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OF SANTIAGO DE GUAYAQUIL**

**OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAM IN  
TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

**TITLE:**

**Implementing a guide of analytic rubrics in the assessment of  
speaking skill of A1 Level Students at the Language Center at  
Universidad Técnica de Machala (UTMACH)**

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**PROJECT ADVISOR:**

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**CERTIFICATION**

We certify that this research project was presented by **Lupercio Cobeña, Micaela Janneth and García Luna, Verónica Marbel** as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the **Degree of Master in Teaching English as a Foreign Language**.

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**Guayaquil, 19<sup>th</sup> of December of 2018**



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**We, Lupercio Cobeña, Micaela Janneth and  
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**HEREBY DECLARE THAT:**

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**Guayaquil, 19<sup>th</sup> of December of 2018**

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**Lupercio Cobeña, Micaela Janneth**

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to my dear family for being a constant support in my life.

---

**García Luna, Verónica Marbel**



## **DEDICATION**

This research is dedicated to all the teachers who are willing to make changes in the assessment process, and to those teachers who see teaching as an integral process to achieve the learners' success.

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**Lupercio Cobeña, Micaela Janneth**



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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>CEFR</b>	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
<b>CES</b>	Consejo de Educación Superior del Ecuador
<b>EFL</b>	English as a Foreign Language
<b>L1</b>	First Language
<b>L2</b>	Second Language
<b>UTMACH</b>	Universidad Técnica de Machala

## **Abstract**

One of the main challenges faced by EFL instructors in higher education is to determine with accuracy the level of improvement attained in the speaking skill of their learners. The present research project has the purpose of consolidating the implementation of effective assessment tools that strengthen the monitoring of how L2 oral productive language skills are developed at the Language Center at Universidad Técnica de Machala (UTMACH). This study was conducted under the premises of action research where quantitative and qualitative methods were applied. To begin, a review of the literature was performed considering the relevance and setbacks of L2 speaking assessment taking into account the elements of oral production. Afterwards, an analysis of how analytic rubrics contribute to find strengths and detect weaknesses in the speaking performance of target students. The research hereunder gathered data by means of surveys on both teachers and students, interview of EFL educators, and class observation reports. The information obtained went through a qualitative-quantitative analysis providing elements of judgment to conclude that in general, oral examinations lacked of analytic rubrics in detriment of the formative assessment. Thereupon, a proposal was prepared to cope with the aforementioned academic issue. It consisted of the elaboration of a booklet with guidelines to implement speaking rubrics efficiently during the English teaching-learning process.

**Key words:** speaking skill, assessment tools, analytic rubrics, analysis, guidelines

## Introduction

Learning speaking can result a little hard to develop because learners need real conversations to practice English. Although they have access to technology, human interaction is essential. Fulcher (2014) indicates that “Speaking is the verbal use of language to communicate with others” (p. 23). Interestingly, communication is the only way to practice and improve learned grammar and vocabulary. Furthermore, the use of language combats the language anxiety when people are connecting ideas to give responses.

The goal of the speaking skill is to enable learners to communicate thoughts, ideas, and feelings orally. Jose and Raja (2012) express that teaching speaking in English means “Adequacy of fluency and communicative effectiveness” (p. 41). Evidently, speaking practice is essential to achieve communication, but obviously to fulfil effectiveness, it should be supported by assessment to prove its success or failure. On the other hand, when the learner reaches the authentic communication, he is able to interpret the message and translate it into meaningful information. In fact, a good communication implies to develop appreciation of speech in one’s daily activity, and the application of effective speaking practice standards, activities for assessing speaking skill, instruments to assess the speaking process, and sources of feedback. Therefore, educators must provide students with opportunities and use assessment tools to develop better speech situations directed to an effective communication and fortify teaching speaking skill.

