)

Second, structured speaking tasks are usually short and specify carefully what the examinee should say. Yet, they cannot assess creative elements of speaking. Reading aloud is another type of structured speaking task that focuses on pronunciation which can be an important criterion of assessment. Furthermore, sentence repetition task includes series of sentences which become more complex and longer as the task develops this kind of tasks in phone pass. In addition, sentence completion and factual short answer question. The first type the focus is on grammatical knowledge and contextual understanding whereas short answers focus less on grammatical knowledge. (ibid)

2.3.4 The speaking test mode

Luoma (2004) claimed that the most common way of assessing speaking is in live or face-to-face interaction. This can be done in one-to-one interview, paired interview and group testing. Live test mode has two parts in terms that each speaker reacts to the other's turn. Otherwise, tape based mode of testing is used when a speaker produces a long role alone

without interacting with others, this mode of testing has one part since the speaker adapts with the tape but the tape does not. Also, tape- based testing is used when there are a lot of examinees, where examiner cannot interact with all of them.

2.3.5 The speaking scales

Speaking scores usually take the form of numbers or descriptions such as 'excellent' or 'fair', as can be short or long statements that describe what each score means. These statements referred to as rating scale from lowest to highest degree. North (1996) (cited in Luoma, 2004) describes developing rating scale as follows "trying to describe complex process that is organised in a form of small numbers of words". Luoma (2004) declared that there are three methods of developing scales for assessing speaking: intuitive methods, qualitative methods and quantitative methods.

First, intuitive methods of scale development are based on experience. The scale can be developed by one person who has experience in teaching or materials development. Moreover, the scale developer can consult other teaching materials or existing materials in order to set his own scale. (ibid)

Second, qualitative methods of scale development include asking experts to analyse data related to the scale. These experts can work with level descriptors or with samples of performances. If they work with level descriptors, they will work on how far a group of expected scale users can agree with statements that build up the scale. If they work with sample of performances the scale may be already exist, but in this situation experts work on performances that are rated by different raters , then compare them with the statements of the scale .alternatively, if samples are not rated before the rating and the writing of descriptions are done in parallel. (ibid)

Third, quantitative methods of scale development are done in large testing and need a statistical expertise. For instance, Fulcher (1996, cited in Luoma, 2004) used this method when he developed rating scale for fluency: he registered group of performances and counted the appearance of a framework of fluency features in them, then he used various regression to set which of the features were valuable in setting the candidate's scores. Thus, these features were used to organise level descriptors. (ibid)

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2.3.6 The speaking skill rating scale

Rating may proceed with the help of particular rating criteria. The criteria are arranged into speaking scales that record the aspects of candidates' language use in a set of statements and explain the qualities of a spoken performance. It is very important that the Criteria or Rating Scale we employ in a test of speaking should have criteria that reflect the model of language ability that we assume reflects what exists in the mind of the test taker. The kind of scale to be used is of two types, Holistic and Analytic. O'Sullivan (2008)

2.3.6.1 The Holistic rating Scale

Holistic scoring means that the testers rate only on their overall impression of the performance (Luoma, 2004). Underhill (1987) called it impression marking and adds that "impression marking calls for subjective judgement and requires a lot of experience". (p. 100) the advantages of holistic rating may be that the categories in a holistic scale are brief and so it is quite quick for raters to go through them and decide about the final score. On the other hand, the holistic scales do not analyze candidates' weak and strong points and the quantifiers or quality descriptors are not explanatory enough. To illustrate, we cite the most famous holistic scale used in ELTS test (the British council) (cited in Hutchison& Waters, 1987.p, 150)

9	Expert user: fully operational command of the language; appropriate, accurate and fluent with complete understanding.
8	Very good user: fully operational command of the language; occasional inaccuracies, inappropriacies or misunderstandings possible in unfamiliar situations.
7	Good user: operational command of the language occasional inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings in some situations.
6	Competent user: generally effective command of the language, although occasional misunderstanding and lack of fluency could interfere with communication
5	Modest user: partial command of the language coping with overall meaning in most situations although some misunderstanding and lack of fluency could block communication.
4	Limited user: basic functional competence limited to familiar situations, but frequent problems in understanding and fluency can make communication a constant effort.
3	Extremely limited user: below level of functional competence; although general meaning can be conveyed and understood in simple situations there are repeated breakdowns in communication.
2	Intermittent user: no real communication possible although single-word messages maybe conveyed and understood.
1	Non-user: unable to use the language or does not provide relevant evidence of language competence for.

