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THESIS:

ONLINE ASSESSMENT OF THE SPEAKING SKILLS OF EFL STUDENTS IN NORTH MACEDONIA DURING COVİD-19 PANDEMICS – A CASE STUDY FROM MAARIF INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

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Abstract

Pandemics and lockdown raised the need of online teaching and the use of digital platforms in every level of education worldwide. English language teachers had to adapt themselves to the online teaching, which brought its obstacles almost in all areas of teaching process. Among those difficulties, the evaluation and grading of students' speaking skills motivated us to research and share our experiences for better solutions in the online EFL classroom. This study aims to investigate the diverse ways to approach assessment objectively by using certain assessment criteria and methods in the online classroom. The participants of this study were 91 Middle School students of Maarif International Schools in Tetovo, particularly students from 6th grade to the 9th grade. The participants were divided in two groups, group A was assessed by live online presentations while group B by recorded video presentations which were sent to MS Teams platform where they also got feedback on their oral proficiency presentations. The assessment was based on the criteria set by McKay (2007) and Taufiqulloh (2009), i.e. grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, intonation, relevance to the topic and fluency. This thesis used both quantitative and qualitative method of gathering data while the students were assessed according to the analytic grading rubric designed by Taufiqulloh (2009), where the lowest point was 1 and the highest was 5 points per each criterion. The findings of this thesis are supposed to improve understanding of implications and limitations for speaking skills' assessment in online education and further research in this field.

Key words: speaking skills, online education, speaking assessment, assessment criteria, online classes, online assessment

Abstract

Pandemia dhe karantina paraqitën nevojë për përdorim të platformave digjitale dhe edukim online në secilin nivel të shkollimit anembanë botës. Mësimdhënësit e gjuhës Angleze duhej të adaptohen mënyrës së re të mësimdhenies e cila solli vështirësi në cdo aspekt të procesit arsimor. Ndër to ishte pikërisht vlerësimi dhe notimi i aftësive të të folurit që na motivoi për të hulumtuar dhe ndarë rezultatet e studimit tonë duke synuar zgjidhje më efikase në lëndën e gjuhës Angleze në mësimin online. Qëllimi i këtij studimi është të vëzhgojë dhe analizojë mënyrat e ndryshme për vlerësimin e aftësive të të folurit duke aplikuar kritere dhe metoda të veçanta të notimit. Pjesëmarësit e këtij studimi ishin 91 nxënës nga klasa e gjashtë deri në klasën e nëntë nga Shkolla Ndërkombëtare Maarif në Tetovë. Nxënësit ishin të darë në dy grupe ku grupi A u vlerësua sipas prezentimit live me PowerPoint kurse grupi B poashtu me prezentim në PowerPoint, mirëpo të regjistruar në video të cilët i dërguan në platformën digjjitale MS Teams ku poashtu morën edhe vlerësim përshkrimor për prezentimet e tyre. Vlerësimi ishte i bazuar në kriteret e McKay (2007) dhe Taufiqulloh (2009), të renditura si në vijim: gramatikë, fjalor, shqiptim, intonacion, renditja e temës dhe rrjedhshmëria në të folurit. Ky studim përdori metodën kualitative dhe kuantitative ku nxënësit ishin të vlerësuar sipas rubrikës së vlerësimit analitik të dizajnuar nga Taufiqulloh (2009) ku pika më e ulët ishte 1, ndërsa 5 ishte pika më e lartë e suksesit për secilin kriter në vençanti. Rezultatet e arritura nga ky studim supozohen të përmirësojnë këndvështrimin tonë mbi sugjerimet dhe kufizimet e vlerësimit të aftësive të të folurit në arsimimin online dhe të hulumtimeve të mëtejshme në këtë fushë.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Considering the importance of the oral performance of a learner, especially in the foreign language, with which his or her language knowledge is manifested, it is inevitable not to conduct a study on how to develop and improve one's speaking skills. This thesis concentrates solely on the way technology is a means both to instruct and assess and integrate it into our language classroom. The platform used in this research is the Microsoft Teams, which is currently applied in Maarif International Schools' online educational system. These platforms have been a great support to learners and teachers in carrying out online lessons as well as in hybrid lessons, where some students where having face-to-face instruction in a real classroom, while others were following the lesson online from the computer or smartboard of the classroom.

This research was led to assess the efficiency that Microsoft Teams has when it comes to assessing speaking skills, the efficiency of applying certain assessment criteria during the evaluation process and the functionality of live online and recorded video PowerPoint presentations. As an instrument to assess the students' oral proficiency PowerPoint presentations were asked to be prepared according to the topic the students had chosen. Microsoft Office PowerPoint presentation was decided to be used in this research for several reasons. Firstly, it is believed to be a program that almost all students are familiar with and like to work on. Secondly, PowerPoint enables students to put pictures and notes that will be helpful for them to remind about the points they have planned to mention during their presentation of the speaking assessment process. Third, it was assumed that it would reduce the stress level and motivate them to find their way in their speech. The thesis includes the introduction part, the second section includes data about the theoretical background of the study, the third section demonstrates the methodology of the work done and section four is about the conclusion and recommendations for further research.

Moreover, the methodology section puts forward a broad description of the design procedure and methodology for the research project that encompasses the foundation or essence of this thesis. The inspiration to conduct the research on this area of language is the need to analyze the validity of teachers' methods of instruction and assessment on their students' speaking skills. Even though students are expected to use the language proficiently, little attention is given to the development of their speaking skills. Accordingly, exams taken at school, including primary, middle and high school, are mostly based on testing learners' vocabulary, grammar, reading and writing. Studies have shown

that the reason speaking tests are not applied parallelly with the above-mentioned tests are the challenges and lack of knowledge on speaking assessment that teachers face. This thesis has given a broad literature review on what the teachers need to pay attention to when teaching speaking skills, what the parts of speaking skills are and the steps they should take in order to carry out a reliable and valid assessment. Certainly, the aim is to help learners improve and progress in their oral proficiency, as well as teachers to instruct and assess their students objectively.

Various questions were essential to be acknowledged referring to the authenticity and plausibility of the oral power point presentations as an efficient method to assess our learners' oral proficiency. Aiming to complete this thesis and interpret the collected data rationally and truthfully, both quantitative and qualitative research methods were applied.

The participants of this thesis were middle school students from 6th grade to the 9th grade who study at Maarif International Schools in Tetovo, North Macedonia. The selection of participants was consciously and specifically preferred to range between the grades from 6th to the 9th as these students are more familiar to the issue of being assessed orally and have the capability to prepare functional and understandable PowerPoint presentations when compared with primary school students who may have not mastered the use of Microsoft office and Microsoft Teams that well. The most appropriate and convenient methods to conduct this research were the descriptive-analytical, and comparative method; while the techniques used were content analyses and case study.

Language is the medium by which we transmit our ideas and thoughts in a lot of different forms. The exchange of ideas in other words is the communication process. Communication differs in two forms, spoken and written. Oral communication is a procedure of spoken correlation between the speaker and the hearer in converting thoughts to attain the goal of conveying our message. Speaking is usually supposed to be as the productive skill of language. The author of this thesis, based on her observations during her teaching experience and the research of the statements of Tamara Lucas (2008) and Hosni (2014) states that speaking skills, in all aspects of it, appears to be a great challenge for the teacher as it hardly gets attention in its evaluation. If we take as an example the language learning process of a person in his/her early childhood years, we will witness that the first what the child acquires is the listening and the speaking skill. Reading and writing skills are to be developed in the following years which need more professional help and are gained at school by their teacher's instructions. The child undergoes a sequence of processes initially by recognizing and associating sounds until constructing complex expressions. On the other hand, from the first grade at school, the first thing the child is aimed to be taught is the written language. Considering the importance given to writing and reading in the language classroom, the assessment is almost always based on the areas they

have been taught about; that is writing and reading. This reality confirms that assessing spoken language is put aside by teacher, instead focused on grammar and vocabulary especially in the EFL classroom. On the other hand, if we compare it with reading and writing, speaking is the most difficult skill to measure in a language classroom. In this regard, O'Malley and Michael (1996) in Taufiqulloh (2009) state that there are at least three difficulties confronted by the teachers who test spoken language in the classroom:

- o specifying the duration of the evaluation process
- o selecting assessment activities, and
- o defining the assessment criteria

Accordingly, this thesis reports three core problems:

1. steps in evaluation
2. choosing speaking test materials, and
3. the grading criteria.

Whatever we are teaching our students, be it grammar and vocabulary or the skills in a language, teachers need to get a feedback of their work that will help both them as a teacher to know where to stop and what to do more as well as improve the learners' linguistic knowledge. The means of getting feedback is by preparing different kinds of tests which should be appropriate to the points we want to assess. Assessment at this point of view, appears to be the culminating process and the hardest one in the EFL classroom, reasonably creating a vast number of research questions on its field. McKay (2007) suggests that the assessment instruments; i.e. exams, quizzes and/or other means of evaluation should fit to the circumstances in which they are used and offer scores that are truthful and correspond to the learners' language performance.

Boonkit (2010) states that assessment of speaking skills has been a challenge to almost all the teachers, as there are many factors to question its reliability and validity of the scores that we get at the end of the evaluation process. Accordingly, research of this thesis put the following six main divisions forward, the first two of which are based on the literature review division of Boonkit (2010).

1. The importance of the speaking skills for EFL learners
2. Factors influencing the speaking skills of EFL learners
3. Sub-skills of speaking
4. Assessment of the speaking skills
5. Instruction and assessment in the online virtual classroom vs. face-to-face classroom
6. Computer facilitated assessment

It appears that students whose mother tongue is Albanian are relatively extrovert and willing to talk English which is a great advantage in succeeding in learning the language. Of course, the similarity of their mother tongue to the target language has a great influence, however it is not always the same in everyone. There are different factors that affect their proficiency and fluency in the spoken language which are shown and discussed in the 'factors' section of this thesis. Besides the internal factors that affect the learning process and assessment of speaking skills in a language, the conditions under which these tests are done are of high importance. Since we are in the pandemics period, and the education system has changed worldwide, it is inevitable not to mention the online learning process. This thesis also introduces the details of both online and face-to-face learning and assessment. Furthermore, it analyses how computer facilitated assessment is carried out and what its implications are.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2. 1. The importance of Speaking Skills for EFL learners

Teaching learners to communicate in a foreign language, as Sripada and Masuram (2020) define, is a challenging productive skill which requires a lot of studying, enthusiasm and persistence to reach high proficiency in the language. According to them, when speaking takes place, a learner needs to concentrate on preparation, correction, re-correction and clarifying the words so that they obtain the competence to convey a message in spoken form. Additionally, the same authors note that pronunciation, intonation and stress patterns are all parts of speaking skills which could be hard for non-native speakers of English to master. According to Nunan (2004) speaking encompasses constructing organized oral messages to express a meaning. In oral language, speaking should take the attention of the listener and as Nunan (2004) states, it has a brief and instantaneous recognition or reaction, as well as an immediate feedback by the listener interfering the speaker during their conversation.

As L. Oxford (1993) defines, analysis conducted on the amount of time we spend on the four main skills of language, shows that 30% is speaking, 45% listening and around 16% reading and 9% writing. Therefore, as contended by Lertola (2015) it is obviously a skill that should receive more attention in the EFL context. However, the attention it got hasn't been so long. Zhang (2009) claims that in the past the key method was the grammar-translation method and the instruction of pronunciation was not useful as they were tested basically on their grammar knowledge. Later, language learning had a shift from grammar-translation method to audio-lingual method, which made the learners to listen and then repeat the words together as a class. It was not that simple as the translation method and required a more complicated teaching technique. This method according to Zhang (2009) was influenced by the concern that the language could be learnt best by continuous repetition and practice. Despite the fact that this approach had started to gain is fame in 1950s and that a vast number of English language teachers do not agree with it, currently there are still some forms of the audio-lingual method that are functional in teaching the language.

With the emergence of the view which encompasses a wide spectrum of the combination of different methods, pronunciation is taught more naturally during the communication process. Zhang (2009) states that even there are many different ways to practice the speaking skills in the classroom, most of them are based on the idea that the main objective should be to teach the language according to the purpose of why we learn it, rather than concentrating on its grammar mainly. Initial awareness trying to describe the speaking concept as Lado (1961) points out was represented in the trait theory

approach to construct validity. He claimed that the least advanced area in the assessment field of a language is the speaking skills and the reason for this is the lack of having the right understanding of what makes up speaking ability or oral production. The same author aimed to make an oral assessment test be exclusively a language test, without including parameters like talkativeness or introversion in it. The next theory which has recently gained awareness is the Communicative Language Ability of Bachman (1990) and A.S. Palmer (1996) in Bachman (2002a) which identifies that the oral proficiency encompasses both knowledge of the language and ability to apply it in their everyday life. This concept is in agreement with existing models of Canale and Swain (1980) of communicative competence which according to McKay (2007) included a large scope involving grammatical competence (knowledge of the rules of grammar), sociolinguistic competence (knowledge of the rules of use and of discourse), strategic competence (knowledge of verbal and nonverbal communication strategies) and discourse competence (verbal and nonverbal communication strategies that may compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or insufficient competence). McKay (2007) refers to Richards and Schmidt's (2013) idea that the framework is dependable on earlier theories like those of Canale and Swain (1980) about communicative skills, and Canale's (1983) a more advanced interpretation where communicative skills were broadened to be composed of grammatical proficiency (comprehension of the rules of grammar), sociolinguistic proficiency (comprehension of the right and appropriate use of words and expressions where necessary according to the context where they appear), strategic proficiency (comprehension of the rules in spoken and written language in the target language) and discourse proficiency (spoken and written communication methods that may cancel out the malfunctions in communication as a result of the factors in the performance or limited comprehension). Yet, Bachman's (1990) theory is enterprising by seeking to interpret the procedure by which several factors cooperate as well as with the environment where the language is applied.

Furthermore, McKay (2007) adds the summative description by Bachman (1990) and Weir (1990) who put forth the components that the communicative skills are made up, that is the proficiency in language, strategic proficiency and the third component the proficiency in psychophysiological processes. She defines that proficiency in language involves the organizational proficiency which is seen as the ability to organize words and sentences to make sense when using the language. The second aspect involving language proficiency is the organizational proficiency, which is composed of grammatical and textual knowledge; third is the pragmatic proficiency as defined by Taguchi (2009) as the power to apply the knowledge in the second language in accordance to the context where it appears. Bachman (1990) and Weir (1990) divide the pragmatic proficiency in two segments, the

illocutionary and the sociolinguistic proficiency. Strategic proficiency on the other hand, is perceived as carrying out evaluation, designing and implementation tasks in establishing the most efficacious ways of obtaining a communicative objective. Finally, as it is stated by McKay (2007) psycho-physiological processes included in the use of language designate the medium which can be auditory and visual and the manner which can be receptive and productive in which proficiency is achieved.

2.2 Factors Influencing the speaking skills of EFL learners

According to Zhang (2009) the first of the factors that affect the foreign learners' pronunciation when speaking English is the interference of the learners' mother tongue or of their first language to the target language. In our study we analyze the interference of Albanian language to English language as almost all the students' first language who study in Maarif International Schools is Albanian, however we interpret also the influence of Turkish language to English as there are a great number of students whose mother tongue is Turkish as well. The second factor is the learners age, therefore the participants in this study are chosen to vary from eleven-year-old (sixth grade) students to fourteen-year-old (ninth grade) students. The next factor that Zhang (2009) points out is the learner's stress at the time of speaking, the attitude and the psychological factors, intonation and prior pronunciation instruction.

2.2.1 Interference of Albanian to English

A great number of academics such as Karimi (2015) and Zhang (2009) approve that the first language has a powerful effect on the acquisition of the target language, both in its grammatical aspect and the spoken or the pronunciation of the words. In other words, interference of the mother tongue is the reason for the learners' strengths and weaknesses in their ambition to progress in the language, the stress level and intonation in the foreign language. In his study Zhang (2009) states that some Chinese learners struggle with pronouncing some sounds which do not exist in their language. The same applies to Turkish students, who face difficulties when they have to use the following sounds: / θ/, / ð/ and in some cases the sound / ŋ/. What they do, as most learners do from our observations, they try to substitute the target sound with a sound which is similar to that one. Here, for instance, instead of saying 'therefore' / ðɛ:fɔ:/ they pronounce it as / dɛ:fɔ:/ or some may pronounce it as / zɛ:fɔ:/. The same problem occurs when they have a word with the sound / θ/ which is a very frequently appearing sound in the spoken language in English. An example of this would be substituting the sound / θ/ with

/s/; hence when a learner is not able to pronounce 'thank you' as /θenk ju:/ he or she changes / θ/ to / t/, so that we hear it as /tenk ju:/ or in some cases /senk ju:/. This substitution varies from person to person, for that reason there is not a sound which substitutes the target sound in the foreign language. When we look at Albanian alphabet and the English phonetic alphabet, we see that the Albanian alphabet is parallel with its phonetic alphabet and the way it is written. On the other hand, English has only 26 letters but 44 sounds. Albanian language has 36 letters, from which only the sound /əʊ/ as in British English pronunciation of 'go' is missing. Accordingly, Albanian students tend to use the /oʊ/ sound and say /goʊ/ in the American accent. However, this doesn't appear to be a difficulty in articulation, as there are learners who prefer the British accent and for them it's not a challenge to articulate this particular sound. A key factor in this similarity in the phonetic system is that both the Albanian and the English language as Cable (2002) states belong to the Indo-European language group. Based on this fact, languages that don't belong to the same group of languages, like LaPolla's (2017) definition of Chinese belonging to Sino-Tibetan language group has much more differences with the English language.

