Exploring informal assessment in the speaking class: A case study of EFL Teachers and students in the Department of English, University of Algiers 2

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Abstract

The current study aims at exploring the use of informal assessment of the speaking skill in the English department at the University of Algiers 2. Speaking is a highly valuable skill that should be assessed and improved and the use of tasks is crucial for the success of the informal assessment. For this reason we chose to investigate the tasks used by EFL teachers to integrate informal assessment into their speaking classes. This research also aims at examining the learners' perception of the effects of informal assessment on their progress. Classroom research is the method followed by the researcher to carry out this research. 50 English students and 6 EFL teachers were the sample for this study. Three data collection tools were utilized. An observation scheme and two questionnaires, one for teachers and another one for learners. This latter was analyzed through the use of descriptive statistics, while the other two tools were content analyzed. The results revealed that the tasks and their implementation differ from first year teachers to second year teachers. First year teachers tend to use tasks that require group works and discussions, and they take control over the learning process while second year teachers make the learning process around the learner and encourage him to take charge of his own learning. Findings have also revealed that learners believe that the informal assessment of speaking has contributed to improve their speaking ability in a remarkable way.

Key words: Speaking, assessment, speaking tasks, feedback.

Introduction

Informal assessment has played a major role in developing learners' abilities. Even though informal assessment has always been given more importance than informal assessment, research has shown that informal assessment has more impact on the progress of learners, if used properly, informal assessment could have a great influence on the overall level of English learners of the University of Algiers2.

Assessing speaking informally is highly important; it is a key factor in developing learners' communication skill, but yet sometimes, it is either neglected or is not used properly in Algerian universities. This is problematic since the advantages of integrating informal assessment are enormous and could improve learners command over the language.

I have chosen speaking in particular because it is considered as the core of learning a language as Sari Luoma 2004) mentioned that*" the ability to speak in a foreign language is at the heart of what it means to use a foreign language"* This is the reason why I have chosen to

investigate the use of informal assessment of speaking at the English department at the University of Algiers2.

The objective behind this study is to investigate the ways in which informal assessment of speaking is used in the English department of Algiers 2 and try to determine how learners perceive it as being helpful to improving their speaking ability. This research also seeks to explore types of tasks and the way they are included to operationalize the informal assessment. To fulfill the objectives of the research, the following research questions, have been formulated:

1- What are the speaking tasks used by teachers to implement informal assessment in the classroom?
2- How are these tasks implemented in the classroom?
3- How do learners perceive the effects of informal assessment on their learning?

1- Research Background

Assessment is a controversial concept and different linguists use it in a different manner. It is defined as any device that helps the teacher evaluate many aspects of learners' learning such as: their willingness to learn, their improvement throughout the whole period of instruction, their acquisition of the required skills, and thus having a better understanding of what they are lacking and need to learn.Bachman (2004) defines assessment as: "a process of collecting information about something that we are interested in, according to procedures that are systematic and substantially grounded" (Bachman 2004:6-7) A similar definition of assessment is proposed by Manitoba (1997)who defines it as a continuous action of collecting information about learners' actual level, learners' capacities, and explaining to learners what is expected from them. But according to Ari Huhta cited in (Ketabi 2014) assessment is not mainly the scores given by the teacher, but assessment could come in the form of comments. Thus, assessment is both formal and informal. "*The result of an assessment procedure can be a score or a verbal description*" (Ketabi 2014:1)

1.1. Formal assessment and informal assessment

Brown (2004) defines formal assessment as the combination of tests taken by learners mainly for academic purposes. Informal assessment on the other hand is the techniques used exclusively inside the classroom to keep up with learners' progress. According to Furtak (2006), informal assessment is the "*techniques that can easily be incorporated into classroom routines and learning activities*" Furtak (2006:1)

Assessment is of two types, formal and informal. Brown (2004) puts all types of tests as formal assessment, which is not the essence of our research, he used a different terminology for making the difference between these two concepts.

Brown (2010) draws a distinction between formal and informal assessment but he uses the term "assessment" to refer to informal assessment, while formal assessment is referred to as "testing". Testing is the standard tests taken by learners mainly for administrative purposes, while assessment is any kind action that goes on inside the classroom for the sake of watching learners' progress.