Figure 01: *Proficiency scales used in ELTS test (the British council)*

2.3.6.2 The Analytic rating scale

Analytic scoring schemes are means of assessment by splitting the performances into criteria parts, and each part is scored separately. The procedures of this method involve the separation of the different features of a discourse into categories for scoring purpose. The total score is the sum of the rating for all of the parts that are being evaluated. Depending on the purpose of the assessment, speaking performance might be rated on such criteria as content, organization, cohesion, register, vocabulary, grammar, or mechanics (Tuan, 2012). According to (Luoma, 2004), "Analytic scales contain a number of criteria, usually 3-5, each of which has additional descriptors at the different levels of the scale" (p.68). In comparison to the holistic scale, the analytic scale is a much longer description of specific strengths and weaknesses in candidates' language abilities. The most famous of all analytic scales is the Foreign Services Institute (FSI) scale, upon which most others have been based. (cited in, O'Sullivan, 2008)

	Rating
Accent 1 Pronunciation frequently unintelligible. 2 Frequent gross errors and a very heavy accent make understanding difficult requires frequent repetition. 3 Foreign accent requires concentrated listening and mispronunciation lead to occasional misunderstanding and apparent errors in grammar and vocabulary . 4 Marked foreign accent and occasional mispronunciation which do not interfere with understanding . 5 No conspicuous mispronunciations, but would not be taken for a native speaker. 6 Native pronunciations, with no trace of 'foreign accent'.	Rating
Grammar 1 Grammar almost entirely inaccurate except in stock phrases. 2 constant errors showing control of every few major patterns and frequently preventing Communication. 3 Frequent errors showing some major patterns uncontrolled and causing occasional Irritation. and misunderstanding 4 Occasional errors showing imperfect control of some patterns, but no weaknesses that causes misunderstanding. 5 Few errors, with no patterns of failure. 6 No more than a few minor errors during the interaction.	Rating
Vocabulary 1 Vocabulary inadequate for even the simplest conversation 2 Vocabulary limited to basic personal and survival areas 3 Choice of words sometimes inaccurate limitations of vocabulary prevent discussion at some stages of the interaction 4 Vocabulary adequate to participate in the interaction , with some circumlocutions 5 Vocabulary broad and precise, adequate to cope with more complex problems 6 Vocabulary apparently as accurate and extensive as that of the native speaker	Rating

Fluency	Rating
1 Speech is so halting and fragmentary that conversation is virtually impossible 2 Speech is very slow and even expect for short or routine sentences. 3 Speech is frequently hesitant and jerky; sentences may be left uncompleted. 4 speech is occasionally hesitant , with some unevenness caused by rephrasing and groping of words. 5 Speech is effort less and smooth, but perceptively non-native in speed and evenness. 6 Speech on all topics is as effortless and smooth as native speaker.	
Comprehension	Rating
1 Understands too little for the simplest type of conversation. 2 Understand only slow, very simple speech on the most basic topics. Requires repetition and phrasing. 3 Understands careful, somewhat simplified speech directed to him/her with considerable repetition and rephrasing. 4 Understands quite well normal speech directed to him/her, but requires occasional repetition and rephrasing. 5 Understands everything in normal conversation except for very colloquial or low frequency items, or exceptionally rapid or slurred speech. 6 Understands everything in both formal and colloquial speech to be expected of a native speaker.	

Figure 02: *The Foreign Services Institute (FSI) Analytic Rating Scale*

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have discussed the concept of assessment that is a central element in the learning/teaching process. As it is mentioned above a sound assessment has to be reliable, valid, practical and authentic since it enables learners performing real life tasks effectively. Also, we have dealt with the speaking skill in EBP and the different task types, rating scales used in its assessment with some examples.

III. Chapter two: Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

3.2 Participants

    3.2.1 Students

    3.2.2 Teachers

3.3 Data collection instruments

    3.3.1 Teachers' interview

    3.3.2Students'questionnaire

3.4 Data collection procedures

3.5 Data Analyses

3.6 Conclusion

3.1 Introduction

In the first chapter, we have presented a literature review about assessing business English students' speaking skill. To determine this work it is high time to look at something more practical. Depending on this, the present chapter is devoted to the presentation and analysis of the data collected through using the descriptive method that involves the qualitative and quantitative methods to examine the research question and objectives. Hence, in this study we have used two tools, teachers' structured interview and students' questionnaire. The teachers' structured interview is administered for teachers who are good source for providing data relevant to the study. The students' questionnaire is designed for them to give valuable information on their background of learning and their attitudes towards the assessment of the speaking skill.

As a first step, we describe the population of the study. Second, we describe, analyze and interpret the interview and the questionnaire results. We provide two sections, the first one presents the teachers' interview analysis, and the second tackles the students' questionnaire analysis.

Context of the study

We have chosen to carry out the case study of the present work in the Career Center of Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla. This center was created in collaboration with the organization of World Learning, The U.S. Embassy in Algeria and the University of Ouargla. The primary aim of this Career Center is to assist students to successfully integrate into the workplace by improving their employability.