2.2.2 Stress factor in the target language

Students have shown to make errors when speaking English especially in the stress and rhythm of sentences, which is not a problem in most of other languages. In English language in every word there is a syllable which should be stressed more than the rest in that word. The significance of putting the stress on the correct syllable in a word must not be neglected. The mispronunciation of the words can be associated with the intervention from the first language of the learners. For a lot of learners who cause difficulties to the listeners to understand the intended meaning of word, erroneous syllable stress appears to be one of the primary concerns. The sounds of a word will be changed even from just a little change in the stress pattern of a word. The meaning of the word as well as its grammatical characteristics will change if stress is put on a different syllable than the one aimed according to the context where it appears. In his study Zhang (2009) exemplifies this issue with the word *subject* which when used as a noun has the stress on the first syllable, whereas when it is used as the verb in a sentence, we put the stress on the second syllable.

According to the author of this thesis, from the teaching experience she has observed that in English language students must be taught the importance of the stress put on words in a sentence. The word that we put the stress on, is the main information we are implying in that sentence. For example, if we ask someone the question "Are we having dinner at your house?" and put the stress on the word

dinner, we will give the message to the listener that we are more interested to what we will be doing in his / her house. On the other hand, if we emphasize the word "your", we will ask if we are having the dinner at his/her house or someone else's house. Reasonably, prior instruction on the changes that stress makes on the meaning of the message we aim to deliver to the listener is highly significant in speaking skills classes.

2.2.3 Intonation factor

Zhang (2009) states that the language group a language is part of, determines not only its pronunciation but also the intonation in that language. He points out that Chinese and English differ in their stress and rhythmic patterns due to the difference they have where the stress should be put in the language. According to the same author, rhythm in Chinese language in grounded on the number of syllables where every syllable in a word is given the same amount of time to pronounce. On the other hand, in English language which depends on the Indo-European group of languages same as the Albanian language, in one word only one syllable is stresses and we emphasize the stressed syllable more than the other syllables in the words. As a result of this difference, Zhang states that this causes the Chinese to be misunderstood and sound like a non-native speaker. From the observations in Maarif International schools, and the other Albanian speakers of English, we can say that Albanian language and English language both share the same rhythmic and stress patterns, as a result of which advanced speakers cannot be differentiated if they are native or non-native speakers when it comes to their pronunciation and intonation in the English language.

Additionally, Zhang (2009) suggests that the shift of intonation of the first language to the second language could affect perception of the speaker. Hence, differences in tone and intonation may cause the speaker to sound unkind and thoughtless. Students of English must be conscious of this difference in order to bypass making mistakes in intonation. Indeed, sounds in some languages that depend on different groups than the English language depends on have intonation also, and that intonation drops at the last syllable of words. However, especially in Chinese each word has an established pitch which causes the pitch or intonation of the whole sentence be limited to the intonation of the main word in the sentence; whereas for English, as Zhang (2009) says, intonation is so important that can mean life and death and clearly associates vowels and consonants as the skeleton of English and intonation as the soul of it who goes on by claiming that the most significant thing in language is the manner and the tone we use rather than the words we use to convey our message, thus employing noticeability of intonation.

The familiarity of intonations and the understanding of purposes of diverse intonation patterns will considerably enable learners' achievement of the second language phonological system. As pointed out by Zhang (2009), Wenda (1983) asserts that intonation is one of the factors that determines the meaning and intention in spoken language. Later he mentions that the intonation pattern in English language mainly reveals whether a sentence is a question, an assertion or a recommendation, therefore students not only should learn the intonation pattern of English to convey their message in spoken form but also to eliminate misunderstandings on their intention.

2.2.4 Learners age

In his study Derakhshan (2015) states that various researchers such as Tohidian (2009), Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991) have indicated the connection between the age and some aspects of the second language acquisition. Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991) and Long in his article about second language acquisition (1991) state that the age is significantly influential in learning a foreign language. Nemati (2006) claims that the ideal method to learn a second language is to learn two languages at the same time since early childhood. In addition, Zhang (2009) point outs that young learners appear to grasp accents very fast and the skill to do so seems to weaken with time and the acquaintance of their first language, to a huge degree, acts as an irritating interference to their foreign language acquisition.

One of the researchers interrelating age with language acquisition is also Lennenberg (1967) who recommends two best stages to learn a language: the first is the childhood and the second one the puberty or the teenage years. From the observations based on the working experience of the author of this thesis, we can say that pronunciation is seen to be the most challenging fragment of a language for adult learners to acquire. Why is it easier to learn e new language when we are younger in age than when in maturity? One key reason that Zhang (2009) puts forward is that children can acquire the phonetic system more efficiently, while at adults the process of learning may be slower due to their age. Nemati and Taghizade (2013) in Derakhshan (2015) claim that when children try to communicate, their family members become joyful and approach positively to their pieces of words. They know what they intend to mean, they never stop to modify or improve their pronunciation or grammar, however teachers on the other hand value and give emphasis on the messages the students try to deliver, they stop and correct their grammatical mistakes, errors in vocabulary, pronunciation and intonation as well. This is the reason that the above-mentioned authors claim that classroom is not a real setting where language is learned if we compare it with the language learned at home with family members.

Zhang (2009) reports some scholars arguments that, after teenage years, lateralization (the transmission of linguistic functions to the different brain hemisphere) is completed, and adults' capability to differentiate and create native-like sounds is more restricted. Derakhshan (2015, p.2113) characterizes puberty as the period when the "brain loses its elasticity and reorganizational capacities which are necessary for language acquisition". He indicates that people can best learn languages in early childhood, and if they don't have this opportunity, by the age of puberty the chances of learning a language proficiently will be diminished. The same author states that, the left hemisphere of the brain in children is designed to do the functions of language and talking rather than the right hemisphere. The meaning of this as Derakhshan (2015) explains is that in early childhood children will learn the language without being affected by their mother tongue, so they don't mix them, or do not think of the meaning of the words in their mother tongue to say it in the second language. However, when they reach their teen years both spheres of the brain work efficiently on language, which causes transfer from L1 to L2. In his research, Zhang (2009) mentions the same process as delicate stages of life when numerous features of language achievement occur, or to adults' requirement to re-modify current neural networks to welcome new sounds. Most scholars, according to Zhang (2009), approve that adults accept pronunciation more problematic than young learners do and that they possibly will not reach native-like pronunciation.

However, if it is grammatical aspect the issue, Derakhshan (2015) mentions Tohidian and Tohidian's (2009, p.12) ideas where they state that "The critical period for grammar may be later than for pronunciation (around 15 years). Some adult learners, however, may succeed in acquiring native levels of grammatical accuracy in speech and writing and even full linguistic competence". As a result of the morpheme study conducted by Bailey, Madden and Krashen (1974) on a certain number of English learners, children and adults, they concluded that both groups learned certain English words at the same order of acquisition. Besides, Derakhshan (2015) asserts what authors like Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1981) have argued that children's mother tongue learning is parallel to the adults' second language acquisition.

2.2.5 Learners attitude, psychological factors and anxiety

Zhang (2009) asserts that the learners' attitude towards second language acquisition can encourage them to succeed in pronunciation. It is very usual in phonetic classes to see that a great number of learners struggle cooperating with their teacher. In his article he mentions researchers like

Pennington (1994) who claims that teaching pronunciation in second language classroom should as well relate to the learner's values, attitudes and their social representations and what can facilitate positive attitude in the learner is the motivation to learn the second language. Correspondingly, the same author relates learners' unique pronunciation with their character and psychological state at a given time. Acton's (1984) point of view is that in order to improve the learner's pronunciation teachers should work on their students' psychological readiness as both perspectives correlate and interact with each other. He states that a learner can manage his or her feelings and emotions if he or she speaks fluently and has a good pronunciation, parallelly their emotions can manifest in their pronunciation. This according to Zhang (2009) is the main principle of the leading programs in voice instruction and public speaking.

Scholars like Lee and Winke (2017) claim that one of the motivations why researchers should identify how, especially, young learners perform and associate with global English language assessments is the motivation to get completely reliable and valid results from their assessments. Flanery (1990) recommends researchers to work on this issue more as young learners are easily influenced in testing situations. He also suggests paying attention to the tests, which should be controlled not just to be safe psychometrically but also psychologically. Rotenberg (2002) also indicates the difference between peers who are and are not ELLs, as ELLs may possibly go through a higher feeling of anxiety during the assessment procedure. Based on the research of numerous researchers like Hall, Collins, Benjamin, Nind and Sheehy (2004); Harlen (2006); Hodge, McCormick and Elliott (1997); Reay and Wiliam (1999) and Rotenberg (2002), Lee and Winke give a significant information related to the effects of state or nation-wide tests on young learners. They state that those tests can have negative effects on their psychology as well as their overall academic work, success and anxiety if the learners do not perform well or get low grades. Sometimes, learners who do not experience the test positively, according to Smith and Ellsworth (1987) and Winke (2011), stop trying or do not continue to do well until the end of the test, as a result of losing their hope. Responses like these, weaken the trustworthiness of the test and grade evaluation and thus validity. With these indications, Carless and Lam (2014) note that researchers have already started to analyze young learners' viewpoints on assessment standards, while Chik and Besser (2011) stress the analysis conducted on economically achievable language tests.

Lee and Winke stress the question if English language learners undergo too much test-taking anxiety or not. Horwitz (2010), as they report, claims that English language learners usually experience changeable levels of foreign language anxiety. Lee and Winke state that foreign language anxiety can be caused from the lack of knowledge on a certain task, however Hewitt and Stephenson (2012) and

Rotenberg (2002) assert that the two notions foreign language anxiety and test-taking anxiety are different in their nature, as the latter can be caused by the assessment procedure itself. Lee and Winke give the details of the result of the study conducted by Hewitt and Stephenson who state that Spanish adult learners in a face-to-face oral assessment have shown to weaken in their performance during the test, especially the learners which are at a lower level of their language proficiency in relation to the exam they are taking.

Apart from this study, research on children or young learners has also been conducted, that Lee and Winke took Rotenberg's (2002) study as an example. Rotenberg analyzed the relationship between two types of anxiety (test anxiety and foreign language anxiety) and language competence. The participants in his study were ten second grade non-native speaker learners and twelve native speaker learners. The results of her study showed that non-native ELL children got higher points from the exams but also had a higher level of foreign language anxiety in comparison to their native speaker peers. Similarly, Hodge and several other researchers (1997) detected that the language background of a learner (whether he or she is a native or non-native speaker of the target language, here English language) is a scientifically important aspect in foreseeing the degree of emotional discomfort shown between learners who entered the Higher School Certificate exam in Australia. The stress and anxiety of young language learners in an online assessment can result from various reasons, therefore Lee and Winke suggest teachers to try to detect the reasons and clear them out.

Apart from the test itself, the same authors note that ELLs undergo high levels of anxiety during the test as a result of the pressure which comes from their parents and other people like family, friends and teachers. Chik and Besser (2011) conducted a research on young ELLs in Hong Kong by doing interviews with both sides, the learners with the researchers, and found out that children had a lot of stress to perform well in that exam and studied intensively aiming to enter prestigious English-language schools in China. In the same way, Carless and Lam (2014) examined the thoughts of 115 middle school students in Hong Kong on the exams taken in school through interviews. The students were asked to draw pictures or illustrate their feeling about the exams on paper by drawing. The results showed that generally the learners expressed more negative than positive feelings and 51% of the learners indicated that the fear of their parents' disapproval was one of the biggest factors that causes anxiety during and before the test. On the other hand, Lee and Winke write Dewaele, Petrides and Furnham's (2008) research findings, who state that an encouraging and understanding environment with rich target language involvement decreases the anxiety that young language learners feel during the assessment.

2.2.6 Former pronunciation instruction

Similar to prior preparation of their inner state about communicating in the second language, Zhang (2009) also suggests teachers to train their students on their pronunciation in early stages of the learning process. If they start to be taught how to pronounce the words or be corrected at early levels, they can have a native-like accent. On the other hand, as the above-mentioned author states, learned errors become part of a person's natural speech and they can be difficult to be recognized and changed by themselves.

2.3 Sub-skills of speaking

Masuram and Sripada (2020, p. 61) point out Lackman's (2010) list of significant and fundamental parts of language in order to advance speaking skills as "functions, fluency, accuracy, appropriateness, grammar, turn taking skills, relevant length, responding and initiating, repair and repetition, range of words and discourse markers". Below figure 1 illustrates Lackman's (2010) ways of applying the sub-skills of speaking into the language classroom as it is illustrated by Masuram and Sripada (2020).

Speaking sub-skills	Application
Fluency – students speak with a logical flow without planning or rehearsal	Students require to focus on meaning in communication than accuracy in activities
Accuracy – students speak using words, pronunciation and structures	Students require to focus on pronunciation of words and structures in activities
Using functions – students use phrases for giving advice, request, apologies	Role-plays and simulations which require verbal communication for a reason or function
Appropriacy – students require to speak with appropriacy for a situation or deciding for a choice of vocabulary and grammar	Students require to stress on purpose of talking determining what language is appropriate
Turn-taking skills – students practice ways of interjecting	Students need to take turn without irritating the speaker. Listening practice is required
Relevant length – students require to speak at a length appropriate to a situation	Students practice activities which demonstrate that the purpose of speaking or the context determines the appropriate length of a turn. A one-word answer is acceptable for a store research survey but would not be sufficient for a job interview.
Responding and Initiating – students practice by starting a new topic or by making responses.	Students practice conversation activities using appropriate words and phrases.
Repair and repetition – students practice rephrasing sentences when the speaker feel what was said was not understand	Students practice repairing when they suspect they haven't been understood or correction from the speaker.
Range of Words and Grammar - students practice	Students need to know a range of words and grammar

Figure 1. Lackman's (2010) speaking sub-skills and their applications taken from Masuram & Sripada (2020)

2.3.1 Crucial Components of Speaking

Masuram and Sripada (2020) highlight Harmer's (2001) statements about oral fluency which, as he states, requires language competence and skill to understand the language naturally without struggle. He classifies the crucial components for oral fluency as follows:

Connected speech: good speakers should be capable to use the short forms of words, such as *I'd've been*, rather than saying each word separately as *I would have been*. The first version is an example of a fluent connected speech in which, according to Masuram and Sripada (2020), words are changed (assimilation), lost (elision), added (linking) or diminished. Based on these facts, they suggest teachers to incorporate learners in tasks that will foster the use and improve connected speech.

Expressive devices: When people whose native language is English are communicating with others, apart from being fluent and using connected speech, they also change their stress, intonation, the volume of their voice. Besides, they also use body language which is another way of conveying meaning to the listener. Accordingly, the same authors recommend teachers to instruct the learners on these aspects as well, certainly if they want to be effective native like speakers of English.

Lexis and grammar: Improvised speech takes place when learners use some recurring lexical phrases from everyday life especially by using specific language for the situation. Therefore, the same author suggests teachers to practice a wide range of phrases for diverse functions as agreeing or disagreeing, using the language at moments of surprise, contentment or disturbance. When learners are having conversations, such as in pair work tasks, for a particular context like ordering something in a restaurant or talking to a doctor or doing shopping in a supermarket, teachers could instruct them about functional phrases that they can use according to the respective situation they are in.

Discussion language: Functional speaking improves from the discussions in a language which are used for explanation and to express what we mean.

2.4 Assessing speaking skills

Most of the students who have achieved the pre-intermediate level in English language are not afraid of making mistakes anymore as a result of having a rich vocabulary and knowledge of the grammar rules. However, when it comes to students who are at the beginner level, they feel uncomfortable when they try to speak English. The factors that affect them, from our observations are the fear of making mistakes and thus being laughed at. These two factors weaken the learners' self-confidence and social interface. Thinking in terms of conducting a proper and understandable dialogue between two people, Zhang (2009) suggests having an accurate pronunciation and intonation in their

speaking process. This study correspondingly determines some factors which influence the oral fluency or the speaking skills in general and then provides some useful recommendations for teaching and assessing it.