1.2. Summative assessment and formative assessment:

There is no exact definition of formative assessment; every linguist defines this concept in a different manner. A definition given by Bachman and palmer (1986) is:

> *"Formative assessment refers to frequent, interactive assessments of student progress and understanding to identify learning needs and adjust teaching appropriately".* (Bachman and palmer 1986:1)

Based on this definition, one could understand that formative assessment is continuous and takes place inside the classroom, the teacher uses formative assessment to keep track of learners' progress. Perhaps a better way to understand formative assessment is by making the difference between formative and summative assessment. According to Brown (2004) summative is related to formal assessment, feedback on learners' performance is through marks, scores or grades, while formative is part of the informal assessment, and teachers give feedback by commenting, telling learners what is wrong and what is correct and about the aspects they need to improve.

Formative assessment is the only form of assessment that can match informal assessment; learners must be given feedback on their learning, what they have learned, what they need to learn, and on how well they are progressing.

1.3. Formative assessment strategies:

As mentioned above, formative assessment is crucial for informal assessment and for this reason William and Thompson (2011) proposed a model of strategies of giving formative assessment, they came up with five strategies:

- **Clarifying and sharing learning intentions and criteria for success**

It is important that learners know what is expected from them, teachers are required to share information about the output expected from learners as well as the criteria for success. The importance of this first strategy was proved with a study conducted by Wiggins and Mctighe (2000) in a mathematics classroom of 72 learners aged between seven and thirteen. There was no explanation of the outcomes expected from them. Some of them were able to work despite the ambiguity but the rest of them failed because they simply could not work when they did not know what is important and what is not.

- **Engineering effective classroom discussions and other learning tasks that elicit evidence of student understanding.**

After explaining to learners what the essence of their learning is, the second step is to test whether they are improving and working towards achieving those goals or not. Teachers should open discussions to make sure that indeed learners are improving.

- **Providing feedback that moves learning forward**

One important way of giving feedback that pushes learners forward is to inform them about their weaknesses and also about how to improve and overcome those weaknesses.

- **Activating students as instructional resources for their own learning**

learners learn very well when they are told that they are responsible for their own learning, thus teachers need to help learners develop their autonomy and teach them that learning is not all about grades, it is important for their personal growth.

- **Activating students as instructional resources for one another**

Learning in groups is far more beneficial than individual works, learners should develop their collaborative sense of working, and they should help one another. One way of doing so is through the method of two stars one wish, basically the learners are asked to comment on one another's work by giving two positive comments (two stars) and an aspect that they believe needs improvement (a wish). And because the comments are made by learners and not the teacher, the learners are more receptive to the feedback.

1.4. Feedback:

Feedback might be given by many agents such as peers, parents…etc. For this research; the type of feedback we are interested in is teachers' feedback. Brown (2009) believes that feedback appears "*When the output of a system becomes an input to the same system causing the system to respond dynamically to its previous products*" (Brown 2009) Taking this definition in our context, we can define feedback as the response to learners' productions after a period of instruction and giving output.

Giving feedback is very important in many domains such as business, sales, healthcare, and education. Feedback is an important component of the formative assessment process. Race (2005) made a minor study by asking direct questions to a huge number of people from students, experts, colleagues …etc. about the way they acquired the knowledge they have. The most dominant factor was feedback. He considers feedback to be essential for many reasons:

First of all, feedback is helpful to guide learners and to explain them the aim behind their learning. Second, feedback encourages the learners to be more autonomous and take responsibility of their own learning. Third, generally speaking, feedback is supposed to increase learners' motivation towards learning by increasing their self-esteem and giving them more confidence, and making them trust that they are capable of reaching the goal the teacher has set. Finally, feedback can serve as a means of encouragement for learners to improve and be more determined. It is also a way of teaching them to benefit from old experiences to improve and go forward. Lester et.al (1997)suggests that giving feedback could be executed in six techniques.

- **Explicit correction:**The teacher provides the correction explicitly and while providing the correction; the teacher explains that the student's utterance is wrong or inappropriate.
- **Recast:**It is similar to explicit correction, but in a less explicit manner because the teacher corrects the error without mentioning that the learner made an error. The teacher reformulates the whole utterance or just part of it.
- **Clarification request:** The teacher asks the learner to repeat or reformulates the utterance because it was either misunderstood or not well formulated.