3.2 Participants

3.2.1 Students

Business English students, at the Career Center of Ouargla University came from different departments; English, Economics, Human sciences, and Computer Science make up the entire population of our study. We have enquired a sample of thirty (30) students. We followed purposive sampling in choosing samples to participate in this study. As Cohen Manion and Morrison (2007) state that " In many cases purposive sampling is used in order to access 'knowledgeable people', i.e. those who have in-depth knowledge about particular issues, maybe by virtue of their professional role, power, access to networks, expertise or

experience" (p.115).The students' age ranges from twenty two to twenty six. The reason behind choosing to work with students at the career center lies in the fact that they are BE students who share approximately the same background knowledge in English.

3.2.2 Teachers:

Two teachers at the Career Center of Ouargla University make our population. They have been teaching BE for one year. Both of them have a Bachelor in English language, and they have been trained to teach BE.

3.3 Data collection instruments

For this study, we make use of two tools for collecting data: quantitative and qualitative methods. The former is the questionnaire. The second tool is an interview with the teachers. It is a distinctive research technique and flexible tool for data collection in getting insight information from the subject.

3.3.2 Teachers' interview

The interview is designed to gather information about how teachers assess their students' speaking skill by considering their qualifications and types of activities they use in the assessment. This interview is composed of 13 questions divided into two sections. The first looks at the background information about the qualification they have for teaching Business English and the methodology used in the classroom as well as their attitudes towards the speaking skill in business context. The second one contains questions that explore the types of assessment regarding students' speaking skill.

3.3.3 Students' questionnaire

This questionnaire is given to learners to know their opinions and attitudes towards the assessment of the speaking skill. Qi (2004) points out that questionnaires have three advantages: ability to sample large numbers, facility for in-depth investigation, and relatively high reliability.First, we begin by identifying students' general background, their gender, age, educational degree and departments they came from. In addition to, their professional activity if they have. Learners are asked to answer by ' Yes' or 'No' with brief justification whenever necessary. Sometimes, they choose the right answer from different options. The students' questionnaire was administered to thirty (30) students as participants. Our sample consists of nineteen (19) males and eleven (11) females. Students were given identical instructions, before

they complete the questionnaire, on how to do so and for what reason it was designed. They were notified that: a) it is not a test, b) it is an important component in our study, c) their participation is going to be really appreciated, d) what matters is their opinions (no true or false answers), and e) the answers they will provide would remain completely confidential (even though they were not asked to write their names). The questionnaire took the students nearly 15 minutes of their time (which is largely enough for them to answer).

3.4 data collection procedures

In conducting this study, we make use of teachers' interview and students' questionnaire. The interview took place in the career centre UKMO by interviewing two teachers. This interview was held in April 2013. The interview lasted around 30 minutes. At the beginning, we explained the purpose of this structured interview. Some introductory instruction were developed in order to put the teachers in the right path and insuring that the data they will provide will not go beyond the main objective of the questions.

The students' questionnaire was held in April 2013, respondents were gathered in the Career Center workshop, and asked to complete the questionnaire after they have finished their training sessions. This tool is very helpful; we believe that we can succeed to a great extent in obtaining reliable data. This leads us to claim, that our questionnaires were administered in good conditions.

3.5 Data analysis

Teachers' interview analysis

Part One: Background Information

Question (01): What qualifications do you have?

The two teachers answered that they have a bachelor of English language, as well as communication, presentation, and computer skills. This means that both of them are qualified to teach business English.

Question (02): Have you got experience in teaching business English?

Both of them said that they have been teaching business English for one year. One of them stated that she was trained to teach BE in the USA. We understand that the two teachers are well trained to teach Business English.

Question (03): What method or approach do you use in the classroom? Why?

Both of them stated that they follow the communicative approach which is learner-centered because it is useful and effective to help students to communicate appropriately and fluently in English language. Also, it helps them interact, exchange and negotiate ideas.

Question (04): Do you think that speaking is crucial in business English?

One teacher said that speaking is an important skill to develop presentation and communication skill in business world, as long as the process of getting a job requires first job interview that requires the speaking skill. The other one expressed the same view but one has to take the writing skill into account.

Part two: Assessment

Question (05): Have you got experience in assessing the speaking skill?

The two teachers declared that they have experience in assessing the speaking skill. They used to administer spoken tests that assess students' communication skill. That is, both teachers are experienced and well qualified to assess students' speaking skill.

Question (06): What is the purpose of assessing students' speaking skill?

Both of teachers said that the purpose of assessment is to evaluate students' communication and presentation skills and their proficiency in their work field and getting them comprehensively communicating with their peers.

Question (07): Do you follow the method or approach used in the course when constructing the test? If yes, briefly explain how?

The two teachers claimed that they assess students using the same approach used in the course by using oral tests with which the students are familiar. In this respect Carroll (1983) says that, "The communicative approach stands or falls by the degree of real life, or at least life-like, communication that is achieved …" (p.1).

Question (08): What kinds of activities do you use in the test?

They answered that they use face to face interviews with their students in which they ask them job interviews questions. One can conclude from this answer that test used in the career centre is authentic in terms that it simulates real life tasks. Accordingly, Morrow (1981) claims " test the key criterion in identifying a good test is that it looks like a good one, the input appears to be ``authentic'', and the task or item type mirrors an act of communication in the real world" (p. 56-57).