To evaluate oral fluency, firstly we need to define what exactly speaking as a process in language acquisition encompasses, so that teachers can use fair assessment criteria and examinations that will let them evaluate the speaking skills as a whole rather than just being based on the performance of the student during the examination process. Additionally, McKay (2007) suggests teachers to consider defining models for oral exams in ways that are relevant for the learners for whom the test is created. This explanation of speaking as a skill should challenge to define associated, but different, characteristics or elements that make up the concept of speaking initiated on specific theories of competence.

The same author, defines two of the core bases for this explanation which are strategic competence and interactional competence. Based on the research of Canale and Swaine (1980), Canale (1983), Bachman (1990) and Bachman and Palmer (1996), McKay (2007) defines strategic competence as the mental capability to be able to communicate, but intending to have the skill to incorporate it in a theory definition it is also essential to study what noticeable characteristics of speech would offer us with the representation of applying it into practice. Palmer (1981) claims that strategic abilities differ from person to person, therefore in consequence with this definition Paribakht (1985) adds that the communication strategies (CS) have been commonly defined as the ways that learners practice to solve the difficulties they have when speaking. However, according to McKay (2007) the concept of interactional competence hasn't yet reached a unified or agreed definition among linguists.

Nowadays, academics in educational and social areas are shifting from theories that cover all-largescale models of theories that work in unlimited circumstances, asserting that such theories cannot contribute significant and rich manifestations of socially carried models. In accordance with this inclination, Chalhoub-Deville (2003) suggests developing and widen the notion of interactional competence in order to cover the context where the communication takes place. McKay (2007) points out Fulcher's (2003) statement about language testing for which she says that it is one of newest areas of research and training in the field of applied linguistics, with the speaking skills proficiency tests gaining interest during the World War II. Historically, speaking assessment, as stated in McKay (2007), at first was conducted in the United States of America to the students coming from other

countries and continents around the world. The year was 1930 and the name of the exam was College Board's English Competence Examination. The scores that these students would get, would determine whether they have the right to study in USA or not. Their psychological condition during test was also important and their shyness was a point that the testers had to pay attention and see if it has affected their test scores or not. McKay (2007) reveals the following criteria used for assessing speaking skills in 1930:

- fluency
- responsiveness
- rapidity
- articulation
- enunciation
- command of construction
- use of connectives
- vocabulary and idiom

2.4.1 Identifying the purpose of speaking assessment

In order to be accurate and create valid and truthful criteria for assessment, it is of great importance to identify the purpose of the assessment. In his study, Taufiqulloh (2009) states that speaking skills exam is designed for some goals such as determining learners' oral proficiency when he should take part at a given level of language instruction which requires speaking skills. In English classes, practicing speaking skills becomes one of the main aspects of curriculum which ranges from the lower levels up until the advanced level. If a person wants to join such a language learning course, then he or she is obliged to enter and pass the oral proficiency exam which most of cases is carried out as an interview. According to the points they get, the learners are placed to classes parallel to their level of proficiency in English where they can communicate with their classmates. Another example that Taufiqulloh (2009) gives is when learners want to have a vertical shift upwards, when they have to undergo the same kind of assessment procedure.

O'Malley and Pierce (1996) as stated in Taufiqulloh (2009) state three main intentions for taking an oral proficiency test:

1. For arranging learners into classes according to their level of oral proficiency in a language-based course.

2. For moving to a higher level from the current level of the language program.

3. For shifting from an ESL to a regular grade-level learning program.

Between the above-mentioned intentions of oral proficiency test stated by Taufiqulloh (2009), there is not a certain objective of assessing oral proficiency in the classroom for primary and middle school students. The same author believes that speaking skills tests are seldom practiced in the second language classroom and when they are, they are either to determine the progress of the students or to construct an educational plan. The main factor, according to the Taufiqulloh (2009) is that teachers could not have had a special training on how to evaluate oral proficiency specifically in the language classroom. From the point of view of the author of this thesis, the central point of emphasis both in teaching and assessment is given to reading and writing skills, and even more on grammatical knowledge. To determine the aims of oral proficiency tests, Richards (1983) emphasizes the great initiative to investigate the learners' needs. According to him, surveys or interviews are essential methods to understand the needs of the learners. Taufiqulloh (2009) suggests combining the aims of oral proficiency tests based on learner needs and personal language evaluation papers; in order to create proper teaching goals, objectives and evaluation methods and techniques.

2.4.2 Planning speaking assessment

As stated by Taufiqulloh (2009), interrelationship between teaching and assessment in defining the aims of oral assessment will contribute to planning and evaluation process. O'Malley and Pierce (1996) claim that there are various stages concerning planning:

1. Establishing teaching activities
2. Defining the fundamental teaching goals and associating them to classroom activities and presentation assignments
3. Determining whether the students will prepare an audio or video recording of their speaking skills presentation project
4. Determining the frequency of gathering information
5. Determining when and how the students will get the feedback of their speaking skills presentations

1-Establishing teaching activities

As regarded by Taufiqulloh (2009) this is indeed the most critical phase when we need to design the speaking assessment. Teaching and assessment are the unified and undivided tasks in classroom activities. Reasonably, the same author proposes teachers to specify the circumstances when they will

evaluate the learners' oral proficiency presentations, separately one student at a time or in groups. Additionally, he suggests the teachers to prefer appropriate techniques and activities relevant to the form of assessment they have chosen (separately, in pair or in groups).

2-Defining the fundamental teaching goals and associating them to classroom activities and presentation assignments

Taufiqulloh (2009) recommends teachers to prepare the general objectives of their speaking skills classes beforehand which will later be advanced to specific ones. This will be the moment of starting to adopt the appropriate materials, assignments and methods in teaching extending to its evaluation process.

3-Determining whether the students will prepare an audio or video recording of their speaking skills presentation project

Brown and Yule (1983) put forward the idea of using recordings for each student separately if it is an objective to teach oral proficiency. They also propose that learners should be recorded carrying out diverse types of assignments, including talking about a painting or a situation, narrating a story, or expressing their thoughts about a certain topic. Divergent types of assignments carried out by students, according to Taufiqulloh (2009) will be to the advantage of teachers to get beneficial feedback on the learners needs thus enabling to concentrate on determining appropriate teaching goals.

4-Determining the frequency of gathering information

For teachers whose aim is to observe learners' improvement it will be required to collect evidence more frequently than the teachers who aim to recategorize viewpoints, which could need assessment to be carried out two times per year. So, as a necessity to examine students' development, Taufiqulloh (2009) suggests integrating assessment in the curriculum systematically using an array of speaking skills activities.

5-Determining when and how the students will get the feedback of their speaking skills presentations

Among the factors that affect learners' progression, as stated by Taufiqulloh (2009), is the feedback which is more essential and potentially is more effective. Accordingly, he states that feedback can be given in a spoken form directly with the learner and by grading based on specified grading criteria with comment which will help the learners improve themselves in areas they should advance more.

2.4.3 Designing speaking test rubrics

The history of speaking skills assessment, as stated by McKay (2007), dates to World War II when the military workforce had to master in oral fluency and understand the English language. As a result of this need, assessment in language programmes shifted from evaluating grammar to oral performance. Adams (1980) signifies the list of grading criteria made up of five components which was introduced in the Foreign Service Institute in the USA. The list, as shown in McKay (2007) included the following points:

1. Accent
2. Comprehension
3. Fluency
4. Grammar
5. Vocabulary

Sollenberger (1978) specifies the absence of the factor to assess functional communication as a limitation of the above-mentioned grading process. Accordingly, McKay (2007) interprets both language and oral proficiency as significant issues of assessment which date back to the first times of the construction of modern grading criteria. These initial advances in the assessment of speaking skills created awareness in the usefulness of holistic contrasted with combined characteristics grading and in the difference between language and oral competency criteria for grading and validity. The emphasis, as McKay (2007) states, was entirely on the format of grading range and their denotations, or the criteria for the exam. Taufiqulloh (2009) specifies the assessment, implementing and preparation of speaking as the most challenging between other skills in linguistics classes. One of the factors which are a challenge for teachers is the decision on the grading criteria to assess the oral proficiency of the learners. Taufiqulloh (2009) lists some elements which are generally used to evaluate speaking, that is:

- o Pronunciation
- o Grammar
- o Vocabulary
- o Fluency
- o listening comprehension
- o appropriateness, and so on.

If we compare Adams' (1980) list with that of Taufiqulloh (2009) we observe that in the latter appropriateness and listening comprehension are added, while accent is replaced with pronunciation. In addition to the above elements that need to be regarded specifically when assessing oral proficiency,

the teacher needs as well to consider the number of students who are going to take the exam as well as the aspect of indifference and validity. From the teaching experience of the author of this thesis, we have observed students who speak fluently, have a native like accent, do not hesitate and do not think which grammar part they should use when in dialogue but just keep talking like a native speaker. On the other hand, we have observed and noticed students who hesitate, are shy to express themselves probably from the fear of making mistakes and being laughed at, as well as students who correct themselves continuously when they communicate. Besides these, the same author suggests teachers to pay attention to the methods of asking the students speak and ways of assessing several aspects at a time. Above all these issues, as Taufiqulloh (2009) states, there is the problem of assessing every student exclusively. He offers teachers to assess oral proficiency based on what they have taught and that the teaching certainly needs to be based on the previously set aims and objectives of language teaching for that group of students. After the test has been carried out, the teachers will be able to look at the evaluation assignments and their quality in a different light as well as the teaching objectives and tasks which must be parallel with the students' needs. O'Malley and Pierce (1996) as reported by Taufiqulloh (2009) recommend following the below given steps in order to establish better criteria or grading procedure:

- Create grading standards of oral proficiency centered on the aims and objectives of teaching before applying those teaching assignments needed for test.
- Functionalize these criteria to be centered on the learner's current language production.
- Specify standards for criteria of the learners' performance by formulating appropriate grading criteria and grading scales.
- Start by applying a simulation of grading criteria and scale
- Re-examine it to verify your teaching objectives and then propose your colleagues to give you feedback.
- Observe and notice the elements of speaking skills that you need to test and grade. The elements could encompass conversational outcomes or the state of being easily understood by others, grammar and pronunciation. If general conversational outcomes are more significant than communication, then the rubrics or criteria need to be given more emphasis.
- Get the students involved in analyzing the grading criteria so that they give feedback on it.

Moreover, Brown and Yule (1983) recommend applying grading methods that represent crucial aspects of functional communication which, as Taufiqulloh (2009) interprets, could be applied as the highest level whereas less effective performance as the lowest level among the grading criteria in the

speaking skills tests. Among other researchers, Gonzales Pino (1988) states that when assessing speaking skills teachers should consider the level of the whole class and the teaching objectives determined at the beginning of the course. For instance, he suggests teachers to evaluate the general oral effects at the beginner level students, where they will be given less emphasis on their use of vocabulary and grammar and even less to pronunciation and fluency. Furthermore, he states that grading criteria should aim to prioritize and emphasize the aspects of the language that students are good at, rather than the aspects they are weak at and certainly, beginners will have limited language proficiency.

Taufiqulloh (2009) approaches this issue also from another point of view. He compares holistic with analytic grading methods and assumes that teachers will notice that learners not always fit into a category precisely, for that reason teachers should use less criteria about three to six; whereas analytic grading according to him will be more accurate yet time consuming. However, analytic grading will answer the learners' strengths and weaknesses in their language especially oral proficiency. He states that the latter could be best used when we are planning a placement test, not in a regular language classroom. Similarly, Underhill (1987) proposes using holistic and analytic grading criteria proportionately. Taufiqulloh (2009) illustrates this approach best in the figures below (figure 2 and 3). Figure 2 illustrates the holistic oral language grading criteria, whereas figure 3 illustrates analytic oral language grading criteria.

Focus/ Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6
Speaking	Begins to name concrete objects	Begins to communicate personal and survival needs	Begins to initiate conversation; retells a story and responds to simple questions	Initiates and sustains a conversation with descriptors and details; exhibit self-confidence in social situations; begin to communicate in classroom settings	Speaks in social and classroom setting with sustained and connected discourse; any errors do not interfere with meaning.	Communicates competently in social and classroom settings
Fluency	Repeats words and phrases	Speaks in single-word utterances and short patterns	Speaks hesitantly because of rephrasing and searching for words	Speaks with occasional hesitation	Speaks with near native fluency	Speaks fluently
Structure			Uses predominantly present tense verbs; demonstrate errors of omission	Uses some complex sentences; applies rules of grammar but lacks control of irregular forms	Uses a variety of structures with occasional grammatical errors	Masters a variety of grammatical structures
Vocabulary		Uses fictional vocabulary	Uses limited vocabulary	Uses adequate vocabulary	Used varied vocabulary	Uses extensive vocabulary
Listening	Understands little or no English	Understands words and phrases; requires repetition	Understands simple sentences in sustained conversation	Understands classroom discussions with repetition, rephrasing and clarification	Understands most spoken language including classroom discussion	Understands classroom discussion without difficulty

Figure 2. Analytic Oral Language Scoring Rubric by Taufiqulloh (2009)

Rating	Description
6	- Communicates competently in social and classroom settings - Speaks fluently - Masters a variety of grammatical structures - Uses extensive vocabulary but may lag behind native-speaking peers - Understands classroom discussion without difficulty
5	- Speaks in social and classroom settings with sustained and connected discourse; any errors do not interfere with meaning - Speaks with near native fluency ; any hesitations do not interfere with communication - Uses a variety of structures with occasional grammatical errors - Used varied vocabulary - Understands simple sentences in sustained conversation ; requires repetition - Understand most spoken language including classroom discussion
4	- Initiates and sustains a conversation with descriptors and details; exhibit self-confidence in social situations; begin to communicate in classroom settings - Speaks with occasional hesitation - Uses some complex sentences; applies rules of grammar but lacks control of irregular forms (e.g., runned, mans, not never, more higher) - Uses adequate vocabulary ; some words usage irregularities - Understand classrooms discussions with repetition, rephrasing, and clarification
3	- Begins to initiate conversation; retells a story or experience; asks and responds to simple questions - Speaks hesitantly because of rephrasing and searching for words - Uses predominantly present tense verbs; demonstrate errors of omission (leave words out, word endings off) - Uses limited vocabulary - Understands simple sentences in sustained conversation; requires repetition
2	- Begins to communicate personal and survival needs - Speaks in single-word utterances and short patterns - Uses functional vocabulary - Understands words and phrases; requires repetitions
1	- Begins to name concrete objects - Repeats words and phrases - Understands little or no English

Figure 3.Holistic Oral Language Scoring Rubrics by Taufiqulloh (2009)

2.5 Instruction and assessment in the online virtual classroom vs. face-to-face classroom

Up until March 2020 we were not even thinking of online education. The teaching process was taking place in the school, currently defined as face-to-face learning. However, the spread of Covid-19 changed our country's education system as well. Maarif International Schools firstly started using the program called "The Blackboard Collaborate" which in November 2020 was replaced with Microsoft Teams application. If we compare in-class learning with online learning, thinking in terms of evaluating oral fluency, online assessment appears to have more disadvantages than advantages. When students are in the classroom, the amount of spoken interaction seems to be much higher than

when they are attending the class from distance. Evaluation of a student's oral fluency in online classes takes place just when the student raises his/her hand or when the teacher asks. If the student's nature is of an introvert type, shy and not active, continuous assessment will not be applicable on that student. However, in face-to-face education, students see each other and seem to be more willing to participate in the lesson. These naturally occurring dialogues between students and the teacher create an opportunity to assess them every day continuously without having them known they are being assessed for their speaking skills.

On the other hand, in online learning system, since we don't have a natural classroom but a virtual one, students need to be given turns and less time to express themselves. Online classes last 10 minutes less than regular classes which were 40 minutes and adapted to 30 minutes currently. Reasonably, informing students previously that they will be assessed for their speaking skills appears to be helpful both for the teacher and students, so that the students prepare themselves and when the test starts they will be able to give more attention to the criteria for which they are being tested. According to the author of the thesis, based on the ideas of previously mentioned researchers as well, it's of great importance to inform learners about the grading criteria beforehand. Another advantage of online assessment appears to be the learners presence in their comfortable zone where they may choose to be alone in the room and feel less stressed, yet particularly this point can be a challenging part of assessment for the learner as everybody else in the classroom will listen just to him/her and this may create anxiety during the test, in other words the fear of making mistakes in front of everybody.