On the other hand, to know if learners are developing speaking skills appropriately, it is relevant that teachers apply techniques and instruments that help them to assess the results and verify the process of assessment. Although assessing results is not easy, it is the best way to prove in what elements of the speech students are failing, which does not happen when teachers give a grade or a number because a grade does not indicate students’ weaknesses and strengths on their speaking skills.

In fact, to analyze language assessment is complicated because it entails the responsibility of educators to assess what students are able to do with language. To gauge what the students know, the teachers need to use instruments which support the speaking practice and the teaching efficacy. In addition, assessment is analyzed broadly in this study, and it goes beyond a number; learners need to demonstrate their ability to speak. Thus, assessment should include verbal and nonverbal aspects of communication and should consider competence in different communication settings. Besides, assessment should not be focused on an individual's area of expertise; on the contrary, learners should be trained to be able to achieve the domain of English language (Christ, 2013).

On the other hand, the purpose of assessment is to help learners to improve English speaking skills through instruction. Although assessing speaking skill is not an essay task, according to Christ (2013) it is necessary to use "appropriate methods" (p. 216). It will help to determine what chosen instrument is the most effective to assess knowledge and skills. Through assessment students and teachers are engaged as Ahmad (2015) states in judgment about "the quality of students' achievement or performance" (p. 17). It means that assessment gauges students' language proficiency for which teachers should apply the most appropriate instruments to assess them. In this study the researchers are applying assessment tools allow to verify through figures gotten from surveys to teachers and students, interviews with teachers, speaking activities and speaking exams observations the speaking development and with the objective of establishing the real needs in speaking skill and on the basis of the results obtained contribute with a proposal to improve the detected weakness.

Similarly, in this study the researchers are focusing on rubrics which are an innovative instrument to obtain evidence regarding the acquisition of competencies. The rubric is based on a series of relevant dimensions that according to Velasco-Martínez and Tójar-Hurtado (2018) may "be assessed quantitatively and qualitatively" (p. 119) regarding a gradual and coherent scale. Rubrics are instruments that evaluate competence descriptors and offer

accurate assessment regarding students' work qualities. Furthermore, Eshun and Osei-Poku (2013) mention that rubrics make assessment of students' work "quick and efficient" (p. 1). Undoubtedly, rubrics are directed to make assessment more efficient since they provide valid feedback to determine learners' outcomes. However, rubrics which are analyzed in this study are analytic because they provide more detailed feedback and they work in the process, but it does not happen with holistic ones because they provide a general feedback and do not drill learners in specific elements of language to improve speaking skill.

Analytic rubrics, as it is stated by Tuan (2012), are more appropriate for this research for the following reasons (p. 674). Firstly, analytic rubric provides suitable diagnostic information about students' speaking skills. In other words, it informs students where their weaknesses and strengths are. Analytic rubrics are more interpretable because they identify explicit and specific elements of speaking discourse, and they allow teachers to tailor instruction regarding students' needs.

It is worth indicating that the present study is supported by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) which was taken as the standard for foreign language proficiency in the Regulation of Academic Regime 2013 for Ecuadorian higher education institutions (Consejo de Educación Superior (2013).

The UTMACH applies what the CEFR establishes and learners of A1 level have to demonstrate the following speaking competences:

Speaking – (spoken interaction)

I can interact in a simple way provided the other person is prepared to repeat or rephrase things at a slower rate of speech and help me formulate what I'm trying to say. I can ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics.

Speaking – (spoken production)

I can use simple phrases and sentences to describe where I live and people I know.

(Council of Europe, 2001, p. 26)

Therefore, it is clear that this study on the implementation of a guide of analytic rubrics in the assessment of the speaking skill of A1 level students at the Language Center at the Universidad Técnica de Machala will contribute to the development of speaking skill in learners. Likewise, the results of this research will support the proposal which is focused on achieving the proficiency in speaking skill considering that speakers should demonstrate their capacity to give thoughts, opinions, and express feelings. In other words, the students are able to demonstrate their expertise in this productive skill.