Question (09): What criteria are used in assessing students' speaking skill?

They said that they have five criteria of assessing their students' speaking skill: the first criterion is communication skills, the second is presentation skills, the third one is the knowledge of workshops subjects, the fourth one is self confidence and the last concerns interview ethics.

Question (10): How do you score them?

They said that each criterion is scored separately. On a scale from one (1) to five (5).The average of these criteria is twenty (20).

Question (11): Do you use double rating in the test?

Both of them claimed that they use double rating in the test in terms that the candidate will be scored by two examiners during the test to reach reliability.

Question (12): What mode of testing do you use in the assessment?

Both of them confirmed that they use live mode of testing since they use face to face interviews.

Question (13): How long is the test?

The teachers declared that the oral test took around fifty (15) minutes with each student.

Students' questionnaire's analysis

This questionnaire is given to learners to know their opinions and attitudes towards the assessment of the speaking skill. The analysis of their responses is discussed as follows:

Table 1: *Students' Age*

Years	22	23	24	25	26	Total
Numbers	12	09	03	03	03	30
%	40	30	10	10	10	100%

As can be seen from the table above that the learners' age ranges from 22 years and 26years. Most of them study at the English department (17 students), whereas, the others are studying different specialties: Economics and commercial sciences (9 students), technological sciences (6 students). Some of them are teaching English at secondary school or private schools, working with foreign companies, or working in a national institution. In this connection Dudley-Evans & ST John, (1998) maintain "ESBP courses are run for job-experienced learners who bring business knowledge and skills to the learning situation". (P, 56)

Table 2: *Students' Gender*

Gender	Number	%	Total
Male	19	63.33%	30
Females	11	36.66%	100%

It is apparent from this table that males outnumber females .We have recorded just (11) female subjects out of a total of 30 making up (36.66%), whereas the rest is of a male gender, that is 19 (63.33%).This means that males are more interested in learning Business English than females since they look for work in foreign companies

Q1: How long have you been studying English?

Table3: *Students' years of studying English.*

Years	Seven (7)	Eight(8)	Ten (10)	Total
Number	12	15	03	30
%	40	50	10	100%

It can be seen from the data in table 3 that half of the students (15) making (50%) stated that they have been studying English for eight years and a minority of them indicated that they have been studying English for ten years. This is believed to be the normal number to reach out their academic year. Those who stated that they have been studying English for seven years (40%) are believed that they are still studying. The aim of this question is to explore students' educational background.

Q2: How well do you speak English?

Table 4*: The Level of Language Speaking*

Option	Very well	average	Well	Total
Number	6	15	09	30
%	20	50	30	100

In response to question 2, half of the participants (50%) consider their level to be average in speaking English. (30%) state that their level is well, whereas the minority (20%) state that their level is very good. Students usually relate their level to how well or how bad they can understand and produce the language orally. This question indentifies students' self-evaluation of their proficiency in speaking English. Accordingly, Robinson (1991) sees "Many students all over the world are studying technical or academic subjects wholly or partly through the medium of English: their command of the English language must be such that they can reach a satisfactory level in their specialist subject studies"(p.96).

Q3: Do you think it is important for you to learn business English? Why?

Table05: students' opinion about learning business English

Responses	Number	%
Yes	30	100%
No	0	0%
Total	30	100%

From The table above we can see that most of the students (100%) answered that learning business English is very important for their studies. They justify their answers by the following statement that English is the global language of science and commerce and business English is needed in their careers, since it helps them communicating effectively in the workplace. Accordingly, Kennedy and Bolitho (1984) state that "EOP is taught in a situation in which learners need to use English as part of their work or profession"(p. 4).

Q4: Do you think that Speaking skills are important for learning business English? Why

Table06: *students' opinion about the importance of the speaking skill for learning business English.*

Responses	Number	%
Yes	30	100%
No	0	0%
Total	30	100%

As shown in table 6, all of those surveyed (100%) indicated that speaking skill is very important in learning business English since it is necessary especially when communicating with foreigners in the work place.

Q5: How important do you think it is that you should possess/acquire speaking skills?

Table 07: students' opinion about the importance of acquiring speaking skill

Option	number	%
Very unimportant	/	0%
Unimportant	/	0%
Slightly unimportant	/	0%
Slightly important	/	0%
Important	06	20%
Very important	24	80%
Total	30	100%

As can be seen from the table above that the majority (80%) of those surveyed reported that it is very important for them to possess speaking skill. a minority (20%) of them indicated that it is important to acquire speaking skill because they believe that speaking skill is the core of communication. one can conclude that the speaking skill is very important for their studies and their motivation remains higher for acquiring it.

Q6: Did you take a speaking test before?

Table08: Students' response about taking speaking test.