Despite its disadvantages, online assessment has many good sides that help both the teacher and the learner at the same time. Technology here, is what makes it easier. From a psychological point of view, the author of this thesis suggests learners to keep something in their hands when they are doing a presentation in front of an audience; it can be a pen, a ruler or a little stress ball that will stop their hands shaking. This study uses power point presentations to help students remind the points they should mention during their test. Some of the learners choose to add pictures according to their topic, while some add just important points.

2.5.1 Review of Developments in Computer Assisted Language Learning

The undoubting and fast progress of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and the increasing preference in Internet based instruments, according to Romero (2016), have caused the teachers be more inclined to discover, evaluate and choose the most suitable digital facilities that promote learning methods which are more communicative and relevant to the learners' needs. Warschauer, Shetzer and Meloni (2000) claim that the considerable impact of the internet on education has achieved to reconsider and broaden the barriers of interactive communication and teaching instructions. Inevitably, in the education area, specifically in the language learning classroom, the incorporation of internet as a complementary pedagogical medium, as they state, has brought more creative and original chances for the learners to encounter an unlimited number of credible and encouraging materials, to cooperate with the theme of the subject, to communicate instantaneously and exchange ideas with learners from other countries thus become independent, multicultural and cooperative learners. These advantages have been greatly acknowledged by language teachers who aim to interact with learners in a more effective and functional environment rather than the usual four-wall classroom, where websites for language learning have become an inviting and pleasing option to reach this objective. Yet, it is to be mentioned that when researching the webpages for establishing language learning results, teachers should be aware of the limitations of the webpage they are using in the teaching instruction as well as its consequences on a specific language teaching approach.

Therefore, researchers such as Cruz, 2003; E. Fernández, 2007; García, 2000; Kartal, 2005; Lozano & Ruiz Campillo, 2009; Magnúsdóttir, 2010; Torat, 2000 believe that the probability of making the learners communicate instantaneously appears to be less when compared to programs like Blackboard Collaborate, WebCT or Microsoft Teams which give the opportunity to manage the teaching and learning process simultaneously. Therefore, the above-mentioned authors suggest teachers to pay attention to the difficulties that webpages may cause. They list three difficulties, the first of which is that certain websites may not give the option to facilitate real-time communication; second, some webpages can be more centered on written or spoken communication, circumstances and culture instead of concentrating exclusively on forms and the third limitation is that some websites do not give immediate feedback or give less formative feedback which reduces the self-correction of the mistakes. Accordingly, Romero (2016) clarifies that language learning websites generally lean towards introducing language based on a behaviorist approach, by advocating deductive grammar clarifications, structuralist and audio-lingual tasks such as multiple-choice and close-ended questions,

true or false items, and fill in the blank, drills which don't help to practice the foreign language authentically.

Various researchers, such as Hassan and Fakulti (2011) and Susser (2001) as Romero (2016) reports, claim that teachers challenge themselves at deciding which webpages to use in their teaching practices, because they don't know whether they provide functional communicative language learning or not. This causes teachers to distinguish and think before choosing the best website that will provide the teacher to reach his or her goal at the end of the teaching process. Hubbard (2003) states that teachers need to obtain the skills of evaluating the teaching aims and objectives of any webpage before introducing their students with it. Thus, it appears that an evaluation model or a checklist is required in order to be guided to effectively check if the webpage is relevant to our needs in terms of its characteristics. Below, table 5 as illustrated by Romero (2016) shows the diverse evaluation criteria for websites and online materials established by different scholars in the area of language teaching

Author(s)	Evaluation Criteria
Son (2005)	1. Purpose 2. Accuracy 3. Currency 4. Authority 5. Loading speed 6. Usefulness (convenient information and language activities) 7. Organization 8. Navigation 9. Reliability 10. Authenticity (language learning authentic materials) 11. Interactivity 12. Feedback 13. Multimedia 14. Communication (Bidirectional communication among learners) 15. Integration of the online material into the curriculum
Aly (2008)	1. Authority 2. Purpose 3. Coverage 4. Currency 5. Objectivity 6. Accuracy 7. Technical aspects 8. Usefulness for EFL Teachers and Students (usefulness and helpfulness in developing learners' four language skills, grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation)
Higueras (2010)	1. Technical aspects 2. Reaping the benefits given by the online environment 3. Profitability of internet access 4. Reliability 5. Amount of information provided for the teacher and student
Kartal & Uzun (2010)	1. Physical characteristics 2. Contextual characteristics (features of the site content such as testing tools, software, lesson plans, exercises) 3. Pedagogical characteristics (features that contribute to the learning and teaching process)
Liu, G., Liu, Z., & Hwang, (2011)	1. Web usability 2. Learning materials 3. Functionality of assisting language learning (offers multi-channel and hyperme promoting language learning), 4. Technology integration (inclusion of technological resources to enhance the websi its users)

Figure 4. Existing evaluation criteria for websites and online materials from Romero (2016)

As it is stated by Romero (2016), it is valuable remarking that when discovering any learning material, language learners could be encouraged to initiate perceptive skills of diverse stages based on the given input and the fundamental competences of the material.

2.5.2 Online Speaking Assessment

Winke and Lee (2017) state that further possible issues in learners' second language assessments relate to the fast and unavoidable shift of assessment to digital platforms. Pitkin and Vispoel (2001) claim that online testing generally requires computer skills as well as familiarity to content; however, Bosse & Valdois (2009) and Donker & Reitsma (2007) claim that this can be challenging with young learners, whose motor skills are not developed fully yet and also appear to have short visual concentration as a result of which they frequently act more erroneously and slower on computerized activities in contrast to the same activities done in the real language classroom. In order to adapt these problems, McKay (2006) suggests implementing graphic and audial tasks into online or digital activities for young learners. Yet, Joo (2007) states that even adult learners appear to have problems in online tests for language; hence McKay (2006) points out the importance of teacher support and observation of the test if it fits the learners age, level and needs especially if that is the first time the learners are taking an online test. On the other hand, Winke and Lee (2017) state that despite the continuous development of studies on young learner centered L2 tests, there is still not a considerable research conducted about the effects on young learners' cognitive processing during the examination process

2.5.3 Cognitive processing in online speaking assignments

To examine the effects of online exams on learners' cognitive processes, Winke and Lee (2017) suggest firstly to define the types of cognitive processes with are taking place during online speaking skills exams. The author of this thesis focuses on this problem because the young learners' skill of concentration in this thesis is speaking and more specifically speaking skills in an evaluation or examination process. To explain the cognitive procedure, they approach the psycholinguistic viewpoints about speaking during speaking assignments. Segalowitz and Trofimovich (2012) point out that language and speaking encompasses individual and social or interactional aspects and a great amount of knowledge related to the situation which takes place. First, learners need to be willing to speak or have volition as they define it, for which they claim it will have consequences for processing. The speaker needs to encourage the listener to some degree, and this according to Segalowitz and Trofimovich (2012) means that the processing which originates speech production embraces the

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processing originating the construction of communicative purposes. From the aspect of online speaking tests, the learner who is being assessed should visualize the interlocutor and analyze his or her demands so to express him or herself using the proper language. In an online exam, the social scope is generally a fictionally set-up scene the context of which needs to be understood by the learner. Additionally, Segalowitz and Trofimovich (2012) indicate that especially in the second language, the social aspects have expected consequences on the processing of learners when they are communicating. They point out the findings of Wray (2002) who states that learners attempt to support each other by reducing the amount of processing tasks they attribute to one another and claims that the learners can simplify their tasks by means of fixed expressions. In an online exam, face-to-face speakers do not reduce each other's processing tasks; rather, the test instructions and timeliness of the learners offer the volition and the social aspect (who the learner is going to communicate with) and can attempt to

control the processing task by using specific expressions or by applying various types of oral productions like short statements or long speeches in the length of a paragraph. Therefore, Segalowitz and Trofimovich assume that deduction of the instructions and the context is significant in an online speaking test as deduction or understanding of the instructions initiates and reinforces the speaking skills. The same authors also pointed out the importance of understanding the context or the circumstances where the target language is used. They recognized the presence of two wide-ranging conversational contexts that outline speech processing:

1. closed skill contexts
2. open skill contexts.

In terms of online speaking tests, they define as closed skill context the assignments in which the learners must list for instance their hobbies or their favourite sports, talk about their routine or explain what they see in certain pictures. The objective in these assignments is to reproduce physical or cognitive action as promptly as they can in order to reach an average. Yu and Moeller (2015) call them presentational speaking assignments. Moreover, Segalowitz and Trofimovich define open skill contexts, which according to Yu and Moeller are defined as interpersonal communication assignments, as activities where there are a lot of unexpected interferences and disturbances from the environment which never occur in a closed assignment. What makes open skills differ from closed skills is the processing necessity they hold to highlight, given how significant it is to recognize and reply rapidly to unforeseen modifications in the context or the situation they are in. Therefore, Winke and Lee clarify how closed online speaking test work, stating that some of them use human interviewers or user-controlled virtual interviewers who govern the online communication.

2.5.4 Digitalized online feedback

The unification of digitalized online learning devices with the foreign language learning classroom, according to Antonio (2015), provides numerous advantages; yet, Alavi (1994) assumes it is accepted that applying such devices into the teaching process requires a great deal of difficulties and responsibilities. Various researchers such as Bloxham and Boyd (2007), Crossouard and Pryor (2009), Denton (2001), Denton, Madden, Roberts and Rowe (2008) and Gips (2005) who studied the role of technology for giving feedback, provide strong evidence for the affirmation that technology could be beneficial at involving learners in a productive learning process.

Antonio states that it is distinguished that learners accept online feedback as a better way when compared to other types of feedback and point out the results of a Mann-Whitney study about the contentment scores which show four methods that feedback was developed by online delivery. The four methods consist of the simplicity of the scoring scheme, transparency or clearness of feedback, guidance on unsatisfactory points, and the description of the parts that the learner completed successfully. Several researchers like Hepplestone, Holden, Irwin, Parkin and Thorpe (2011) as Antonio (2015) states, believe that the use of technology can enhance and turn the disadvantages of the written feedback special for every learner into an advantage. The same author gives another advantage of online feedback, which is the flexibility in the time of delivery and reading by the teacher and learner, which is not possible in other methods of feedback. Also, he points out that online feedback is hidden and only the teacher can see the mistakes of the learner, thus accepted as a more confidential method preventing peer-group stress that real face-to-face classroom could possibly have.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The main reason to carry out a research on the area of assessing speaking skills was the challenge it created to give objective and realistic grades of students' oral proficiency performances. There were a lot of questions waiting to be answered, therefore this research would enable to get useful implications thus be more experienced when testing speaking skills. Above all, deciding on the criteria to be used when assessing middle school students and the ways to make it easier for both sides, the teachers and students, were the motivation of this thesis. The criteria established by Susan McKay (2007) and Taufiqulloh (2009) were helpful and based on their work, the following criteria were applied: Grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, intonation, relevance to the topic and fluency.

As it was a decision taken at the beginning of the semester, as a first step, the speaking skills assessment was included in the thematic plan for each grade. It was assumed that two lessons would be enough for the final assessment which happens at the end of the semester. Nevertheless, the books that were in use, Cambridge Global English, had certain discussion and presentation topics per each unit, thus after each unit a lesson or two were included in the thematic plan in order to carry out the oral presentation lessons. These times were significant and highly valuable for the teacher to evaluate holistically and have a general view of students' oral proficiency and fluency. Considering Underhill's (1987) suggestions students were assessed both holistically and analytically in their speaking skills. Thus, having assessed the student holistically before the final assessment was helpful as well as practical for the learners as it was the second time for them to present a topic online by using the PowerPoint. Having arranged and included the lessons in the thematic plan and writing it in the register reflected the real working and assessment procedure for both the administration of the school and the state inspectors.

Having finished the first administrative step in the global and annual thematic plan, we decided on the time and the way the assessment was going to take place. As the second step, all the participants were informed ten days before the deadline for sending or uploading their PowerPoint presentations to MS Teams platform, which was also the program we were using for online lessons, communicating with students, asking questions, taking online exams and sending homework. The program had an option to create an assignment as well. Accordingly, after informing the students,

the assignment was created with a deadline until 13th of December 2020. The instructions and the Microsoft Word document about the detailed information on the topics were attached to the assignment section.

In the instructions, the students were informed that the presentation was going to be calculated as a speaking skills exam evaluating their oral proficiency based on their use of grammatical structures, choice of vocabulary/ phrases/ idioms etc., pronunciation of the words and their intonation when they are speaking; fluency which included the flow of their speech, hesitations and pauses while speaking and finally the relevance of their oral presentation to the topic they had chosen. Additionally, in the instructions the students were reminded to choose only one from the five topics and the word 'one' was emphasized with capital letters. The instructions included detailed information why the PowerPoint is used in the assessment and what they needed to include in it. They were told to add pictures if they wanted and write only short sentences or words to remind them what they should talk about at that moment, i.e. to remind of the structure and organization of their speech. The students were also informed beforehand about the criteria they were going to be tested on, aiming it would help them to concentrate more on not making errors and pay more attention to be accurate and correct when speaking.

The assignment, as mentioned before, included the topics attached to it. The students were given the option to choose between five different topics. The organization of the topics, taken as they are from GCSE 2012 Teachers Handbook, was as follows:

1. **Home and local area**
   - Life in the home; friend and relationships
   - Family / best friend / brother / grandmother
   - Local area, facilities and getting around
2. **Health and sport**
   - Sport, outdoor pursuits and healthy lifestyle
   - Food and drink as aspects of culture and health
3. **Leisure and entertainment**
   - Socializing, special occasions and festivals
   - TV, films and music

4. **Travel and the wider world**
   - Holidays and exchanges
   - Environmental, cultural and social issues
5. **Education**
   - School life in North Macedonia

Each subtopic had a great number of questions which were to assist the students in their oral presentation. When we added the questions, the document became long enough to confuse the students, therefore each topic was written with a different font color.

Next was the division of classes and we started with the sixth grade which consists of only one class and because of their age, they were told to prepare their presentation, upload it in the assignments and present live online in the lesson in the upcoming week, that was from 14th to 18th December. The upper grades, from seventh to ninth grade, consist of two classes (A and B), thus from each grade one class was given the same instructions as the sixth grades, while the other groups which were students with higher GPA were told to record their voice while turning the camera to the slides of their PowerPoint presentation.

The reason for not asking them to record themselves in front of the camera was that this was the first time they were asked to record themselves and it was assumed it would make them stressed, embarrassed and affect their performance. Another reason was to make them used to this type of assessment, thus it should have started from the minimum and changing it to a more advanced style the next time when they would be asked to record themselves sitting on their chair with the monitor or their laptop next to them. This remains to be done at the end of the second semester.

The week from 14th to 18th December was the week of online assessment and it took two and in some cases three lessons to finish the assessment with one class. Same as the online live presentations, the video recorded presentations were also listened by all the students and evaluated accordingly. After listening to their presentations, the students were provided with a holistic general feedback on their performance; however, their points on the criteria were sent to them privately later in MS Teams assignments.

Student Work
Turned in December 13, 2020 at 3:06 PM
View History

power point presantation f •••

Feedback

I just listened to your
presentation, it was perfect, well
done :)
to be specific, in grammar you
had two mistakes but that's okay
because you were fluent, your
pronunciation was aobve my
expectations, you have a native-
like accent and you were

Figure 5. Example of a feedback given to a student from 7th grades

When it comes to grading, this research was based on the grading scale of Susan McKay (2007) starting from 1 as the lowest until 5 to the highest points for each rubric, however the content explaining each point per rubric was based on Taufiqulloh's (2009) analytic oral language scoring rubric.

3.1 Objective of the Study

The aim of this study was to find the most useful way to assess the speaking skills of Maarif International Schools Middle school students from sixth to ninth grade using certain evaluation criteria. The objective of the research, therefore, is to give answers to eight research questions:

1. **Does the use of mentioned assessment criteria make the assessment more reliable?**
2. **Are all the criteria necessary to be used?**
3. **Is there any part of the criteria that should not be applied to middle school students?**
4. **What are the advantages and disadvantages of live online presentation?**
5. **What are the advantages and disadvantages of recorded video presentation?**
6. **Under which presentation form students had better speaking assessment results?**
7. **What are the steps teachers should take before planning a speaking assessment online?**

8. **Are the topics and instructions given to the students before the test helpful and are there any implications to consider when giving out topics to students?**

As a part of the research, this thesis comprises three hypotheses.