- **Metalinguistic feedback:**The teacher communicates information, makes comments, or asks questions to indicate that the utterance is not well formed. This technique is implicit as well.
- **Elicitation:** There are three sub techniques to elicitation either by repeating the same utterance and pausing to allow the learner to auto correct, or asking questions such as: "How do we say that?', or by asking the learner to reformulate the utterance.
- **Repetition:** The teacher simply repeats the error with a different intonation to highlight the error.

Feedback can also be divided into two types: positive and negative. Tujand (2013) reported that giving feedback could be done through positive or negative techniques. As a first impression many could say that positive feedback is the best technique, and negative feedback should not be used. In fact this is not what research has shown, sometimes negative feedback is beneficial and positive feedback is harmful.

A study was carried out with learners studying French as a foreign language. They were assigned to two groups, they were given questionnaires about the feedback they prefer (positive or negative) and they were asked to choose between a teacher who gives feedback on strengths or a teacher who highlights the errors they have done. The first group was composed of beginners while the second one contained advanced learners. The learners with a low command over the language said that they prefer positive feedback while the answers from the advanced level were the total opposite. They preferred the teacher who points out to the things they do wrong in order to correct them. This implies that feedback needed varies according to learners' level.

1.5. Models of speaking skill tasks:

Many modals for speaking tasks are presented by linguists; there are some similarities and some differences between them. But Brown's modal is an acre in the domain of assessment.

Brown (2010) divided the speaking tasks into types of tasks which are: imitative, intensive, responsive, interactive, and expensive. Under each type he has put some tasks that are appropriate to it. Only tasks for interactive and extensive speaking are going to be presented since these are the ones being dealt with in this research.

1.5.1. Interactive Speaking tasks:

The tasks he proposes for Interactive speaking are

- **Interview:** It is a protocol in which an interviewer and an interviewee sit face to face; this latter is asked questions upon which he is going to be scored.
- **Role play:**It is a common task in the pedagogical setting, learners in this type of tasks are asked to pretend to be someone else and act and speak as if they were in the shoes of that character.
- **Conversations and discussions:**This task is very important in the process of informally assessing students, because of its authenticity. Different topics are tackled and opportunities to speak are given to every student
- **Games:**There are many games that could allow the teacher to evaluate learners' progress among which: Tinkertoy game where a learner sees the steps of constructing a structure, he then explains to other learners how to recreate the same structure. There are other games that can help the teacher to evaluate learners for instance: crossword puzzles, information gap grids, and city maps.

1.5.2. Extensive speaking tasks:

The tasks he proposes for extensive speaking are:

- **Oral presentations:**This task is considered to be very authentic, because it is very common in one's professional life to be asked to present a report, a paper, or a marketing plan.
- **Picture cued story-telling:**Visual materials are presented to learners, and they are expected to describe them, it could be a map, a picture, a diagram, or a chart.
- **Retelling a story, news event:**After hearing or reading a story, the learner is then asked to retell it using his own words
- **Translation (for extended prose)** The learner reads long texts in his mother tongue, and then he is asked to translate them to English. The texts could be dialogues, directions for an assembly, play, a movie..etc

2- Research Method

The objective behind conducting this research is to see the extent to which teachers of the English department of Algiers 2 are informally assessing the learners' speaking ability. Thus the research method best suited for this exploration is a classroom research of a case study. This type of research is appropriate for our study because assessment happens inside the classroom between the teacher and learners.

This study was carried out at the level of the English department at the University of Algiers 2. The sample consists of 50 first and second year students and six teachers of the listening speaking module.

This research was conducted at the level of the University of Algiers 2. Triangulation is the method adopted for collecting reliable data. Observation is the first tool, four teachers were observed as they gave classes of the module of listening /speaking. Since this research investigates only the speaking ability, the researcher attended two episodes with each teacher, which makes eight episodes in total and each episode represents a different group. Two of the teachers were teaching first year students, and the other two were teaching second year students. A Teachers' questionnaire is the second tool, the observed teachers were supposed to be interviewed but the interview was turned into a questionnaire because the teachers preferred a written version. And a students' questionnaire is the third tool, it was addressed to 50 first and second year students whose level ranges from beginner to upper intermediate.

The procedure for the data collection consists of teachers and learners answering questionnaires and the researcher attending four observational episodes.

The observation scheme is an instrument used for a structured observation. It helped the researcher to get accurate observations. The columns for the observed instanced were filled with "Ob" and the columns of instances that are not observed were left empty.