Responses	Number	%
Yes	19	63.33%
No	11	36.66%
Total	30	100%

The most striking result to emerge from the table above that over half (63.33%) of those surveyed reported that they took a speaking test before; whereas 36.33% of them answered that they did not take a speaking test before. The reason behind giving such question is to know if learners have any experience in taking speaking tests or not.

Q7: If yes, how were your results?

Table09: *Students' evaluation of their results.*

Option	Number	%
Very good	0	0%
Satisfactory	18	60%
Poor	11	36.66%
Very poor	1	3.33
Total	30	100%

As shown in table 9, over half of participants (60%) indicated that their results were satisfactory, (36.66%) of them said that their results were poor whereas, a minority (3.33%) of them indicated that their results were poor.

Q8: Were you satisfied with your results

Table10: Students' satisfaction of their results.

Responses	Number	%
Yes	18	60%
No	12	40%
Total	30	100%

Table 8 shows the results obtained from the preliminary analysis that over half (60%) of those who said that they took a speaking test before, they reported that they are satisfied with their results whereas, (40%) of them indicated that they are not satisfied with their results.

Q9: How difficult was the speaking test at the career center

Table11*: Students' opinion about the difficulty of the speaking test at the career centre.*

Option	Number	%
Easy	19	63.33%
average	8	26.66%
Difficult	3	10%
Very difficult	0	3.33
Total	30	100%

From the table above we can see that (63.33%) of participants indicated that the speaking test at the career centre is easy. (26.66%) of them indicated that the test is average, and (10%) of participants said that is difficult, whereas a minority (3.33%) of students reported that the test is difficult for them. This question is administered to know students opinion about the speaking test in the career centre. From students responses one can conclude that the speaking test in the career centre is quietly accessible to everyone.

Q10: Was the test administered in a form of individual interview?

Table12*: students' answers about the form of the test*

Responses	Number	%
Yes	30	100%
No	0	0%
Total	30	100%

As we can see from the table above that all participants (100%) indicated that the test was administered in a form of individual interview. The aim of this question is to confirm data collected from the teachers' interview since teachers declared that they used the individual interview in their assessment of BE students at the career centre.

Q 11: How much did you like the test?

Table13: students' attitudes towards the test

Option	Number	%
Little	0	0%
Somewhat	03	10%
Much	27	90%
Total	30	100%

In response to question 11, over half (90%) of those surveyed reported that they like much the test whereas a minority (10%) of participants indicated that they like it somewhat. This question is administered to see the effectiveness and the validity of the speaking test at the career centre. In this respect Hutchinson & Waters (1987), report "... any assessment should also provide positive feedback   to inform teachers and learners about what is still not known".

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the research design and methodology used in this study. Furthermore, it has shown the data collection instruments and procedures, in addition to the analysis of teachers' interview and students' questionnaire. The interpretations and discussions of the findings will be presented in the next chapter.

IV. Chapter three: Findings and Discussions

4.1 Introduction

4.2 Interpretations of the results

    4.2.1 Perceptions of teachers

    4.2.2 Perceptions of students

4.3 Discussions of the results

4.4 Limitation of the study

4.5 Conclusion

4.1 Introduction

This section is devoted to discuss the interpretations and discussions of the interview and the questionnaire findings. The findings of these instruments help us in drawing conclusions about the assessment of the speaking skill. Also, we will discuss some limitations of the study that we have faced in conducting this piece of research.

4.2 Interpretations of the results

4.2.1 Perceptions of teachers

The results obtained from the analysis of the interview are presented as follows:

a-The qualifications of the BE teacher

It is obvious from the analysis of teachers' responses to the items 1 and 2, that BE teacher have to be qualified in order to give effective courses that fit the learners' needs. Moreover, the BE teacher should be well experienced and aware of the different issues of assessment specially the speaking skill assessment.

b- Teachers' attitudes about the usefulness of the communicative method

Data collected from item 3 show that BE teachers argue about the effectiveness and the high reliability of the communicative method in their teaching process. The implication of this method helps in choosing and designing the appropriate tasks to be used in the classroom and in the assessment process. In this respect Carroll (1983) says that, "The communicative approach stands or falls by the degree of real life, or at least life-like, communication that is achieved …" (p.1).

c- Teachers' assessment of the speaking skill

From response to item 6, we can infer that assessment should have a purpose which is clearly defined to be as a guild line to what is will be included in the test. With the set aims of the test, the test designers use tasks that provide them with information both about learners' progress and their level of proficiency. Thus, the two teachers answered that the purpose of assessing BE students' speaking skill is to test their proficiency in carrying out tasks in the work field. Also, teachers has to follow the same approach used in the course in designing the test tasks with explicit criteria which reflect the model of language ability that we assume reflects what exists in the mind of the test taker. Moreover, it is clear from the analysis of