# Chapter 1

## The Problem

### 1.1. Problem Statement

According to the Resolution 003/2007 of the University Board of the Universidad Técnica de Machala (UTMACH), the students of all the careers were required to pass two levels of English at the Language Center, except those from the Nursing Career who needed to pass four (4) levels as a graduation requirement. However, this situation changed in 2013 when the *Consejo de Educación Superior del Ecuador (CES)* in the Article 30 of the Regulation of the Academic Regime stipulated that university students have to show proficiency in a foreign language as a requirement to graduate and in the Article 31 of the Regulation of Academic Regime 2016 reformed by the Resolutions RPC-SO-45-No.535-2014 and RPC-SE-03-No.004-2016 of the *Consejo de Educacion Superior (CES)*, stipulated that the undergraduate students have to reach the CEFR B2 level to graduate. Consequently, the UTMACH established that the students of the 48 careers should study eight (8) modules of English at the Language Center to reach this level.

The English Program is organized in the following way:

- First and Second courses correspond to A1 level.
- Third and Fourth courses correspond to A2 level.
- Fifth and Sixth courses correspond to B1 level.
- Seventh and Eighth courses corresponds to B2 level.

This research is focused on studying First course which corresponds to A1.1 level to determine the problem object of study taking into consideration that the first course is the foundation for learning a foreign language.

Moreover, in accordance with the new requirement, the Director of the Language Center has made some changes so as students can demonstrate their proficiency in the English language. Nevertheless, the current results are not positive, especially in speaking skill since the students are having difficulty

at the moment of establishing an authentic communication. The problem goes beyond the methods used by teachers since it seems they are using good techniques and activities. The problem may be the poor use of the assessment tools. Students are immersed in practice, but teachers do not know how to assess speaking skill. This situation makes students not realize where they are really failing when they are performing this skill.

Applying assessment tools requires time and patience to assess speaking because teachers need to deal with different elements of language such as fluency, intonation, pronunciation, and so forth, which are not considered in the other skills. Likewise, the teachers need to do a good speaking assessment to have a clear idea of what students can really do and what they cannot do so as to provide them with the right feedback which allows them to improve their speaking skill.

## **1.2. Justification**

Considering that speaking skill is foremost for communication and difficult to assess in relation to the other skills, the researchers have seen relevant to focus their research on tools to assess speaking as it is one of the less developed skills in spite of being necessary for exchanging ideas, giving information, and expanding business world. Therefore, the present research seeks to contribute with assessment tools to support the speaking assessment skill at A1 level at the Language Center at UTMACH. Besides, the assessment tools are aligned with the requirement of the Common European Framework of References for Languages (2001).

CEFR is an instrument of support for teaching a foreign language and assessment of skills through the use of descriptors and the measurement of skills by levels. It appeared to facilitate the exchange of information, ideas, promote the personal development and make the learning process fairer (Byram and Parmenter, 2012). Although teachers know the assessment indicators for speaking that the CEFR provides, the speaking results are not the best. It could be because the teachers are concentrated on activities, but they do not consider assessment.



Assessment does not only require time, it needs tools which allow to establish the strengths and weaknesses in order to improve the speaking skill. The Council of Europe (2001) adds “Scaled descriptors are provided for aspects of linguistic competence and pragmatic competence” (p. 30). It strengthens still more the assessment tools work since considering scaled descriptors allow to specify communicative competences in learners.

Likewise, according to Goh, Goh and Burns (2012) “it is very important that English learners develop their ability to use spoken English for academic learning” (p. 24). The use of effective skills engages students to participate in oral language and this is helpful for students to succeed academically in the foreign language. It is also essential that teachers maximize learners’ opportunities to speak in the classroom by designing activities that provide chances to talk in English. This will allow language learners to improve not only fluency but also grammatical and phonological accuracy which for sure will contribute to overall language development. However, it is worth emphasizing that this needs to be fortified with assessment.