In order to gain insights into teachers' choice of tasks and their choice of procedures to implement them into the classroom. The researcher administered a qualitative questionnaire composed of four open ended questions. Learners were administered a questionnaire. They were asked to answer nine questions, the majority of which were close ended and the minority were open ended.

The observation scheme is expected to generate quantitative data, which will be analyzed statistically. The researcher ticked observed items in the scheme about observed tasks and their implementation in the classroom. The observation data allowed to establish teachers' profiles about the ways in which they introduce speaking tasks in the classroom. The observation scheme data have been displayed in a table with columns and rows. Rows refer to categories and items of the observation scheme and columns refer to the teachers observed. the abbreviation "Ob" describes instances that were observed. Columns of unobserved instances were left empty.

The questionnaire has some close ended questions and some open ended ones, thus the generated data are going to be both quantitative and qualitative. The data obtained from close ended questions were computed and analyzed statistically the open ended questions were subject to content analysis.

3-Data Presentation and Analysis

Tasks	Responses recurrence	Instances of justifications
Conversations and discussions	6	"To develop students' pronunciation" "To develop learners' fluency".

presentations	6	To make students practice their English, learn vocabulary and pronunciation.
Role plays	1	To develop learners' critical thinking. Learners like diversity, thus we tend to use
Debates	2	different tasks. Learners like to participate to discussions,
Questions and answers	3	debates and conversations.

The structured observation in addition to the unstructured observation has helped the researcher to present the following table

Table 1: teachers' choice of tasks

The tasks used by teachers of the English department at the University of Algiers 2 as well as the execution of those tasks varies depending on the level. First year teachers' profiles are very similar, they use approximately the same tasks, and they provide a lot of feedback. The same thing applies to second year teachers; their profiles share a lot of characteristics. The tasks they use are identical and they do not provide learners with feedback.

A questionnaire consisting of four questions was administered to six teachers. Four of them were already observed by the researcher and the two others are first year teachers of listening speaking module, they were not observed. The analysis of the questionnaire data revealed that:

➤ The most dominant tasks were "conversations, discussions, and presentations" since the six participant teachers answered so. Debates and role plays were selected by three teachers. Three of them selected questions and answers, 2 of them selected debates and 1 teacher reported to use role plays.

➤ The two ways of implementing tasks into the classroom by teachers are group and individual works. Among the six teachers no one stated that he uses pair work. One teacher did not answer this question.

➤ teachers believe that feedback is important. Teachers were also asked to give examples of types of feedback they use:

Five types of feedback were proposed by teachers. We will organize them according to their recurrence:

- First implicit feedback
- Second, explicit feedback
- Third, both correcting ideas and encouraging feedback
- Finally, correcting pronunciation errors

➤ Teachers already gave their own examples of types of feedback by answering the first question "what are the tasks you use in the classroom? Why do you use these tasks?" they were then given a list of feedback techniques and had to choose the techniques

they use the most. All teachers ticked explicit and implicit corrections, four of them ticked encouraging feedback; three said that they ask learners to repeat their utterances; only one said he uses body language and one changes his tone.

➢ The reason why they use these techniques is because they believe those techniques are the most beneficial for learners, or because learners respond better to such techniques. One teacher claimed to use all the techniques except negative feedback and translation. The setting is the factor that determines the use of types of techniques for one teacher who states that he uses all types of techniques, but his use of techniques changes according to learners' level and the setting.

50 questionnaires were administered to learners for the aim of investigating the third research question. The analysis of the questionnaire data showed that

➢ most learners seem to like the listening-speaking module since 90% of them answered 'yes' when asked 'do you enjoy studying this module', only 10% of learners do not find this module interesting.

➢ the level of learners ranges from beginner to advanced, Intermediates are the overwhelming majority with 48% followed by upper intermediate with a reasonable 26% , 20% is the percentage of learners whose level is beginner and a few 6% are advanced.

➢ learners like to participate to particular tasks. 38% of learners selected discussions and conversations thus this task is the most appreciated, the percentage of students who like to do presentations is 27%. The third task mentioned by learners is debates, 21% of learners' answers were in favor of debates. Finally dialogues, only 13% of learners said that this task is interesting for them.