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teachers' response to item 1, that teachers used the interview since it is a part of a proficiency test. In addition, teachers have to decide about the test mode (live or tape based testing) to use it in their assessment. Referring to response to item 11 the testing mode used by BE teachers in the career centre is the live test mode since they used one-to-one interview. In this respect Luoma (2004) say "the most common way of assessing speaking is in live, face-to-face interaction" (p, 44) .To ensure reliability BE teachers in the career centre used double-marking since the speaking assessment is subjective in nature, in this connection Alderson, Clapham and Wall (1995) say " the third way of monitoring examiners and ensuring that their marks are reliable is to require routine double-marking for every part of the exam which requires a subjective judgment" .(p, 132)

4.2.2 Perceptions of students

The results obtained from the analysis of the interview were presented as follows:

a- Students' perception of the importance of Business English and communication skills

It is evident from the answers to the questions (Q1, Q2, Q3, and Q4and Q5) that the majority of the respondents need to have a good level in English in order to achieve their future goals successfully. English is one of the most important and powerful languages in the world it is considered one of the important tools for communication among people nowadays. It is everywhere, in international trade, management, technology or other related fields. Thus, English language is important together with communication skills in the business context. BE students must improve their English language proficiency as well as their speaking skill in order to succeed in their future careers. Also, we can infer from the results shown in table 7 that respondents stress the importance of acquiring the speaking skill more than the other skills. Thus, BE students need to possess and develop their speaking skill since they need to communicate fluently and effectively in the work place.

b- Students' experience in taking speaking tests

Based on the analysis of answers obtained from Q6, Q7, and, it can be said that BE students have considerable experience in taking spoken tests and they are satisfied with their results. Their experience in taking spoken test confirms their well understanding of the speaking skill assessment process. Thus, BE teachers have to take the students experience into account since their opinions help them in designing the test task which fits the students future careers.

c- The effectiveness of the speaking test in the career centre (the interview)

Another major result is that BE students like the speaking test administered in the career centre. We can deduce from the data shown in tables 11 and 13 that students show a positive attitudes towards the speaking test in the career centre. One of the greatest advantages to be gained from the use of the individual interview as a test is that students become more confident in their use of English. It encourages, fluency, and confidentiality. It places language into context, and by giving learners experience of success in real-life situations in order to make them operate effectively and appropriately outside the classroom. Accordingly, speaking tests should have a positive impact on learners not the opposite and encourage them to fulfill their future tasks appropriately

4.3 Discussions of the results

4.3.1 The major findings of teachers' interview

Referring to teachers' answers, most of the answers are positive in terms that they enriched our research questions. As it is mentioned in the interview analysis that the teachers who had took professional development in teaching business were selected teachers for the study. They are experienced and leading teachers who had took professional development in teaching business English. They understand the wider concept of working with the present communicative teaching- learning approaches and how to implement its rules in their teaching and assessment.

In this connection, we can say that the teachers' answers reveal the following main points:

- The emphasis on using the communicative approach in teaching business English ,as well as in assessing the speaking skill, since the communicative approach provides the teachers with the appropriate activities to be used in the test, in addition, it helps students communicate effectively in their career
- The importance of the speaking skill in business contexts in terms that this skill is vital for the success of students in their career
- The speaking skill assessment is of an important value in the sense that the purpose of the assessment is to evaluate the students' proficiency in carrying out specific communicative tasks in the target language
- The assessment of the oral skill is so important in the course because it provides students with immediate feedback about their performance

- The speaking test administered to learners is valid since it tests what is intended to test, reliable in the sense that scores are consistently standard and practical in terms that is easy for students and authentic since it uses authentic tasks that help students to perform appropriately in real life contexts

Accordingly, our research findings from the analysis of the teachers' interview show significant approval about what we mentioned earlier about the assessment of the speaking skill.

4.3.2 The major findings of the students' questionnaire

Students in this study showed very positive attitudes about their speaking skill assessment in the career centre. Their responses detect some points concerning their attitudes towards the assessment of the speaking skill; also they support the teachers' interview and ideas that are developed in our study. The students' questionnaire findings allow us to confirm our hypothesis.

If we refer to our participants' responses we can say that the majority of students consider that the speaking skill is fundamental skill in learning business English and the most important skill to be acquired by them. Moreover, we understand from the students' questionnaire that students in the career centre have considerable experience in taking spoken tests that test their oral abilities in which most of them are satisfied with their results.

The most striking result to emerge from the data obtained from the students' questionnaire is that BE students prefer to use the interview as test to train them for job interview. Furthermore, they like the speaking test in the career center because it uses the appropriate activity for them which is the interview in which the teachers ask them job interview questions.

Comparing the students' and the teachers' responses, it can be seen that both teachers and students emphasize the importance of the speaking skill in BE. In addition, both of them express the need of acquiring it in order to communicate effectively in real-business contexts. The prominent point that we can deduce from the students' questionnaire is that students believe that the speaking test administered to them in the career centre is accessible to everyone. This point displays considerable agreement with the teachers' responses. Therefore, it is enough to conclude that the speaking test at the career center is effective in terms of their reliability, validity, practicality, authenticity, and its positive impact on students.