1. **The use of speaking evaluation criteria will have outcomes useful for improvement of online education.**

2. **Evaluation criteria may show variability between the students with live presentation and recorded video presentation.**

3. **Teacher's approach to speaking skills evaluation (including information about students' expectations) will lead to their higher performance.**

3.2 Research participants

The research of this thesis was conducted by incorporating middle school students from the Maarif International Schools in Tetovo, North Macedonia in an online speaking skills assessment at the end of the first semester of the 2020/2021 academic year. The age of the participants ranged between eleven and fourteen years old, or in other words they were students attending the sixth, seventh, eighth or ninth grade. There were totally 91 students 16 of which were the students of 6-A class; 24 students in the seventh grade (14 students in 7-A, 10 students in 7-B); 26 students in the eighth grade (12 students in 8-A and 14 in 8-B); and 27 students from the ninth grade (13 in 9-A and 14 in 9-B). Students of the sixth grade did their presentations online, while the other classes were separated according to their level of English or the number of students. Students in 7-A were asked to record themselves, as they are more in number, whereas 7-B presented online. Similarly, students from 8-A were asked to record, while 8-B were asked to present live online. However, 9-A as they were less in number and with lower GPA, were given instructions to present live, and students from 9-B were told to present with recorded video presentations.

3.3 Research instruments and methods

The most appropriate and convenient methods to conduct this research were the descriptive-analytical, and comparative method, while the techniques used were content analyses and case

study. This thesis is led by collecting primary data using a combined research of both qualitative and quantitative methods. Quantitative analysis is done by grading students' oral proficiency using an analytic language scoring rubric, with reference to Taufiqulloh (2009), where students are given points ranging from 1 to 5 about the given criteria. Data obtained from the evaluation of the oral presentations of middle school students enabled us to compare the efficiency of recorded video presentations and live online presentations thus compare the two methods and demonstrate with a chart the difference with numbers. Next, an analysis of students' oral assessment preferences was done to see if they preferred to be tested by their videos or live online during the online lesson. Another analysis was to check how the topic preferences vary between classes or their ages and illustrate that with a chart with numbers to get an answer whether the topic preferences have a relationship with their age or not. Another quantitative research was conducted about the number of students who had followed the written instructions, the outcomes of which will have further implications for teachers when preparing instructions for their tests to be delivered to their students. Finally, a detailed analysis was done by taking the average of each criterion in a class and illustrate it in chart. The results of the last quantitative analysis will demonstrate the functionality and influence of the method of assessment or the method of the presentation of students on their GPA for each criterion separately.

Qualitative results, on the other hand, are obtained from analyzing the circumstances in which this assessment took place; for example, the digital online platform used, the usefulness of the steps taken in the process of assessment, the functionality of the grading criteria and the topics, whether the instructions were relevant to their age and if they were useful or not.

4. RESULTS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

After the description of the methodology, this chapter offers a thorough report of the results obtained; analysis and its discussion will be explained systematically. As stated above, the research aims to answer eight research questions and three hypotheses. They are as follows:

4.1 Research Questions:

1. **Does the use of mentioned assessment criteria make the assessment more reliable?**

Obviously, using specified assessment criteria makes the assessment more reliable than evaluating the students holistically. Referring the statement of Taufiqulloh (2009), students can see their strengths and weaknesses, thus having two benefits. The first is, their positive sides are illustrated in a table, and this will progressively build their self-esteem. The second advantage is that the students will be made aware of their weaknesses and will start to pay more attention to those areas where they need to improve themselves.

2. **Are all the criteria necessary to be used?**

The results we got from the analysis of the analytic grading rubric imply that not all the criteria were necessary to be used when assessing speaking skills in this thesis. Additionally, in recognition of Taufiqulloh who suggested not using all the criteria, but only up to six, same ideas were claimed by McKay (2007) who used less criteria with the Middle School when compared to her research with High school students. Our results, on the other hand, show that the criterion for the relevance to the topic was not necessary as almost 100% of the students were relevant and exact according to the topic they had chosen.

In our research we had specified the topics and even subtopics with questions about them were provided in order to help students organize their speech. It appears of no use to include a criterion as "relevance to the topic" because all students who did their presentations either recorded, online, with or without a PowerPoint were relevant to their topic and didn't jump to another one. As a result, we could state that enabling students with topics plus subtopics beforehand, helps them be

more precise and organize their oral presentation accordingly. However, in case we don't provide students with subtopics but only give them the main topics, then it would be highly necessary to include the criterion about the relevance to the topic.

3. Is there any part of the criteria that should not be applied to middle school students?

Both the quantitative and the qualitative analysis of the students' performance show that all the criteria were appropriate to the age and level of proficiency of the students. Yet it is important to highlight the fact that assessing the students' in those criteria, means observing how much they have acquired from what they had been offered. In this case, the curriculum or the design of the ESL books used in middle schools do not provide much information and tasks about intonation. The books used in Maarif International Schools are Cambridge Global English and they are a good source for grammar, vocabulary as well as developing skills in reading and writing. However, the speaking tasks do not offer new instruction on intonation, rather like many other ESL books they provide the phonetic alphabet and give instructions on the pronunciation of certain sounds gradually. Accordingly, if the question is whether there was a rubric that had better not been applied to middle school students, we could refer to the criterion for intonation which could be better hidden under the "fluency" rubric as a sub criterion.

4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of live online presentation?

From an objective point of view, live online presentations seem to be more realistic than the recorded ones, yet it seems to be to the disadvantage of the learner in that case. To be more explicit, in the live online presentations the students were prepared, had a guideline (the PowerPoint presentation), however they had only one chance to express themselves. The mistakes that were done could not be deleted and counted as if not made, which was not the case with the recorded presentations. Another disadvantage was that in some cases there were connection problems and the student was either disconnected, stopped sharing the screen or the voice was lagging and was not heard clearly. The next disadvantage of this kind of presentation was that some students appeared to be very nervous and their voice was shaking as a result of their anxiety. Accordingly, intervention was needed to calm them down and give them confidence to relax and go on as they had planned. This occurred with new students who didn't know their classmates and the teacher physically. The qualitative analysis done on this aspect shows that the cause of anxiety in live

online presentations was not triggered by low proficiency, but from being part of a new environment, in this case being registered to a new school but not having met the teacher and classmates physically yet.

The advantage of live online presentations is that the students are used to do presentations both in face-to-face and online education system, therefore they feel comfortable for having the knowledge how to prepare and present it. The results obtained from the analysis of the data collected show that the number of students who did their presentation live online is higher than the number of those who were assessed by recorded oral presentations. For instance, in the sixth grades, out of sixteen students three didn't take the test due to personal reasons (being ill or absent), one of the students was assessed orally without having prepared a PowerPoint presentation, one had recorded his voice as a result of being late to be assessed in the online lesson and eleven students presented live online as they were expected to do so. Seventh grades as well followed the instructions and prepared their presentation like they were told; thus, the results show that eleven out of 24 students were assessed live online, nine recorded and four students didn't take the test. To be more specific, 7A was expected to have fourteen video recorded oral presentations but there were only ten; 8A had only two video recorded presentations out of twelve expected and 9B had five recorded presentation out of fourteen. The rest of the students in these classes either presented live online or didn't prepare a PowerPoint presentation at all. Class 8A had to present by recorded videos, however only two of them chose that way, the rest, which is seven students, presented live online. Similarly, all the students in class 9B were told to record themselves, but only five students completed the task successfully, seven others presented live online and two didn't take the test at all.

To sum up, the results confirm that even students are asked to present with videos, majority of them prefers to present live online. Yet, this remains as a research question that could be answered by a survey done with students who participated in this research.
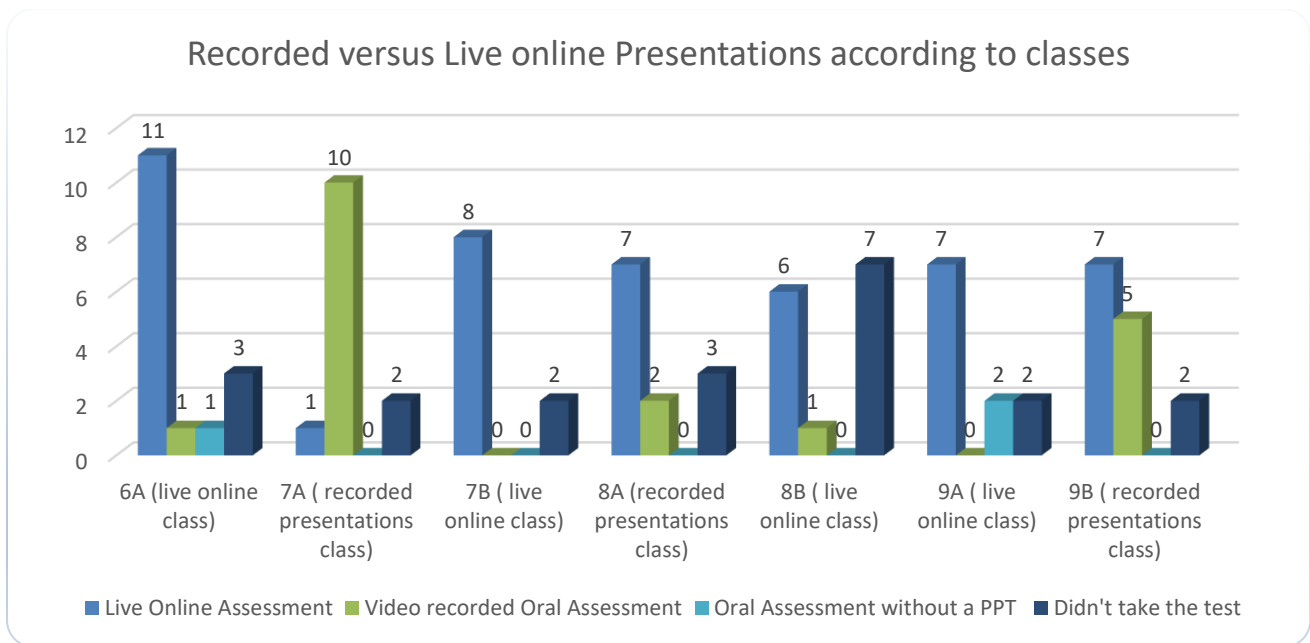
Figure 6. The number of students according to their presentation method and the class they belonged to.

5. What are the advantages and disadvantages of recorded video presentation?

The results show that students prefer more live online presentations to video recorded presentations. There are several advantages and disadvantages obtained from the observations and the quantitative data gathered from the analytic grading criteria. The students claimed that it was hard to upload their recordings to the assignments and therefore they didn't record but preferred to be assessed live online. The classes that were asked to present with recorded video were 7A, 8A and 9B. The total number of students in these classes were 40, and the analysis of the results show that 42.5% of the students didn't present with recorded video but preferred to take the assessment live online. That is, 17 students out if 40 neglected to do the task according to the requirements that were given to complete.

Regardless of its disadvantages, the recorded presentation has two major benefits for both the teacher and the student. Firstly, the students have the chance to record themselves, listen and self-evaluate it or can peer-check before they send it to the teacher or in other words, before uploading it to MS Teams. Three students from the seventh grades admitted that they had recorded themselves more than ten times and deleted it again and again until they had been satisfied with their own oral performance. In the end, these students had maximum points in all criteria.

Apparently, this option enables them to be more fluent as well as omit unwanted mistakes in pronunciation for which we are not aware when speaking spontaneously.

The advantage to the teacher, was that the recorded presentations enabled saving time in the lesson and analyze them after classes. So, with the recorded version we can assess them after work, but the learners need to have mastered how to upload or zip it, so it fits the platform they are using, otherwise it would be a challenge to search among all those students and find the project of the student you are looking for.

6. **Under which presentation form students had better speaking assessment results?**

The way assessment was carried out, either recorded or online didn't affect to a great extent the general results of the speaking assessment. However, at some cases we observed that students make less errors in the recorded presentations, and this was confirmed by the students who stated that they had recorded and deleted their presentation until they thought it was the best they could do.

Criteria analysis shows that students who took the test by recorded video presentations, used the grammatical structures accurately without making errors. Most of the students got 4 or 5 points from the grammar criterion; while the students who presented live online resulted with grammatical errors more than the other group. The same applies with vocabulary criterion as well. This kind of comparison, in this thesis, could only be done with seventh grades because all the students in both classes (7A and 7B) are at the same level of English and have relatively high GPA. On the other hand, eighth and ninth grades are separated according their level of English with an English Proficiency Exam taken at the beginning of the year. Therefore, it would make no sense to compare those two classes according to the aspect of the method of their assessment as the results of 8A and 9B are obviously much higher than the results of 8B and 9A.

Taking the average of each student and then the average grade of the whole class we got the results which show that 7A which was assessed by recorded video presentation had a GPA of 4.73; while 7B class which was assessed by live online method had a GPA of 4.35. Even though very little difference, still the recorded way appears to be to the advantage of the students. Evaluation of the points for each rubric of 6A shows that they have a GPA of 4.7 which indicates that live online presentations also result positively in students' performances. However, prior instruction

and informing students about the grading criteria is highly valuable here. Below, figure 8 illustrates the success of each class according to the grading criteria; whereas figure 9 gives the analysis and comparison of the success of students with recorded video presentation with the live online presentations again on each criterion separately.

GPA of classes according to the grading criteria

	GRAMMAR	VOCABULARY	PRONUNCIATION	INTONATION	RELEVANCE TO THE TOPIC	FLUENCY
6A	4.92	4.84	4.76	4.76	5	4.76
7A	4.91	4.83	4.5	4.75	5	4.33
7B	4.5	4	4.5	4.25	5	3.87
8A	4.66	4.88	4.88	4.88	5	4.55
8B	3.66	3.66	3.5	4.2	5	4
9A	4.22	4.22	3.44	4.1	4.66	3.77
9B	4.66	4.9	4.1	4.5	5	4.5

■6A ■7A ■7B ■8A ■8B ■9A ■9B
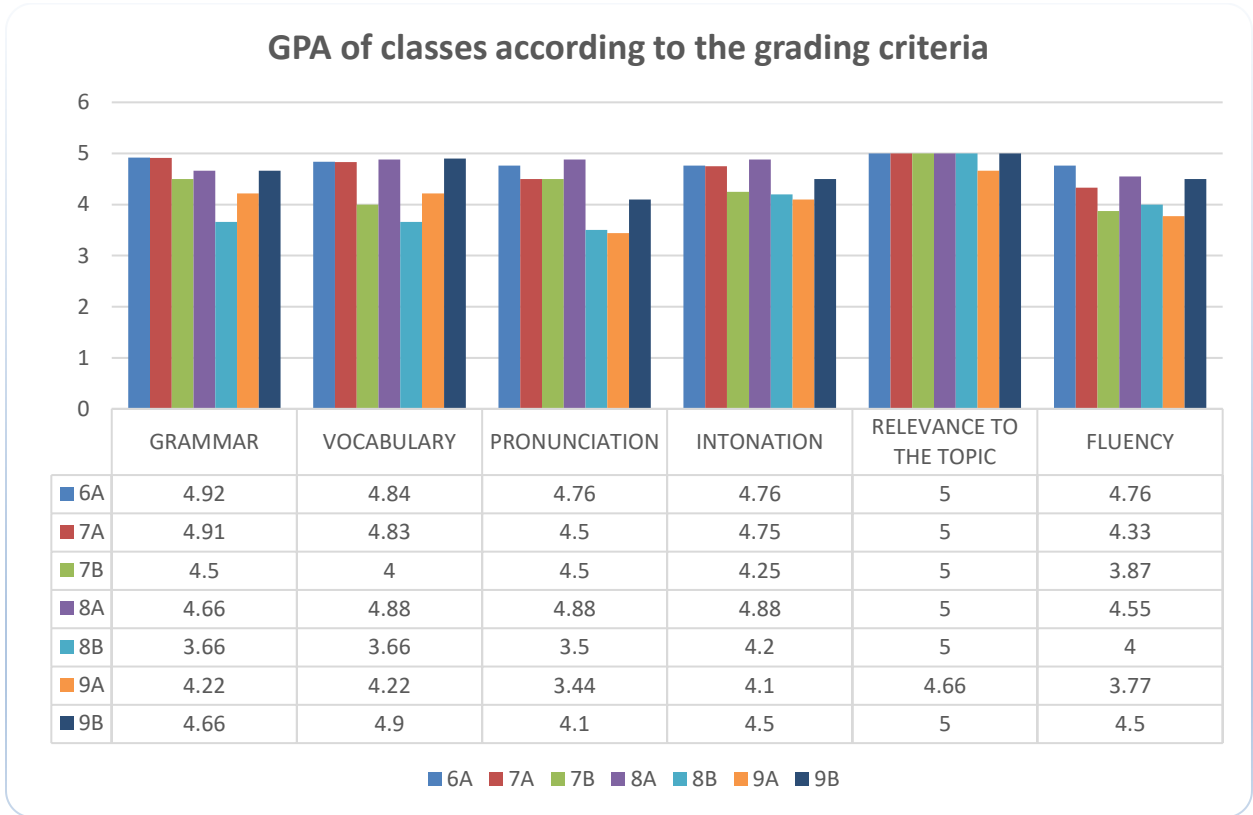
Figure 7. The average of classes according to their scoring results on the grading criteria

The results obtained show that students in 7A, 8A and 9B have obviously been more fluent in their oral presentations when compared with other classes. It is important to mention that these classes were asked to do their assessment with recorded videos. On the rubric for relevance to the topic, as it was answered in question 2, all classes except 9A had an average of 5, which shows that if we give students the details of their topics they do not cross from one topic to the other. The grammar, vocabulary and intonation are same for 6A, 7A and 8A. From the comparison of 6A with 7A we concluded that a class could have very good oral performances if they worked hard and the method of their presentations (recorded or live online) did not affect too much their success. The students in 6A were younger in age, however they paid more attention to the

instructions, presented accordingly and had been prepared very well, it was seen from their PowerPoint presentations.