Thus, to enhance the assessment process in learners of A1 level, it is pivotal to study the assessment tools used by teachers at the Language Center in order to determine the current tools they are using. For this research it is necessary to apply various instruments such as surveys, interviews, classroom observations to verify the grading process. Besides, it is essential to include analytic rubrics to complement this process and, as a result, to assess the progress of students’ oral communication in A1 level. Analytic rubrics provide detailed information of strengths and weaknesses of learners during the process of assessment. Moreover, they provide students with information about their competence. As Hallinger and Bridges (2007) point out, “Analytical rubrics are more powerful tools in that they not only define the criteria for assessment, but also a range of performance levels for each criterion” (p. 125). Therefore, these rubrics go beyond the final product; on the contrary, teachers could establish a deep feedback of the students’ performance to reach the final product in a specific skill since these types of rubrics are addressed to keep a detailed control of students and justify the score assigned by educators.

Taking into account the benefits of analytic rubric for this study, teachers of A1 level at the Language Center will be supported by a guide of analytic rubrics to improve the assessment process of speaking skill.

### **1.3. Research Questions**

- Are the teachers of the Language Center at UTMACH applying assessment tools to evaluate speaking skill in the classroom?
- How can the implementation of a guide of analytic rubrics benefit the process of speaking skill assessment of first level students at the Language Center?

### **1.4. Objectives**

#### **1.4.1. General Objective:**

- To develop analytic rubrics that complement the speaking skill assessment process of A1 level students in the Language Center at UTMACH.

#### **1.4.2. Specific Objectives:**

- To identify the existing assessment tools used by A1 level teachers during the evaluation of speaking skill.
- To implement analytic rubrics to reinforce the assessment of students speaking skill.
- To support the speaking assessment process through analytic rubrics.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

#### **2.1. Communication Skills**

Most people relate communication to listening and speaking. But communication goes beyond that. It involves getting information from one person to the other person, though, this is not a complete definition either. Communication could be defined as “the art and process of creating and sharing ideas. Effective communication depends on the richness of those ideas.” (MTD Training, 2010, p. 10). Definitely, communication fosters people to develop more creative ideas which would not be possible if there was not the communication.

Communication goes beyond the transmission of simple information from a newspaper, article, or news since the most important thing is the ability that a person has to communicate the information accurately and clearly. Barker (2010) argues that “Communication is the process of creating shared understanding” (p. 11). This implies the ability to understand what others say clearly in a dynamic process that takes place around us all the time.

Communication comes in many forms:

- verbal (sounds, language, and tone of voice)
- aural (listening and hearing)
- non-verbal (facial expressions, body language, and posture)
- written (journals, emails, blogs, and text messages)
- visual (signs, symbols, and pictures)

U.S. Labor Department (n.d.)

“Communication skills are the tools that we use to remove the barriers to effective communication.” These barriers could be things like different cultures, expectations, experiences, perspectives or communication styles (MTD Training, 2010, p. 11). Therefore, communication does not have limits, and it gives opportunities to interact and fulfil the success.

Communication skills according to Hannell (2013) engage learners in “Verbal exchanges that involve long sequences of listening and speaking” (p. 61). It means that when learners exchange information, they are communicating, but communication does not work alone; on the contrary, speaking and listening work together to fulfill communication. Learners also need to develop the capacity to express complex ideas and more information to others. For some students it is hard to develop good communication skills. However, an explicit and controlled training will help beginning learners to acquire skills that their peers have gotten easily. Although other learners are fluent communicators, they can still strengthen their skills. The key in communication is formulating language fluently and accurately. In this way, learners will be able to use language and talk on a particular topic, meeting their listeners’ needs and transferring long sequences of information.

Developing communication skills takes time, but it will allow to transmit meaningful information to others.