4.4 Limitations of the study

This study had some limitations in examining the effectiveness of the speaking test administered in the career centre. The limitations of this study emerged from the methodology used in the study, the generalization of the findings, the size of the sample and the language proficiency of the participants.

Methodological limitations

Questionnaires and interviews were used in the present study to get students attitudes towards the assessment of the speaking skill and its effectiveness. But these tools have some limitations in collecting data from the subjects.

The questionnaire

In the present work, participants were asked to complete the questionnaire during class time. Some of the subjects answered the questionnaire within few minutes whereas others took nearly half an hour in completing the questionnaire since they wrote lengthy responses. In this connection, Lewkowicz (1997) claimed that the data obtained from the questionnaire can provide the researcher with partial information about the topic he investigates. Another prominent problem with the use of the questionnaires as a tool of data collection is that subjects are not proficient enough consequently; they may misunderstand the questions or may not be able to express themselves appropriately. To minimize these problems, a structured teachers' interview was administered in order to collect teachers' answers in the study and to complement the questionnaire response.

The generalization of the findings

This study describes the effectiveness of the speaking test in the career centre from teachers and students perspectives. The results cannot be generalized to all business English speaking tests as the fact that the sample has been taken from a particular area in one university. Although the career centre has achieved the above average standard, based on learners' results, the centre is not representative.

Size of the sample

Another limitation of f this study is that findings were generated from a small size of sample group and was limited to one class. Thus, the subjects in this study are not representative of the student population in Kasdi Merbah University as a whole. It could be better if the samples were chosen from diverse classes. More teachers and students from diverse groups could reflect different results for the study. Beside these, classroom observation was not included in the study that could have provided rich data on the assessment process and what is going in there between the teachers and the students.

In spite of the limitations discussed above, findings from the present study have enhanced our knowledge about students' attitudes towards the assessment of their speaking skill. These findings in turn provide us with great understanding of the process of assessing the speaking skill.

4.4 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness and the reliability of the speaking test in the career centre of UKMO in assessing BE students' speaking skill. In order to explore how this assessment is done and examined, students' questionnaire and teachers' interview were conducted. As we have discussed above, the major findings of the present study confirm our previous assumptions about the reliability and validity of the speaking test administered in the career centre. In the next section (general conclusion) we will suggest some recommendations for further research concerning the current research problem.

V. General Conclusion

and

Recommendations

General Conclusion

The ultimate aim of this study is to show how students' speaking skill is assessed in BE and whether the test is effective and reliable to evaluate learners proficiency in carrying out tasks in the business context.

An effective test of speaking skill is not a haphazard selection of tasks. Each assessment situation presents a set of practical demands that need to be specifically addressed. The principles of validity, reliability, practicality and authenticity provide basic guidelines for evaluating the effectiveness of a test instrument. A theoretical model of oral skills is also necessary to structure what is fundamentally changeable. Similarly it needs to be noted that human skills are highly dependent on a variety of internal and external factors that are independent of language ability per se. The art of testing involves reducing the influence of such extraneous factors and creating conditions under which all candidates can display their real abilities.

Despite the limitations observed , The study concludes that a speaking test is valid through gathering evidence of validity in five ways: (1) face validation of academic tasks through association of students' performance, (2) content validation through expert evaluation, (3) construct validation through item analysis for objective test and analysis for subjective ratings, (4) concurrent validation by comparing the scores to a criteria, and (5) reliability by establishing consistency of the test sections.

In general, the present dissertation has revealed considerable results concerning the process of assessing the speaking skill of BE students. The study concludes that the speaking test is a criterion-referenced test, which is academic, authentic, practical, reliable and valid. These findings and conclusions confirm our hypothesis set earlier that the speaking test in the career centre is effective and reliable. And that may be supported by further research for the sake of improving assessment process at the level of university.

Recommendations for further research

The results of the study may be an aid to further development of BE speaking skill tests design.

It is recommended that:

- To use different data collection tools in carrying out further studies concerning the process of assessing the speaking skill. These instruments may include: observations and experimental methods.
- To conduct research on larger subjects of population in order to make generalization of the research findings.

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Appendix A: students Questionnaire

Questionnaire

This questionnaire is distributed in order to gather information regarding assessing Business English learners' speaking skill. Through your participation, the study will be able to reach comprehensive results about the topic. Please answer the questions as honestly as possible. Thank you very much for your help.

The respondent's profile

Your age:………………………

Gender: ……………………….

Department:…………………….

Your level:………………………………………..

If you are working; Name your job title:…………………………………..

1-How long have you been studying English?

-………………………………

2- how well do you speak English?

…………………………………………

3- Do you think it is important for you to learn business English? Why?

Yes   No

4- Do you think that Speaking skills are important for learning business English? Why?

Yes   No

5- How important you think it is that you should possess/acquire speaking skills?

 6 very important   5 important   4 slightly important
 3 slightly unimportant   2 unimportant   1 very unimportant

6-Did you take a speaking test before?