Recorded Video Presentations vs. Live Online Presentations

	GRAMMAR	VOCABULARY	PRONUNCIATION	INTONATION	RELEVANCE TO THE TOPIC	FLUENCY
RECORDED VIDEO PRESENTATIONS	4.9	4.85	4.7	4.85	5	4.5
LIVE ONLINE PRESENTATIONS	4.48	4.46	4.18	4.4	4.93	4.22
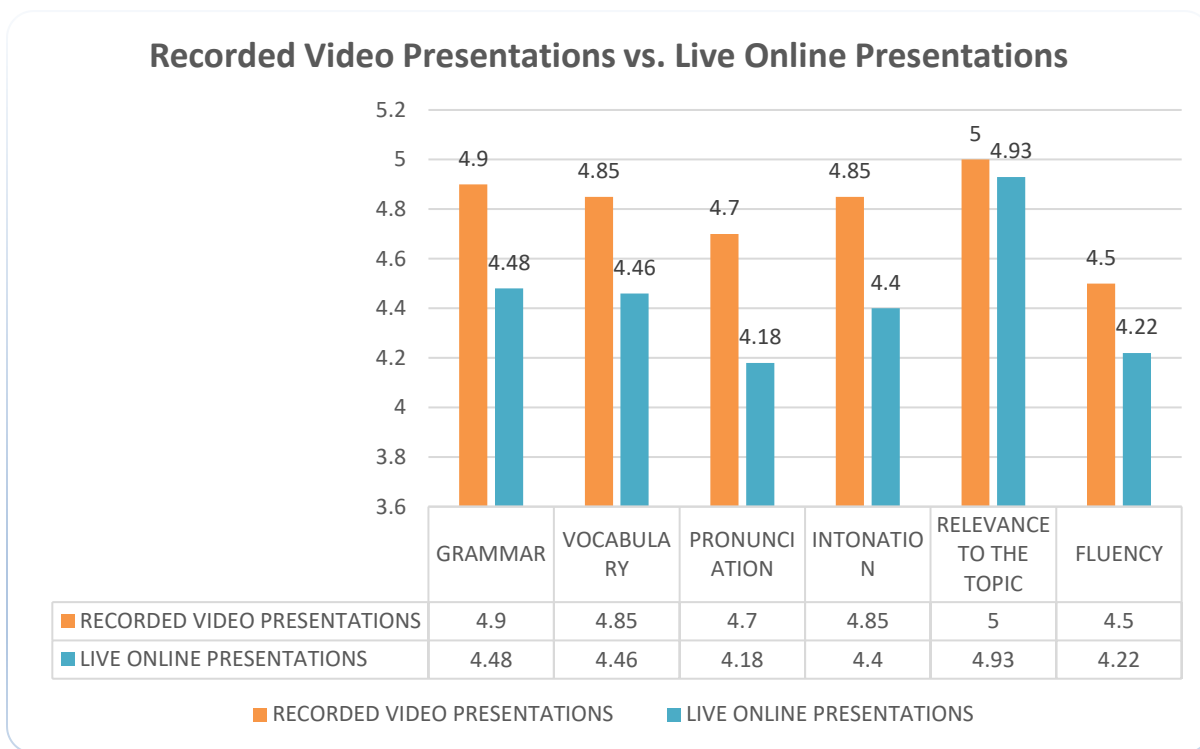
Figure 8. GPA of Recorded vs. Live Online presentations according to the grading criteria.

Figure 9 demonstrates the difference between the recorded and live online presentations. In all criteria students that presented by recording obtained better results. The difference is as follows: in grammar 0.42, in vocabulary 0.39, in pronunciation 0.52, in intonation 0.45, in relevance to the topic 0.07 and the difference in fluency was 0.28. Even though the difference is not very big in general, still we could suggest that recorded version enables students to listen to their mistakes and self-correct thus be more fluent, pronounce the words better and make less grammatical mistakes.

7. **What is the first step that teachers should take before planning a speaking assessment online?**

As a first step, the teacher is suggested to incorporate the assessment in the annual global plan and thematic plan of the curriculum of the course. This research showed that, based on the number of students, two lessons were relatively enough for Maarif International Schools' classes. However, if the case is with a state school where classes are larger in number, then it would be useful to

divide half of the class recorded and half live, or all of them to do a recorded presentation in order to spare time and go parallel with the plan.

After including the speaking assessment in the curriculum, the teacher is suggested to decide for the instruments he or she is going to use in order to assess the students' oral performance and offer prior instruction on the criteria that are going to be evaluated.

8. **Are the topics and instructions given to the students before the test helpful and are there any implications to consider when giving out topics to students?**

In this thesis, the students were provided with five different topics. However, those topics had subtopics with various questions about each subtopic. A great number of students firstly could not understand, as the list was too long, and they claimed that it had seemed to them as if they had to include all the questions in their speaking act. Despite the fact of being informed, both in the instructions and in online lessons, there were still some students who hesitated and asked questions or texted the teacher to ask for clarifications. The analysis of the feedback taken from students on the topics, shows that it would be more appropriate to give only the titles of the main topics and if possible, subtopics but not the questions. It had caused confusion and overload of information at some students' presentations who had thought that they had to give answers to all the questions provided in the document for topics. For example, there was a student from the eighth grades who sent a presentation lasting 21 minutes, as well as another from seventh grades which lasted 13 minutes.

It is important to choose topics that are parallel with the students age and level of English. In this research, all the classes were given the same topics, five main topics which give a total of ten subtopics to choose between others. The aim of not dividing topics according to classes, was to answer the question and obtain data about the relevance of the topics chosen with the students age or class. Analysis done on this area shows that the majority of the students attending the sixth grade (aged 11) had chosen Topic 2 "Health and Sports"; the seventh graders (aged 12) had chosen Topic 1 "Home and local area" mostly; the dominant topic at the eighth graders (aged 13) was topic 5 "Education" and finally the ninth grades (aged 14) appear to have preferred talking mostly on topic 5 "Education" same like their friends from the previous class. However, we should point out that students aged 14, ninth graders, have an evenly distribution of their topic preferences,

where for each of the topics 1, 2 and 3 there were four students who presented about them respectively. Below, you can see the chart illustrating the distribution of the student's topic preferences according to their age or school year from which we can conclude that the older the students get, or the higher their language proficiency is, the easier it becomes for them to choose a topic. We can see this from the illustration of ninth graders results, where almost all the topics are evenly distributed and topic 5 about education is the mostly chosen by a difference of two students.

Distribution of Topics among Classes

Class	T1 Home & Local Area	T2 "Health & Sport"	T3 "Leisure & Entertainment"	T4 "Travel & The wider world"	T5 "Education"
Class 6 (Age 11)	0	6	2	1	4
Class 7 (Age 12)	11	4	0	1	4
Class 8 (Age 13)	4	5	0	0	7
Class 9 (Age 14)	4	4	4	3	6
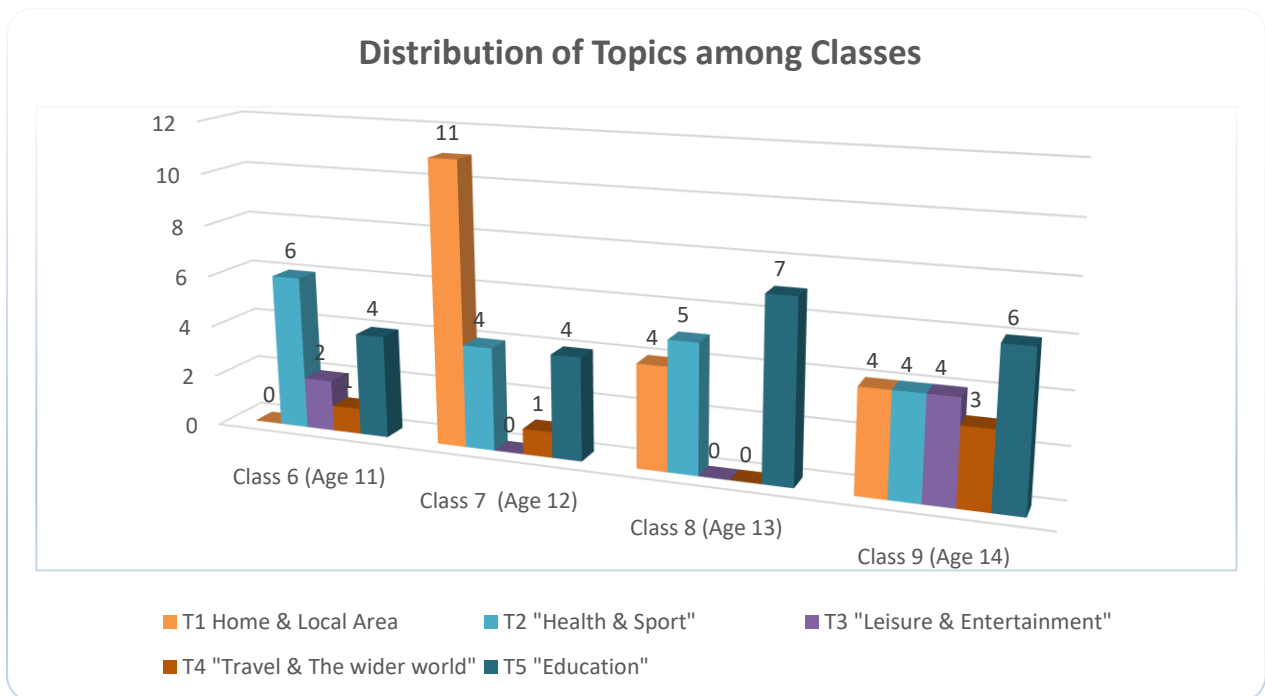
Figure 9. Students' topic preferences according to their age or school year.

In terms of instructions, it appears that students do not follow the instructions accordingly or skip reading them carefully. For example, even the students were told many times to upload their projects to the assignments section, instead they had sent them to the 'Files', to the 'Chat', to the teacher's e-mail address and some even to the private WhatsApp application of the teacher. As a result of this turmoil in the MS Teams program, it was very difficult and time consuming to find a PowerPoint presentation of a particular student when the teacher had to analyze and assess it after the online lessons. Thus, the teacher had to ask the students where they had sent or uploaded their presentations, which didn't sound professional from the side of the students.

The number of students who followed the instructions and uploaded their presentations to MS Teams Assignments is 31 out of 91, hence this makes 34% of the total number of students. To be more specific, 11 students out of 16 in 6A uploaded their presentations in the assignments section, 4 students in 7A, 3 students in 7B, 7 students in 8A, none in 8B, none in 9A and 9 students in 9B. Here, it is important to mention that students in class 8B and 9A are at a lower level of English language proficiency, as well as have a low GPA in all subjects. Based on this fact, they were intentionally not asked to do a recorded presentation but live online, which required just to prepare a PowerPoint and upload it in the assignments. However, analysis shows that they didn't follow the instructions accordingly and sent them to other digital platforms or didn't prepare a PowerPoint presentation at all.

Besides not reading the instructions carefully, a great number of students claimed that they had difficulties in uploading the recordings to the assignments. Therefore, they had tried sending to other places. Below there are pictures from the online platform, illustrating the confusion and difficulties the students faced when working in MS Teams. Additionally, in Figure 11 you can see the illustration of the percentages of students from the total number of 91 students who submitted their presentation in Assignments in MS Teams before the deadline according to the given instructions.

The Percentage of Projects uploaded to "Assignments" in MS Teams

9B, 26.60%
6A, 32.45%
8B, 0.00%
9A, 0.00%
8A, 20.48%
7A, 11.70%
7B, 8.78%

6A 7A 7B 8A 8B 9A 9B
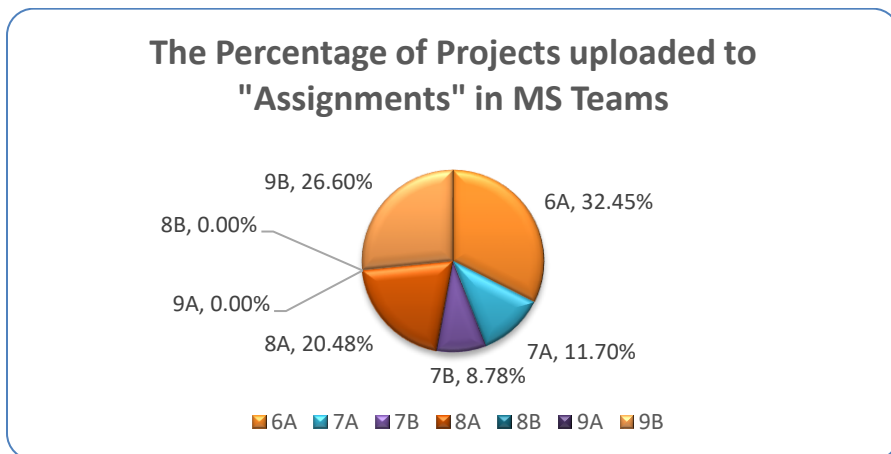
Figure 10. The Percentage of students from the total number of 90 students who submitted in "Assignments" in MS Teams before the deadline according to the given instructions.
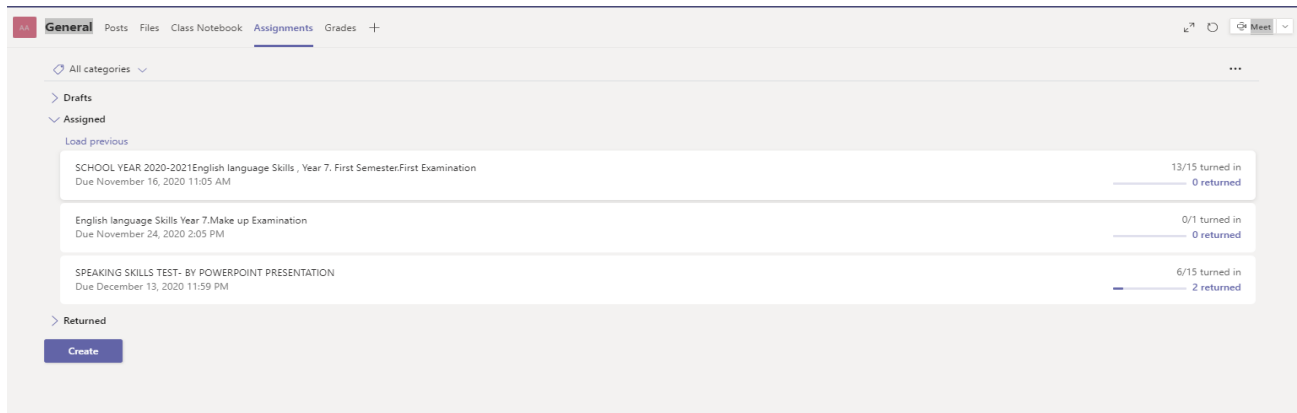
Figure 11. "Assignments" section in MS teams illustrating the number of students who turned in (uploaded their presentations).
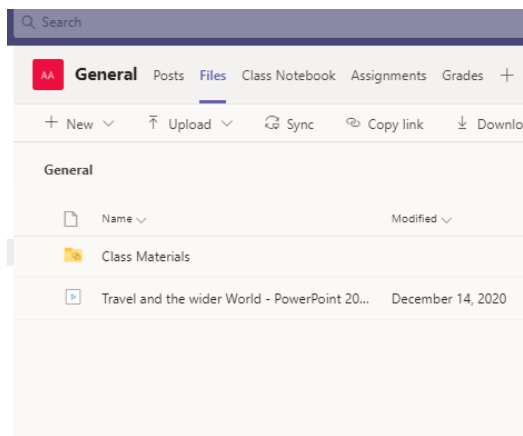
Figure 12. Example of a project uploaded to the "Files" section in MS Teams.
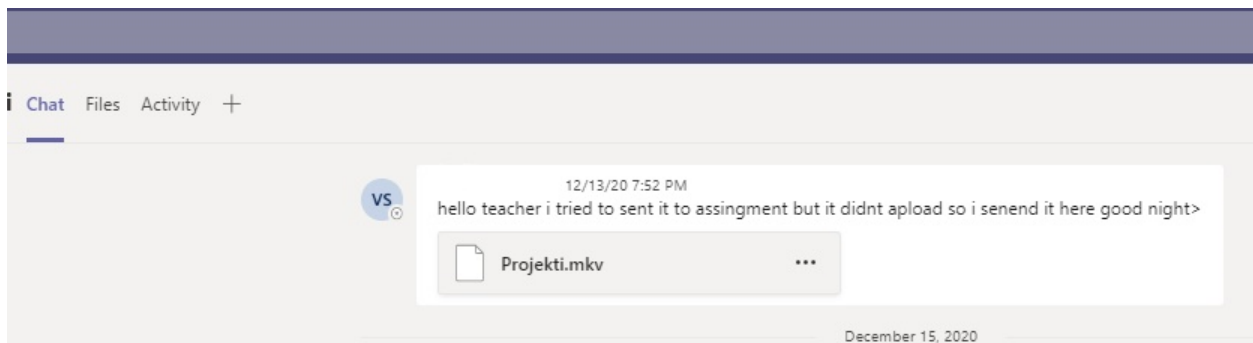
Figure 13. Example of a project uploaded to the "Chat" section in MS Teams.