➢ the type of feedback that is most used by teachers, according to learners, is encouraging feedback. 31% of learners appoint this type of feedback to be the most recurrent among teachers; a high percentage of 22% is dedicated to explicit correction, implicit correction is not neglected by teachers since 16% of learners said that their teachers use it as a common type of giving feedback. In the opinion of learners, gestures and body movements are not used enough as this type of feedback occupied 10% of the samples' choice. Teachers do not often repeat the utterance with a change of their tone as only 6% of learners selected this answer. Finally the less used types of feedback are negative feedback, with only 5% and translation with only 2%

➢ learners like to be encouraged and praised. Nearly half of the subjects picked encouraging feedback as their favorite for multiple reasons. 28% of the subjects preferred implicit corrections. 12% like to be explicitly corrected. The remaining 14% were divided between body movements and repeating with a change of the teacher's tone.

➢ Learners believe that the advantages of feedback are three since the three categories that were dominant are: understanding what needs to be learned 30.95%, motivating to participate 28.57%, understanding what has been learned 22.61%. The least dominant categories were reducing anxiety 7.14% and boosting confidence 10.71%

➢ the majority of learners do not wish to receive any other type of feedback, because 94% answered 'no' to this question, the other 6% answered 'yes' and they provided some examples.

➢ the majority of learners feel comfortable when the teacher gives them feedback. 94% like to be corrected and to be given feedback by teachers. The other 6% do not like to be given feedback

➢ 45.45% of learners said that it decreases their confidence, the same percentage is given to the fact that it makes them uncomfortable to speak and finally a minority of 9% of learners think that feedback makes them lose their thoughts.

➢ 94% of learners are convinced that the tasks they do in the classroom as well as teachers' feedback have helped them improve their communication skills, a minority of 6% disagree and do not think that these two aspects help them develop their communicative competency.

➢ the most dominant categories are pronunciation and vocabulary with 30% each; according to learners these two aspects have been improved after studying this module. Confidence is the third category to be selected with 17%. As for fluency and grammar, the percentages are very low, 11.5% for grammar and 9.73% for fluency.

4- Interpretation of Results

The analysis of the three data collection tools: observation scheme, teachers' questionnaire and the sub question of the third question of students questionnaire "describe some tasks you like to participate to" made it possible for the researcher to extract a set of the most utilized tasks by teachers of the English department at the University of Algiers 2 to evaluate learners' speaking progress:

➢ **Conversations and discussions:**

It was the only task that was common to all the classroom episodes the researcher attended to, the four teachers observed generated classroom discussions in which learners expressed their opinions and practiced their speaking skills.

Discussions and conversations were also mentioned by the six teachers who answered the question "**what are the tasks you use in the classroom?**" Teachers' answers indicate that this task is the most popular task in the English department of Algiers2. They justified their answers with arguments like "To make students practice their English, learn vocabulary and pronunciation". This task was learners favorite as well; it was the task preferred by learners, with a percentage of 38 %. Learners were asked to provide justifications for their choice. The following are the reasons they provided:

- Freedom of expressing ones thoughts.
- Improvement of pronunciation and vocabulary
- Promoting engagement and participation

➢ **Presentations:**

Out of four teachers observed by the researcher, three of them adopted the presentation task to informally evaluate learners' speaking ability. This makes of it a very important task used in our department. The totality of teachers states that they usually use presentations in their classrooms. Because of the limited number of observations, the researcher could not observe that in all the episodes. Based on teachers' answers to the questionnaire, we deduced that their use of presentations is for the sake of developing learners' critical thinking, as well as boosting their confidence and autonomy. Presentations were the second favorite task of learners after conversations and discussions, 27% of them state that they enjoy participating to this type of tasks because they are more comfortable with preparing their presentations at home to present it then to the teacher and get feedback. This task was also popular among learners, 8 learners justified their choice by stating that "the teacher corrects my mistakes because she has more experience than me". Learners trust their teacher and the feedback she gives them. They consider that this feedback will allow them to progress and know about their strengths and weaknesses. This task did not figure within the observation scheme and was not detectable during the episodes the researcher observed. Yet, it was a recurrent task in both learners' and teachers' answers. Both learners and teachers mentioned a new task which is debates, this task could be considered as a variety of the conversations and discussions task.