Yes   No

 7-If yes, how were your results?

Very good   satisfactory   poor   very poor

8- Were you satisfied with your results?

Yes   No

9-How difficult was the speaking test at the career center?

Easy   average   difficult   very difficult

10-Was the test administered in a form of an interview?

Yes   No

11- How much did you like the test?

 Little   somehow   much

Appendix B: teachers' interview

Teacher's interview

I am so grateful to meet you at the career center, I would be thankful if you could answer my questions concerning assessing BE students' speaking skill.

Background information

1-What qualification do you have

2-Have you got experience in teaching Business English?

3- What method or approach do you use in the classroom? Why

4-Do you think that speaking skill is crucial in Business English?

Assessment

5-Have you got experience in assessing the speaking skill?

6-What is the purpose of assessing students' speaking skill?

7-Do you follow the method or approach used in the course when constructing tests?

If yes, briefly explain how?

8-What kinds of activities do you use in the test?

9-What criteria are used in assessing students' speaking skill?

10-How do you score them?

11-Do you use double rating in the test?

12-What method of testing do use in the assessment?

13-How long is the test?

Thank you very much for your participation.

Appendix c: The test specification of the career centre

Handouts for Evaluation Form

How to evaluate my service? This is the first question to be asked before making any evaluation form, I have learned that in marketing business in order to make sure that the evaluation project is implemented effectively, I need to work out what elements of my service I want to evaluate, so, in this case **training need's feedback** are required for the career center's success to ensure that work is good and continuing to operate at our best client and as a result their feedback can be useful to confirm that the service is meeting the needs of our clients

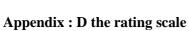Can we say that evaluating the services helps the counselors to set new goals for the career counseling program?

According to this, I have set two main goals as a start

Evaluation Purpose

The goals for the needs assessment at the career center are twofold.

- **The first goal** is assess students' attitudes toward the career planning process.
- **The second goal** is to assess the effectiveness of the current Career Center orientation

Appendix : D the rating scale

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O RAL T EST

The oral test is based on the students' performance and knowledge

NAME	COMMUNICATION SKILLS	PRESENTATION SKILLS	KNOWLEDGE OF WORKSHOPS' SUBJECTS	SELF CONFIDENCE	INTERVIEW ETHICS

Abstract

This dissertation is composed of three chapters. It is carried out to investigate how to assess BE students' speaking skill. The speaking skill is a hard task and a puzzling issue that challenges teachers and researchers. In the theoretical part we have mentioned the speaking skill assessment. Most important facts concerning each phase of testing speaking process have been explained. Assessing speaking represents a broad area of language testing. Thus we focused most specifically on the activities and the ways how can be used in testing speaking process. Data collected in the theoretical part represents a theoretical base for further research needs in the practical part of our thesis. In this thesis we explored the actual situation of assessing speaking at the career centre through the method of a structured interview with teachers followed by students' questionnaire. The results of the present study show that the speaking test at the career centre is reliable and effective. And the individual interview is the best activity used in the test in order to assess learners' proficiency in business context. From the findings of this study we suggest some recommendations for further research.

Key words

Assessment, business English, the speaking skill assessment, communicative Language Testing, rating scale

الملخص

تهدف هذه الأطروحة المكونة من ثلاثة فصول، للتحقيق في كيفية تقييم مهارة الحوار لطلاب اللغة الانجليزية للأعمال التجارية. مهارة الحوار هي مهمة صعبة وقضية محيرة التي تتحدى المعلمين والباحثين. في الجزء النظري قدمنا فكرة لتقييم مهارة الحوار . وتم شرح أهم الحقائق المتعلقة بكل مرحلة من مراحل عملية التقييم. تقييم مهارة الحوار يمثل مساحة واسعة من اختبار اللغة. وبالتالي ركزنا تحديدا على معظم الأنشطة والطرق التي يمكن استخدامها في عملية التقييم. البيانات التي تم جمعها في الجزء النظري تمثل قاعدة نظرية لمزيد من الاحتياجات البحثية في الجزء العملي للأطروحة. في البحث اكتشفنا الوضع الفعلي لتقييم مهارة الحوار في مركز المسارات المهنية من خلال استعمال أداتين: مقابلة منظمة مع المعلمين يليها استبيان الطلبة. وتبين من نتائج تلك الدراسة أن الاختبار الشفوي لمركز المسارات المهني هو موثوق به وفعال. والمقابلة الفردية هي أفضل الأنشطة المستخدمة في الاختبار من أجل تقييم كفاءة طلاب اللغة الانجليزية في مجال الأعمال التجارية. من النتائج التي توصلت إليها هذه الدراسة، فإننا نقترح بعض التوصيات لإجراء مزيد من البحوث.

كلمات مفتاحيه

التقييم _ اللغة الانجليزية للأعمال التجارية _ تقييم مهارة الحوار_ اختبار اللغة التواصلي_ المقياس التصنيف