Finally, questioning whether students respond to the given instructions correctly as they are expected or not, we concluded that the younger they are the more they pay attention to the tasks given to them. It is obvious that the 6th grades are higher in percentage in finishing their projects in time and following the instructions given by the teacher.

4.2 Hypotheses

1. **The use of speaking evaluation criteria will have outcomes useful for improvement of online education.**

Before carrying out the assessment, as the first hypothesis of this thesis, we assumed that the use of speaking evaluation criteria would have outcomes useful for improvement of speaking assessment in online education. The findings and results obtained from the analysis of students' averages prove this hypothesis to be true. Having informed the students about the grading criteria beforehand, had made an impact on them and they showed to have paid a lot of attention to the use of grammatical functions, the choice of words, the flow and the organization of their speech. They had planned all these aspects before the assessment and the results they got were relatively high points, most of them above 4. Some students, who had had lower grades from their reading and writing exam, performed better in their speaking assessment. Also, students that usually make mistakes in their grammar and vocabulary exams, had less or some of them nearly to zero errors in the use of grammatical structures and vocabulary. Since grammar and vocabulary were already parts of language and were practiced in their English language course with the other English language teacher, there was no need for prior instruction. However, other parts of language which are parts of speaking skills such as pronunciation, intonation, fluency and being relevant to the main topic should also be taught and specified before the assessment comes.

In this study, the students were given instructions on how to be relevant, how to organize their speech, how to be fluent and sound native like, but the intonation was not mentioned at all, and little instruction was given on pronunciation. This may be due to the content of the book used in the course; however, the teacher is suggested to teach his or her students clearly and in details about each criterion that his or her students are going to be evaluated on. These conclusions and recommendations are based on the results obtained from the GPA analysis on the grading criteria which shows that students have lower points in intonation and pronunciation, but higher points in fluency and relevance to the topic.

2. **Evaluation criteria may show variability between the students with live presentation and recorded video presentation.**

   The second hypothesis of this thesis was to examine if the results of the evaluation criteria change according to the method of presentation they had chosen, i.e. live online or recorded video presentations. Outcomes of the current research study done on the Middle School students in Maarif International Schools reveal that depending on the way presentation is done, students' performances in certain criteria changed with slight differences where students from the recorded group finished the assignment with higher GPA when compared with their peer's averages who presented live online. Figure 9 illustrates the difference in students' overall results per criterion. Students who had prepared a recorded video presentation had a GPA of 4.9, while the group of live online presentations 4.48 in grammar; in the choice of words, the use of phrases, and the richness of vocabulary the recorded group had an average of 4.85 while the other 4.46 points. In pronunciation the first group had 4.7, the second group 4.18; in intonation 4.85 with 4.4; in relevance to the topic 5 with 4.93 and in fluency 4.5 with 4.22. Accordingly, even if it is limited to a small scale of participants and examiners, we achieved to prove the reliability of our second hypothesis.

3. **Teacher's approach to speaking skills evaluation (including information about students' expectations) will lead to their higher performance.**

   Research on the field of speaking skills assessment gives a broad spectrum of different methods and techniques to evaluate students' oral proficiency. These methods vary and differ from person to person, however, to get reliable and valid assessment result, as Underhill suggests, teachers should grade their students holistically and analytically parallelly. Since this thesis embraces students who are attending regular classes in a Middle school, it would lead the learners to higher performance if they are evaluated gradually sometimes with interviews, sometimes with peer dialogues and at the end with a presentation on a topic or interview with the teacher. Grading a student based on his or her one day performance wouldn't give any benefits, thus it is assumed that if they are informed and instructed for the criteria of evaluation and enabled to see the holistic and analytic grading scale and rubrics visually, it is believed that the transparency of the teacher, in the expectations of both sides, will lead to higher success in the students' oral proficiency performances.

5. CONCLUSION

Despite the fact that this case study has been restricted to a limited number of student participants and having been managed by only one tester during the evaluation, it has still drawn special attention to some new trends in our oral assessment method and simultaneously has put forward fields for further research which are likely to give rise to the comprehension of the current difficulties in the area of online speaking skills assessment. The final section, the conclusion, will encapsulate the results of the case study from the data collected from both the qualitative and quantitative research methods; it will put forward some alternatives to our assessment methods derived from the outcomes, and also report the impact and the limitations of our research study. At the end, based on the results of our thesis which could help our assessment practices be more functional, we will suggest some approaches for further research which we assume will make the issues of speaking skills assessment more efficient.

5.1 Summary of Research Results

5.1.1   Instructions and topics

This thesis was carried out aiming to answer eight research questions and three hypotheses which were expected to have positive outcomes in the area of oral assessment especially for middle school students aged between 11 and 14. In the previous section the questions were analyzed and discussed; whereas in conclusion we will write the implications we got from them and our recommendations for teachers. The findings from the work done and in the process of planning the assessment shows that there were no problems with arranging time to carry out the assessment. Additionally, there were extra lessons arranged by the school administration for teachers who needed to have extra classes with selected students. Having given such an opportunity, we used only two times from those extra lessons which started immediately after regular classes. However, we feel the need to indicate that recorded video presentations will require a lot of time after work, so teachers should be aware of the overload they will have to undergo at the end of the semester, certainly if they choose to apply this kind of a technique in their speaking skills assessment. Accordingly, this thesis will stimulate teachers to use different techniques in order to assess speaking skills of middle school students. Performed tasks for speaking skills assessment were easy to apply and can generalize the assessment of the students. The study can create a key

structure for investigation of new methods and can initiate new researches in order to arrive better results in online education and assessment of the students. The findings of our research will provide further information for English teachers practicing online education.

Dealing with the subject of instructions, we concluded that students no matter their age or grade level they do not read the instructions carefully, some skip, some just scan and miss an important information regarding the assessment. These problems resulted with a high number of students asking many questions for clarification about the assessment and preparations of the presentations which were already given in the instructions. However, the list of instructions was long enough, and this was assumed to be the main reason for misunderstandings. Accordingly, teachers are suggested to provide their students with short, clear and precise instructions in order to prevent further questions and confusions. In terms of topics, teachers are recommended to give only the main topics and in case of requests they could also provide them with subtopics. In this thesis, students were provided a long list of five pages which included five topics, each containing at least two subtopics and more than ten questions each. At the beginning it was assumed that those questions would help the learners and could choose any part among them and organize their presentation easily. However, qualitative research results show that students had misunderstood, some had been over stressed and created long video recordings thinking they had to talk about all the questions under their topic. Moreover, providing them with questions will limit their imagination and we will get fabricated speeches which will be almost same with the other presentations. To sum up, teachers are suggested to provide their students with short instructions and short information regarding their topics, include just the main topics and leave them the freedom to think what to add there. If it was applied as it is suggested, this latter method is assumed to have different results in students' success particularly in the *fluency* and *relevance to the topic*.

This thesis also carried out an analysis on the topic choices of students and discussed whether the student's decision on their topic had a relationship with their age and level of English or not. Results obtained have been illustrated in figure 10 where we can see that sixth grades (aged eleven) have mainly chosen to talk about health and sports, while none have chosen to talk about the first topic which is about their house and family life; seventh grades (aged twelve) have presented the first topic (home) which is followed by four students per each topic on education and health and sports and also we saw that none of the seventh grade students had chosen the topic

on leisure and entertainment; eighth grades (aged thirteen) have mainly chosen topic five (education- seven students) followed by topic two (health and sports- five students) and topic one (home – four students). In the eighth grades none had presented on leisure and entertainment and travelling. Finally, the ninth grades students' (aged fourteen) topic choices are as follows: six students have chosen topic five (education), four students for each topic have chosen topic one, two and three (home; health and sports; leisure and entertainment) respectively and three students had chosen travelling as a topic for their oral assessment. Studying the results, we observed that the older they get with age the more they are able to talk about diverse areas. Students who are fourteen years old could freely talk about tourism, health sector, entertainment, movies, the education system and so forth. On the other side, the sixth and seventh grades chart shows that they were mainly concentrated on one or two topics, that is talking about sports, their school and their family members and describing their houses. The topics that were apparently not preferred by sixth, seventh and eighth grades, assuming because they looked difficult to them, were the third topic (leisure and entertainment) and the fourth topic (travelling and the wider world).

5.1.2   Assessment design

The assessment was designed to be carried out in two ways, the first being live online and the second with recorded videos. The number of lessons were arranged at the beginning of the semester, so each student either recorded or live would present and be listened from the whole class participants. The reason was to be transparent in our scoring on the given criteria so that students can also compare themselves to their peers and detect their own mistakes in other oral presentations. However, in some classes two lessons were not enough and we had to arrange extra lessons after regular classes. This was the case with live online presentations; which was the most preferred method of presentation by students even if they weren't told to do so.

The students were informed and given instructions beforehand on the criteria of evaluation, therefore they resulted with relatively high points in their performances. The assessment was in the form of presentations where students were talking about the topic they had chosen and there was no interruption by anyone; thus the results obtained are assumed to reflect the one instance performance of the students and not their oral proficiency as a whole. To clarify this, we assume that if the format of this test would have been partly PowerPoint presentation partly teacher-student

interview and student-student dialogue like the study conducted by Susan McKay (2007) the results would reflect their real oral proficiency because in our method there were no unexpected questions, no unplanned interruptions and therefore students did their original planned oral presentation without being stopped by someone else, which resulted with high fluency points. In a natural communication process, there are interruptions, hesitations, short pauses by which we conclude if a person is fluent or not when speaking especially in a foreign language, but when presenting a topic, as in our case, students are well prepared for their topic, have detected their errors and record themselves at the final trial which according to them is their best. Reasonably, we conclude that students should be evaluated continuously throughout the year not only with topic presentations but also with short interviews which will be unplanned and instantaneous. However, to carry out such an assessment would require more time if it is planned to be held at the end of the semester, so if teachers arrange a day just for oral assessment it would be successful, however considering the students age and stress it could cause to them, in a virtual online classroom making the assessment continuous would be less stressful and more reliable for both sides.

In our thesis, the students were given direct feedback for live online presentations and recorded presentation that were done during online lessons, and online feedback in MS Teams for those students that uploaded in *assignments.* It is assumed that feedback would help them pay more attention to their weaknesses and improve their errors in criteria that they need to progress more.

5.1.3 Rating scales and scoring

As teachers who both instruct and evaluate students' oral proficiency, we should question ourselves regularly on the usefulness of our grading criteria on the students who take those tests. We assume that the criteria and their descriptions would be functional if they are shared with students. In our study, the students were evaluated with a rating scale raging from 1 to 5 and each of the points had their descriptions, however the descriptions were not shared with students, rather they were only informed that they will get points from 1 as the lowest to 5 as the highest point for each criterion in the checklist. During the evaluation process we observed that some students were in the middle of two grades, for example neither 4 nor 5. In that case it would be more realistic if

we had grades them with .5, .75, and .85 as it is suggested by McKay (2007). The results from the data collected show that students have paid attention to the use of grammatical structures, tried to use a wide range of vocabulary in their presentations and paid attention to their pronunciation. It was observed that some students repeated the same words more often than it was required, for example the words repeated included: hmm, mmm, yeah, okay, like that etc. They were suggested to reduce the number of times they use when they are talking even in their real life. Since students were divided in two groups, a group that presented live online and the other with recorded videos, we compared their overall results which indicate that the students that did the recorded version were more successful than the other group. However, they admitted that they had recorded themselves as many times as they needed until they realized they were successful, or until they liked their voice as they claimed.

5.2 Practical Implications of the Study

Taking into account the outcomes that we put forward in this thesis, we believe it is reasonable to initiate some approaches to make some reforms in our present program for speaking skills assessment in the subject of English language skills at the Maarif International Schools Middle school department. Even though these will depend upon further research and verification, as initial act on advancement or development in our method of assessment we suppose them to be contemplated by our results and beneficial of moving this idea from concept to a reality which can be applied in the language classroom.

Our first suggestion is to use clear and short instructions for the assessment and give not only topics but also books or movies to review orally. In addition, we would propose to change the assessment from presentation to part of it to be carried out as an interview with the teacher or doing pair work, where students ask each other questions and the teacher is the investigator. So, the teacher in that case is assumed to be more objective as he or she will not take part in the interview. However, all these ideas need to be studied and verified if our hypothesis fur further research is true or not. Also, a modification that could be done in terms of assessors is that the teacher who carries out the evaluation process could be a teacher that does not teach in that class, or one that doesn't know the students personally. Teachers perceptions may affect the scoring as well, and their scoring could not be 100% objective. But

if the raters are unknown teachers, if possible, more than two teachers, than the results obtained would be more objective, reliable and valid.

5.3   Contributions and Limitations of our Study

The limitation of this thesis is that the students were assessed by only one teacher, particularly their English skills teacher. If more teachers were included in the rating process, it is believed that we would get more valid and reliable results. Another limitation of this thesis was the lack of time. Five minutes to evaluate one's oral proficiency may reflect the student's performance just for that test, yet it is assumed to be helpful to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the student. On the other hand, two lessons may not be enough to assess a larger group, for example, in one of classes an extra lesson after the regular classes was scheduled just for the oral proficiency test. This requires much more time and effort for both sides. Accordingly, if it is the case with a larger group, more than fifteen or twenty students, it would be more useful to assess them through their recordings after classes, so the students would not have to participate in a lesson after the regular schedule.

5.4 Possible Areas for Further Research

Certainly, the more we investigate fields of our learning and understanding, the higher our consciousness of how much more we should learn becomes. This thesis has recommended other problems in our perceptions of the speaking skills and the applicability of our assessment instruments which we believe to demand future research. It is thought that it would be useful if students were assessed in different forms as well and rated by different teachers thus observe the results obtained from diverging methods of assessment. In this thesis we compared the results obtained from recorded PowerPoint oral presentations and live online presentations, so it could be valuable to conduct a comparative study of assessing PowerPoint presentation oral proficiency assessments with interviews where students would be asked unexpected questions as well. Students could be interviewed by a teacher or a classmate where the teacher would not be involved in the communication process but rather be in the role of an observer and rater at the same time. In addition to this, if we arrange more teachers to rate the students' oral proficiency, which could be around five to ten teachers, we could get more reliable and valid results. In that case, we could

also conduct another analysis on the differences between rater results and compare what has affected the teachers rate the same students differently or maybe we could get very similar results from their assessments. Apart from these ideas, a survey could be done with students on their topic preferences, it would be of use to the teachers if we knew what exactly each age in interested on talking mostly, as in our thesis we got the results of which topics students preferred and which they didn't, however we have no exact information for the reason why they chose their topics, was it because they were experienced enough to talk about it or was it that the topic was broad and they could talk more. Yet all these ideas remain to be researched in the future hoping they will bring innovations and new approaches to assessing speaking skills.

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7.APPENDICES

1. INSTRUCTIONS

Dear students,

In the attachment below you can find the topics about the speaking test which you will do as a presentation through power point.