Debates were a task that 21% of learners selected to be an enjoyable task for them; they argued that debating is interesting for them because they have the opportunity to give their opinion regarding different topics. Two teachers affirmed that they implement debates in the classroom because it is a way of making students practice their English, and improve their pronunciation and fluency

> **Interviews:**

This task was only observed, it did not figure in learners' or teachers' answers. During two observational episodes, teachers used interviews as a task to implement informal assessment. They started by introducing positive things that can be presented in a job interview and things that cannot be said. For example an interviewer should talk about his educational and professional experiences, but cannot talk about his personal life. Learners were very receptive to this task especially when the teacher explained that they will use the tips she gave them in the future. Learners mentioned the task dialogue which in the opinion of the researcher they meant interviews. This task is one of learners' favorite tasks, 13% of learners think that it is interesting.

> **Role plays:**

This task was neither observed nor mentioned by learners, only one teacher proposed this type as a task that is being used in the English department, this implies that it is not widely used by all teachers. These four tasks were the only tasks observed by the researcher, the following set of tasks are mentioned either by learners, teachers or both. The tasks used by first and second year teachers are not the same. Based on our observations, we figured that first year teachers tend to rely on classroom discussions as the basic task of their assessment, while second year teachers tend to use presentations. This is may be due to learners' level.

First year students are beginners and do not yet have the required level to make successful presentations.

A similar study was conducted by Kim Hyun Sook (2003) who worked at the Korean English department for 15 years, the title of her research is "The types of speaking assessment tasks used by Korean Junior Secondary school English teachers" The researcher concluded that the tasks used by Korean English teachers are: let the student pick up one or two question, show and tell, self-introduction or family introduction, role play , rote memory of text dialog, picture description, and information gap activity. The tasks used by Korean English teachers are so different from tasks employed by Algerian English teachers; the only task in common is role plays.

Another aim behind this study is to investigate the ways in which teachers implement the aforementioned speaking tasks in the classroom. Based on the structured observation (observation scheme) and the unstructured observation (notes taken by the researcher during the observation), the researcher came to the conclusion that teachers of first year have a way of implementing tasks into the classroom that is so different from teachers of second year, for instance:

Category 1: Second year teachers

Teacher 1

She teaches second year students, she has the tendency to use individual type of tasks; mainly oral presentations where learners describe a product or any object they bring from home to the rest of the group. From what has been observed, the teacher follows a learner centered approach, because she was particularly silent throughout the whole session, she encouraged other students to give feedback on the presentations by asking questions such as: what do you think about your classmate's presentation, did you like it, and why? Her questions lead to a creation of group discussions where every student gave his opinion and expressed why he thought the presentation was good or not.

The teacher did not bring any materials; in fact she did not even use the white board. The teachers' approach might be beneficial for developing learners' autonomy and their fluency since she focused only on functions. The focus was on learners accomplishment of the task, thus she allowed them to present their work with no interruption. But this absence of feedback, materials, and focus on form might be harmful for their progress because based on learners' answers to the question regarding feedback, they do believe that feedback is important and the majority of 84% do not face problems with being corrected and given feedback

Teacher 2

The second teacher also teaches second year students. She also uses individual type of tasks, but instead of oral presentations, role plays were the focus of the lesson. She asked learners to try to convince their classmates to buy a product by putting themselves in the shoes of a promoter of a certain brand. Group work was also adopted during the conversations and discussions that took place after each role play.

In terms of tasks and their implementation, the two second year teachers are very similar. They did not use any materials, they did not provide learners with any feedback, they chose to keep silent and gave freedom to learners to speak even when they made mistakes. The second teacher followed the same approach, she focused on functions rather than form. She did not correct any pronunciation, phonetic, or grammar mistakes. The only difference between the two teachers is that the second teacher did provide feedback concerning learners' performance; mostly by giving encouraging feedback such as "well done, this is very interesting..." This is not sufficient because learners cannot learn about their weaknesses and improve them. The most dominant type of feedback was the opinions given by their classmates because the teacher asked them to do so. All in all, the similarities between the two teachers are far more significant than the differences.

Category 2: First year teachers

Teacher 3

Unlike the previous two teachers, the third teacher teaches first year students. The tasks she uses are different thus the ways of implementing them are different as well. The researcher noticed diversity in the use of tasks, the teacher managed to include three types of tasks in only two episodes: interviews, conversations and discussions, and oral presentations. As a consequence, the work was individual for oral presentations, paired for interviews (the teacher was the interviewer) and grouped for conversations and discussions.