Furthermore, to get effective communication it is necessary that speakers use a variety of vocabulary, which should be organized at the moment of the interaction and keep eye contact to develop connection with the interlocutor and convey the message. When the listeners are not paying attention or are doing something else, inevitably, communication fails and as a result the message, too. Likewise, effective communication opens door to knowledge and new opportunities to grow personally and professionally.

Today, people want to gain the benefits of modern education by having knowledge of English language and being able to communicate effectively. On the other hand, people who do not have good communication skills will undergo difficulties in this era of competition. Laver (1994), as cited by Khan and Ali (2010), points out, “Speech is the primary means of communication and the structure of the society itself would be substantially different if we had failed to develop communication through speech” (p. 3576). The integration of all the four skills through the different classroom activities are recommended to develop oral communication. Teachers can enable language acquisition

through activities that ensure students' participation and interaction naturally. Additionally, the author expresses the importance of motivating students with speech activities and relate them to students' personal interest and ongoing life of the school. Therefore, teachers should work to achieve authentic communication among students.

## **2.2. Speaking Skill**

Speaking is the productive skill that makes students use sentences for expressing ideas. According to Baker and Westrup (2003) "It is important for learners to practice the language they are learning in situations which are similar to life outside the classroom" (p. 7). Thus, students have the opportunity to interact and talk about their lives, preferences, news, ideas and discussing issues. Therefore, to achieve speaking development it is necessary to create an atmosphere that motivates students to express themselves and correct their own mistakes since speaking is not only learning for communicating in the classroom, but also outside.

On the other hand, Gangal (2012) states that obtaining effective English-speaking skills is challenging because of the multiplicity of listeners (p. 4). Hence, this is an activity that requires enough interaction and interest to fulfill expectations. Likewise, practicing speaking with great expression on face is very important for transmitting ideas and thoughts with good purposes.

Teaching speaking in English means, as Jose and Raja (2012) express, "Adequacy of fluency and communicative effectiveness" (p. 41). Through communication process the sender and receiver are able to exchange information by interpreting and translating it into meaningful information. Developing better communication is related to the appreciation for the importance of speech in daily life. The authors also think that teachers should provide situations where students be engaged in conversation. Although students feel reluctance at first, teachers must give them confidence. The authors say that teachers must use interactive materials that engage students in cultivating speaking until they get accustomed to native speakers of English.

Hall (1995), cited by Fulcher (2014) states “Speaking is an ability that is taken for granted, learned as it is through a process of socialization through communicating” (p. 22). It strengthens even more the sense that the interaction among students is essential to communication since they have the chance to use learned vocabulary and hear partners’ language. Besides, this interaction encourages the students to improve the linguistic competence which can be improved only when the learner produces sounds, says words and uses grammar structures. Likewise, communication helps learners to enhance the use of language in different situations.

Additionally, speaking competence is a significant part in the students’ lives considering that to get domain of it, learners have to manage knowledge, have motivation and skills which requires constant practice and decision. Burns and Siegel (2017) argues, “To develop speaking competence, learners must acquire knowledge of the language systems and genres of discourse, the core skills of speech production and communication strategies that enable them to manage and negotiate rapid communication” (p. 6). Hence, students need to put into practice elements such as fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, discourse, and so on, to demonstrate their understanding and to achieve the effective and natural communication. Consequently, speakers will interact in proper ways and participate effectively in encounters with people across different cultures demonstrating their ability in producing fluent speech.

### **2.3. The Importance of Speaking Skill**

Learning foreign languages at a young age, as it is said by Akbayeva, Ospanova, Kagazbayev, Tazhibayeva, and Eskazinova (2015), improves memory, intelligence and develops observation (p. 95). This is beneficial for learners’ master abilities. Besides, the fruitful work on the development of speaking skill, as the authors mention, enable learners to participate in the following activities:

Students are able to establish contact with partners in real communication circumstances. Students can also name things and activities, give quantitative, qualitative and temporal characteristics in training and in real

communication settings. Additionally, learners are capable of expressing emotions and feelings of perceived information. Finally, learners are prepared to hold and give basic directions, and solve problems by participating in different situations to develop their communicative competence.