- You have 5 different topics and for each of them I have written questions that will help you organize your speech.
- Your speaking presentation should last around 5 minutes.
- power point will be used just to remind you of what you will talk. So, just add there the name of the topic and in short points the areas you will talk about.
- you can add pictures in the ppt, which you will describe when speaking.
- the deadline for sending me the ppt presentation is **Sunday 13.12.2020.**
- the upcoming week I will evaluate and grade your speaking skills.
- the grading criteria are as follows:

1. Grammar
2. Vocabulary
3. Pronunciation
4. Intonation
5. Fluency
6. Relevance to the topic

- Here you can see the main topics, for more details look at the document in the attachments

TOPIC 1 "HOME AND LOCAL AREA"

TOPIC 2" HEALTH AND SPORT"

TOPIC 3 "LEISURE AND ENTERTAINMENT"

TOPIC 4 "TRAVEL AND THE WIDER WORLD"

TOPIC 5   "EDUCATION"

- **Please choose ONLY ONE of the above written topics and talk about it.**

- **What you will speak is up to you and the questions in the document I've sent will assist you.**

Good Luck

2. TOPICS

ENGLISH LANGUAGE SPEAKING SKILLS ASSESSMENT

TOPIC 1 "HOME AND LOCAL AREA"

- **Life in the home; friends and relationships**

Tell me about your house / home / flat. (How many rooms are there? Tell me about the ...)

Describe your bedroom / garden / living room. (Colors / size / plants / furniture) (Do you have a garden? What is in your bedroom?)

What do you do (to help) at home? And yesterday? And next weekend? (Do you do the hoovering / the washing up / help grandparents?)

Describe your daily routine at home. (Morning / evening / weekend) (What time do you get up / get home / have lunch?)

What do you like / dislike about your home / bedroom? Why? (What colour are the walls? Do you like them? Why (not)?)

Who does the cooking at home? Opinions about food / meals / kitchen. (Does your mother / father cook the dinner? What do you like cooking?)

What would you change about your home / bedroom? Why? (Do you like your bedroom? Why (not)?)

- **Tell me about your family / best friend / brother / grandmother.**

(How many sisters do you have? Tell me about your sister.)

Describe your mother / father / sister / brother. (Occupation / temperament / hair / size)

(Do you have a brother / sister? What does your father / brother do?)

Describe your pet. Type / size / colour. (Do you have a pet? How long have you had your …? How do you look after your … ?)

What do you like to do with your friends? Last weekend? Next weekend? (Do you go to the cinema / play football with your friends?)

What kind of person are you? Temperament / (dis)likes. (Are you intelligent / friendly / obedient / sporty / hard-working?) What do you (not) like about your friends / classmates? Why? (Who is your best friend? Describe him / her. Character / (dis)likes.)

Do you get on well with your family / classmates / boys / girls? Opinions. (Do you like your

brother?

Is your mum / dad nice / strict? In what way?)

What would you change in your (family) life? How would that be better? (What do you do: weekend / evening? What else would you like to do?)

- **Local area, facilities and getting around**

Tell me about your hometown / village / region. Industrial? Touristy? (Where do you live? Do you like living in … ?)

What is there in the area for young people (to do)? (Is there a cinema? Are there lots of clubs nearby?)

What is there in the area for tourists (to do)? (Have you visited … castle / museum / park? Tell me about it.)

What is the area like for shopping? Did you go shopping last weekend? (Do you go shopping in …? Where else? When? Who with?)

What do you think about your town / village / region? Why? (What do you not like about …? transport / entertainment?)

What are the (dis)advantages of living in the town or the country? (Do you like living in …? Why? Would you rather live elsewhere?)

If you had the choice, where would you like to live? Abroad? Why? (Would you like to live in …? What is the weather like here / there?)

How do you normally travel to school / into town etc? What would you prefer? Why? (Do you like travelling by car / bus etc.? What are the (dis)advantages?)

TOPIC 2 "HEALTH AND SPORT"

- **Sport, outdoor pursuits and healthy lifestyle**

Do you play sport?

(What sort? When? Who with? How often?)

Do you play for a team / in a club? Why do you enjoy it? Describe a game / match you recently took part in.

What do you normally do to keep fit?

(In school? At the weekend? Any exercise? Walking?)

What did you do last week(end) to keep fit? Tell me about your normal weekend lifestyle.

(Do you exercise / walk / play sport on Saturdays / Sundays? Why (not)?) What about friends / family members? Are they sporty / fit / healthy? Why? Is being healthy an important issue for you? Why (not)?

(Do you eat healthily? other habits e.g. sleeping / smoking etc.)

What will / should you do to be fitter? How could you improve your lifestyle?

- **Food and drink as aspects of culture and health**

What do you like / dislike eating / drinking? Why?

(What is your favourite meal / drink? How often do you eat / drink it?)

What do you normally eat (for breakfast / lunch / evening meal)?

Do you eat healthily? What constitutes a healthy diet (in your opinion)?

(How often do you eat vegetables / fruit / chocolate etc.?)

Did you eat healthily last weekend?

Do you enjoy eating takeaways / fast food? Why? (What do you think is good / bad about takeaways?) How could you improve your diet?

Are you for or against vegetarian food? Why?

Tell me about a recent (family) meal you had. When? Special occasion? Who with? Describe a recent visit to a restaurant – good experience? Why (not)?

What do you think about the food / drink in … (country)? What have you tried / tasted? Do you prefer English or (other) food / dishes? Why?

TOPIC 3 "LEISURE AND ENTERTAINMENT"

- **Socializing, special occasions and festivals (includes online)**

Tell me about your hobbies. What do you do at the weekend / in the evenings?

(Do you play sport? Do you like music? What sort? When? Who with?) What do you like to do with your friends? Last weekend? Next weekend? (Do you go to the cinema / go to worship / play football with your friends?) What do you do in your free time? Last weekend? And next weekend? (Do you go shopping / watch football / go to worship at the weekend?)

Describe what you like to do in your leisure time / evening / weekend routine. (What time do you get home / get up on Saturday? What do you do then?) What do you (not) like about the weekend? Why?

(What do you do on Saturday / Sunday am / pm / evening? Tell me about that.)

Who do you spend free time with? Opinions about friends / family. (Do you watch TV with your family? Do you go out with your friends?) What would you do if you didn't have to go to school or work? Why? (How do you spend your money? Clothes / fashion / music / sport?) Tell me about a special occasion you were involved with recently. (What? Where? Who with? Opinions?)

How did you celebrate your last birthday? With whom? Presents? (What would you like to do differently for your next / 12th birthday?) Do you have a favourite festival in the year? What? Why?

- **TV, films and music**

Do you like television / films / going to concerts? Tell me about that. What is your favourite TV programme / film / music / group? – Why? (When do you watch it? How often? Who with? Where? etc.)

What sort of TV programmes / music / films do you like / dislike? Why?

(Do you like watching documentaries / the news / soap operas etc.?)

How much television do you watch in the evenings / at weekends / in the holidays? Tell me about a programme / film you watched recently.

(What was it about? Who did you watch it with? What did you think of it?)

Do you have a favourite singer / film star / TV star?

(What is he / she like? Description / personality etc.)

Do you buy CDs / DVDs etc. or do you download music / films from the web? What (film / programme / music) would you recommend (to a visitor)?

TOPIC 4 "TRAVEL AND THE WIDER WORLD"

- **Holidays and exchanges**

Tell me about your summer holidays. Last year? This summer?

(Where are you going this year (did you go last year) for your holidays?) Describe your holidays (weather / transport / accommodation / activities). (Where do you like to go on holiday? Do you stay in a caravan? Who with?) If you had lots of money, where would you go on holiday? Who with?

(What do you like to do on holiday? Who with? If weather is bad?)

Describe the / Eid / holidays. Celebrations / parties / visits / meals. What do you (dis)like about holidays? Why? Do you go away / stay at home?

(What do you do at home in the holidays? Do you like it? Why (not)?) Do you prefer holidays with family or with friends? What differences? (Do you go on holiday with your family? Do you like that? Why (not)?)

(Dis)advantages of different sorts of holidays. Cost / travel / accommodation.

(Do you like going to … on holiday? Why (not)?)

Have you taken part in an exchange / trip abroad? Tell me about it. What are the (dis)advantages of exchanges?

- **Environmental, cultural and social issues**

Are you 'environmentally friendly'? What do you do to help the environment?

(Do you recycle bottles / paper etc?; save water / energy? How?)

Is the environment important to you? Why?

What have you done lately to help the environment? What (more) could / should you do?

(Do you travel by car / plane? How often do you cycle / walk?)

In your opinion, what is the worst / biggest environmental problem at the moment? Why? How could it be improved / solved?

(What do you think about global warming / greenhouse effect / pollution?) What are the most important social issues for young people these days? (What do you think about smoking / drinking / violence / crime?)

Is there a problem with drinking / drugs / violence in your local area? How could it be improved?

Why do you think some people take drugs / get involved with crime? Tell me about your favourite cultural holiday / celebration.

What do you (did you) do to celebrate? And next year? Or ideal?

TOPIC 5 "EDUCATION"

- **School life in North Macedonia**

Tell me about your school / college.

(How many pupils / teachers at your school?)

Describe your classroom / school buildings / grounds.

(Do you have a big classroom? What is in your classroom?)

What is your favourite lesson? Why? And least favourite? Why?

(Do you like maths? What lesson will you have next / tomorrow / after this?) Describe your daily routine at school / break / morning / afternoon routine. (What time do / did you arrive at school / have lunch / go home?)

What do you like / dislike about school / lessons / sports? Why?

(What do you do at break / lunchtime? Who with?)

What do you think of school rules? Opinions about uniform / homework.

(Are the teachers strict? What do you think about homework?)

What would you change about your school? How would that be better?

(Do you like your school (uniform)? Why (not)?)

3. GRADING CRITERIA AND ASSESSMENT RERSULTS

2020-2021 ACADEMIC YEAR

FIRST SEMESTER 1st ORAL TEST REPORT

DEADLINE: 13.12.2020

ASSESSMENT WEEK: 14-18.12.2020

ENGLISH SKILLS TEACHER: EBRU ABDURAMANI

CLASS: 6-A

Name and Surname	Topic	Grammar	Vocabulary	Pronunciation	Intonation	Relevance to the	Fluency	AVERAGE
Student No.1	T-5	5	5	4	5	5	4	4.6667
Student No.2	Rec. T-2	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Student No.3	T-2	5	5	5	4	5	5	4.8333
Student No.4	T-2	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Student No.5	T-3	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Student No.6	T-3	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Student No.7	T-2	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Student No.8	T-2	5	5	4	5	5	4	4.6667
Student No.9	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	
Student No.10	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	
Student No.11	T-5 NoPpt	5	5	5	5		5	5
Student No.12	T-5	4	4	4	4	5	4	4.1667
Student No.13	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	
Student No.14	T-4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Student No.15	T-5	5	4	5	4	5	5	4.6667
Student No.16	T-2	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
TOTAL AVERAGE:		4.9231	4.8462	4.7692	4.7692	5	4.7692	4.8462

CLASS: 7-A

Order	Name and Surname	Topic	Grammar	Vocabulary	Pronunciation	Intonation	Relevance to the	Fluency	Average
1.	Student No.17	Rec T-2	5	4	5	5	5	4	4.66667
2.	Student No.18	Rec T-5	5	4	5	5	5	5	4.83333
3.	Student No.19	Rec. T-5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4.83333
4.	Student No.20	Rec. T-4	5	5	4	4	5	4	4.5
5.	Student No.21	Rec. T-2	5	5	4	5	5	4	4.66667
6.	Student No.22	Rec. T-2	5	5	4	5	5	4	4.66667
7.	Student No.23	Rec. T-1	5	5	5	5	5	4	4.83333
8.	Student No.24	T-1	4	5	3	4	5	5	4.33333
9.	Student No.25	Rec. T-1	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
12.	Student No.26	Rec. T-1	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
13.	Student No.27	Rec. T-5	5	5	5	4	5	3	4.5
14.	Student No.28	Rec. T-1	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
15	Student No.29	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	
16	Student No.30	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	
CRITERION AVERAGE:			4.91667	4.83333	4.58333	4.75	5	4.33333	4.73611

CLASS: 7-B

Order	Name and Surname	Topic	Grammar	Vocabulary	Pronunciation	Intonation	Relevance to the topic	Fluency	AVERAGE
1.	Student No.31	T-1	3	2	3	3	5	3	3.166667
2.	Student No.32	T-1	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
3.	Student No.33	T-2	5	4	5	3	5	4	4.333333
4.	Student No.34	T-1	5	4	4	4	5	4	4.333333
5.	Student No.35	T-5	4	5	5	5	5	3	4.5
6.	Student No.36	T-1	4	4	4	5	5	4	4.333333
7.	Student No.37	T-1	5	4	5	5	5	4	4.666667
8.	Student No.38	T-1	5	4	5	4	5	4	4.5
9.	Student No.39	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	
10.	Student No.40	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	
	AVERAGE:		4.5	4	4.5	4.25	5	3.875	4.354167

CLASS: 8-A

Order	Name and Surname	Topic	Grammar	Vocabulary	Pronunciation	Intonation	Relevance to the	Fluency	AVERAGE
1.	Student No.41	T-2	4	4	5	4	5	4	4.333333
2.	Student No.42	Home	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
3.	Student No.43	RecT1	4	5	5	5	5	4	4.666667
4.	Student No.44	T-5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
5.	Student No.45	Rec.T2	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
6.	Student No.46	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	
7.	Student No.47	T-2	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
8.	Student No.48	T-5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4.833333
9.	Student No.49	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	
10.	Student No.50	T-5	4	5	4	5	5	4	4.5
11.	Student No.51	T-2	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
12.	Student No.52	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	
	AVERAGE:		4.6667	4.8889	4.8889	4.8889	5	4.5556	4.814815

CLASS: 8-B

Order	Name and Surname	Topic	Grammar	Vocabulary	Pronunciation	Intonatio	Relevance	Fluency	AVERAGE
1.	Student No.53	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	
2.	Student No.54	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	
3.	Student No.55	Rec.T-5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
4.	Student No.56	T-5	3	4	4	5	5	5	4.333333
5.	Student No.57	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	
6.	Student No.58	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	
7.	Student No.59	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	
8.	Student No.60	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	
9.	Student No.61	T-5	4	3	4	5	5	4	4.166667
10.	Student No.62	T-2	2	2	1	2	5	2	2.333333
11.	Student No.63	T-5	5	4	4	4	5	4	4.333333
12.	Student No.64	T-1	3	4	3	3	5	3	3.5
13	Student No.65	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	
14	Student No.66	T-1	5	4	4	4	5	4	4.333333
	AVERAGE:		3.667	3.667	3.5	4.2	5	4	4.005556

CLASS: 9-A

Order	Name and Surname	Topic	Grammar	Vocabular	Pronunciat ...	Intonation	Relevance to the	Fluency	AVERAGE
1	Student No.67	T-5	4	5	3	4	5	4	4.167
2	Student No.68	T-4	4	5	4	5	5	4	4.5
3	Student No.69	T-4	5	4	4	4	5	4	4.333
4	Student No.70	T-1	4	4	4	5	5	4	4.333
5	Student No.71	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	
6	Student No.72	T-1	5	5	4	4	5	5	4.667
7	Student No.73	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	
8	Student No.74	T-5	3	3	3	3	4	3	3.167
9	Student No.75	T-1	5	4	3	5	5	4	4.333
10	Student No.76	NO PPT T5	5	5	4	5	5	4	4.667
11	Student No.77	NO PPT T5	3	3	2	2	3	2	2.5
	AVERAGE:		4.222	4.222	3.444	4.111	4.667	3.778	4.074

CLASS: 9-B

Order	Name and Surname	Topic	Grammar	Vocabulary	Pronunciation	Intonation	Relevance to	Fluency	AVERAGE
1.	Student No.78	T-3	4	5	3	4	5	3	4
2.	Student No.79	T-2	4	5	4	4	5	4	4.333
3.	Student No.80	Rec.T-3	5	4	5	5	5	5	4.833
4.	Student No.81	Rec. T3	5	5	4	5	5	4	4.667
5.	Student No.82	Rec.T-5	5	5	4	5	5	5	4.833
6.	Student No.83	Rec.T-3	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
7.	Student No.84	Rec.T-2	4	5	4	4	5	5	4.5
8.	Student No.85	T-4	5	5	4	5	5	5	4.833
9.	Student No.86	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	
10.	Student No.87	T-5	5	5	3	4	5	4	4.333
11.	Student No.88	T-2	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
12.	Student No.89	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	
13.	Student No.90	T-2	5	5	5	4	5	5	4.833
14.	Student No.91	T-1	4	5	4	5	5	4	4.5
	AVERAGE		4.667	4.917	4.167	4.583	5	4.5	4.639