The third teacher focused both on form and content. The teacher was creative, she used two materials: the first one was audio tapes, and the second was the white board which she used repeatedly. Each time learners made a mistake she corrected them even though this made learners lose their words from time to time and struggle to express their ideas. She proposed some words to help them recover and remember what they were saying. Because of the diversity of tasks and ways of integrating them into the classroom, other skills were used, such as reading, writing and listening. This jeopardized the validity of the informal assessment and in some cases the researcher believed that it was a writing reading module. The teacher took control over the teaching situation, learners were passive, and they only talked when the teacher asked them questions. Adopting a teacher centered approach might decrease learners' chances of learning.

Teacher 4

The fourth teacher is very similar to the third one, he also teaches first year students. The tasks he used were interviews, and conversations and discussions, he integrated them through the use of group and individual works. The teacher played the role of an interviewer asking the students some questions that they answered which could be considered as an individual work. The other learners expressed their thoughts about the things the interviewee needed to improve and the positive aspects of his responses. The teacher gave learners time to prepare their answers in the written form, thus some of them started reading their answers, the same thing happened with the third teacher.

The fourth teacher did not hesitate to give learners feedback and correct their mistakes; the focus was both on form and content because the teachers corrected learners' mistakes as well as ideas. He brought a computer to show learners a modal of a successful interview, he also used the white board to write new vocabulary related to the interviews. Teacher's interventions came sometimes too early, he did not give space to learners to complete their thoughts, and many of them forgot even what they were saying.

Matching teachers' profiles with the level of students they teach, we could notice that the tasks used by teachers vary according to learners' proficiency. Classroom discussions are more used with beginners. This is probably due to the fact that they do not yet have enough vocabulary to express themselves freely, classroom discussions do not require from the speaker to have an advanced level, he could use only words to express an idea, unlike presentations and role plays that needs a higher command over the language. Second year teachers employed tasks individually because at this stage learners have gained a certain level allowing them to present a work individually

The type of feedback provided by teachers varies as well, teachers tend to focus on form when teaching first year students because of their beginning proficiency level; they clearly make more mistakes compared to second year learners. As second year teachers, the focus was on functions, ideas and the ability to accomplish the task. The final objective of this inquiry is to examine how learners perceive teachers' informal assessment of their speaking ability. The results obtained from the questionnaire answered by learners are going to clarify this aspect. The Results obtained from the analysis of the questionnaire show that learners do consider informal assessment as an important part of their progress. First of all, 90% of learners stated that they enjoy studying the listening/speaking module. This indicates that teachers succeeded to gain learners' attention. Second 86% of learners think that they are provided with opportunities to speak in the classroom, teachers make learners the centre of the teaching learning experience; they leave space for learners to practice their speaking ability.

Third, there was consistency between what learners estimated to be the techniques that are widely used by teachers and their preferred techniques of receiving feedback. 31% of learners stated that their teachers provided them with encouraging feedback. This percentage was the highest compared to the rest of feedback giving techniques. Encouraging feedback was learners' favorite as well with a percentage of 48%. On the scale of teachers second most used technique, implicit correction was the chosen by 22% of learners and it was learners' second favorite technique with 22%.Results were consistent for the rest of the techniques. In other words, teachers of the English department succeeded to detect learners' feedback preferences and use them efficiently. Fourth, feedback is important in the eyes of learners, they believe that it helps them understand what their strengths are, by a percentage of 22% what is expected from them 30%, and it encourages them to participate 28%. Fifth, 84% of learners do not need any other type of feedback; they are satisfied with the feedback provided from teachers. And the same number of learners state that feedback do not present any disadvantage for them, that they appreciate receiving feedback from their teachers. Finally, 94% of learners believe that the tasks used as well as the feedback provided have improved their pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and confidence.

5-Implications

Based on the results obtained from analyzing the data, informally assessing learners' speaking ability can be said to be fundamental in the context of EFL learning and teaching. It is a way of improving and developing learners' speaking skill, and based on these obtained results we would like to make the following suggestions for teachers of the listening/ speaking module to raise their awareness towards' the impact of their informal assessment on learners. Since the tasks used by first year teachers and the way they were implemented are different from the tasks used by second year teachers, we decided to separate the recommendations:

First year teachers:

- Should make of the learner the center of the learning process and avoid the teacher centered approach.
- Should focus on functions as much as they focus on form.

Second year teachers:

- Should introduce more diversity in their choice of tasks.
- Should provide more feedback for learners.
- Explain to learners what is expected from them and the goals they should accomplish.
- Should correct learners' mistakes.

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