In addition, for teaching speaking skills Akbayeva, Ospanova, Kagazbayev, Tazhibayeva, and Eskazinova (2015) recommend that educators should “find the right balance between controlled activities and letting learners talk naturally in the classroom” (p. 95). Teachers must also take care that learners express properly and be prepared to correct linguistic errors but limiting corrections during free speaking activities. A good training in speaking since the beginning of studying programs allows a successful work in communicative activities. Therefore, the most significant aspect in learning English as a foreign language is to be able to communicate.

The effective English speaking performance focuses on some main factors related to speaking skills which according to Boonkit (2010) are “pronunciation, vocabulary and collocations” (p. 2). These are important factors in building fluency in speakers of English as a Foreign Language. To provide students with a diversity of situations and regular speaking tasks is essential in the enhancement of students’ fluency. The author also suggests that confidence and competence lead to strengthen English speaking skills. Nawab (2012) asserts that students’ confidence plays an important role to facilitate “language acquisition” (p. 4). Building up the students’ confidence is important to eliminate fear of making errors in order to the learners feel comfortable with their language use. Likewise, a positive attitude makes the language learning more interesting and successful. Additionally, Boonkit (2010) mentions that the confidence and competence in speaking must be developed from the appropriate syllabus design, methods of teaching, and sufficient tasks and materials. All the opportunities teachers give students is beneficial for them to feel encouraged to use the foreign language which will lead to effective language performance.

Undoubtedly, the acquisition of oral skills is very important in the learning process to get learners speak well. Goh, Goh and Burns (2012) point out “The development of good speaking (and listening) skills is no longer a bonus for language learners, but an essential aspect of their language-proficiency development because it can have a direct impact on the personal and professional success of many of them” (p. 21). This emphasizes still more the idea that language proficiency makes people increase professional goals and gain self-confidence. Speakers should be completely immersed in the speaking practice and educators have the responsibility to look for strategies that foster the development of this skill, but at the same time seek assessment tools which assess the students’ speaking progress.

The speaking skill is crucially important for language learners to communicate. Saeed, Khaksari, Eng, and Ghani (2016) state that language learners give preference to speaking skill since they believe that “if they master the speaking skill, they are seen as speakers of the language” (p. 236). In fact, people who assert to know a language is because they are able to speak the language. Moreover, most of the language learners pursue the mastering of the speaking skill as they feel that it will help them in their future careers and jobs. In other words, learners who are fluent English speakers have more possibilities of employment.

Finally, speaking is a powerful method of communication which provides people many opportunities in and out their work group. When people or learners speak well, communication becomes clearer with coworkers and avoid misunderstandings at work; moreover, speakers feel more confident and become more respectable because apart from speaking well, it makes speakers more impressive over the telephone and in video conferences without forgetting mentioning that speaking well is crucial to professional promotion. Hence, people who speak well have more opportunities professionally and socially (Palmer, 2011).



## **2.4. Problems in Teaching Speaking**

Teaching speaking is a challenge for many teachers since although they present a variety of activities, it does not ensure the development of the speaking abilities. When teachers teach speaking, they are called to catch students' attention and follow up the learning process. According to Blair (1982) and Terrell (1991), cited by Herrera and Murry (2011) "Language learners use language to communicate for a purpose. The role of the teacher (and the classroom) is to provide a context for authentic communication" (p. 199). Accordingly, it is pivotal that teachers look for authentic and valid assessment tools which allow to attain the development of students' speaking skill and be able to hold real-life conversations.

On the other hand, it results difficult to get students to talk due to some problems such as shyness and inhibitions, where teachers should lower the anxiety, find things to say; therefore, educators should encourage learners to make the effort to speak, reduce participation of individuals who participate all the time and do not let other ones participate, L1 use should be avoided as much as learners can because it restricts the opportunities to improve English (Ur, 2012). Thus, educators should look for suitable strategies to solve these speaking problems. For example, the use of strategies in task design can help to create and maintain students' interest in learning.

Moreover, another problem that English foreign learners (EFL) face according to Longcope (2009) cited by Astorga-Cabezas (2015) is the "lack of English contact, input, and output" (p. 39). This happens because these learners have lesser time contact with the foreign language, thus they do not receive enough comprehensible input. The environment where EFL learners study is not a support for them to produce more comprehensible output, so this circumstance produces problems with understanding other speakers. Actually, the interaction that EFL has in classroom makes them reformulate messages frequently, and consequently, the production of oral communication is limited in context.

Learning to speak is not an easy task and Al-Sobhi and Preece (2018) state that students usually “face a number of problems that hinder them from speaking” (p. 2). It proves the limitations that learners find while studying English. Certainly, learning to speak is a hard task and this is a challenge for students. The reason is that there is very limited opportunity to learn English through natural interaction and students lack the basic language skills that enable them to express easily in the classroom. Al-Sobhi and Preece (2018) present some factors that affect the speaking skill instruction:

**Lack of exposure to language:** The social context plays a significant role for English learners. The more exposure students receive, the more acquisition they might develop. Learners who are given more chances to speak can reach great fluency. As Khan (2011) states, the problems students confront during English courses are when “students are not exposed to listening/speaking activities in their daily life interaction” (p. 1252). It lessens students’ enthusiasm and hinder their language growth avoiding that students fulfil an authentic communication. On the contrary, students’ involvement in activities to enhance interaction will facilitate spoken English as they got exposure to listening English in the classroom.

**Students anxiety and lack of confidence:** This problem affects students’ progress and according to Alhmadi (2014) it “led to speaking difficulties and decreased self-esteem” (p. 48). It shows the linguistics obstacles that students face when they are afraid of learning English. This author comments that anxiety is the intrinsic factor that affects the production of students’ oral communication. Similarly, students’ lack of self-confidence obstructs the progress of the speaking skill. For example, students can feel reluctant to give personal information or opinions in front of others. Furthermore, Arnold (2003) cited by Alhmadi (2014) mentions “Students’ lack of knowledge and confidence may lead to several difficulties, which might cause some students to prefer to remain silent and not to interact effectively due to their lack of self-confidence” (p. 49). So that, researchers suggest a simple way of involving students in learning is engaging their minds with ingenious resources for different contexts. Additionally, students should have

good chances to practice the target language in an attractive classroom environment.

**Limited knowledge of English:** English learners are expected to have adequate knowledge of English to speak fluently. Burns and Goh (2012) cited by Al-Sobhi and Preece (2018) add that “learners’ lack of words can prevent them from expressing themselves accurately” (p. 3). In that way, the limited students’ vocabulary conveys to inhibition at the moment of expressing accurately. Burns and Goh (2012) remark that learners must also use correct grammatical structures to be understood. That is why, students must improve their lexical and grammatical knowledge of English. Equally, teachers must employ useful techniques to develop students’ awareness of these elements.

**Ineffective teaching methodology:** The use of methods and strategies in teaching English speaking skills encourages students’ interaction in the classroom. Al-Sobhi and Preece (2018) explain that the teachers’ instruction of speaking skill is “supposed to enhance the students’ communicative competence” (p. 3). This objective can be achieved through the application of recent communicative language methods. For instance, the Communicative Language Teaching emphasizes the learner-centered approach where teachers play diverse roles in the classroom in order to intensify the communication in the target language. Moreover, ur Rahman, Mohd Mahib, and Alhaisoni (2013) point out that teachers ought to consider “new methodologies for classroom interaction” (p. 116). This implies giving learners the opportunity to enjoy their English language classes. Hence, teachers should modify their instruction into student-centered approach that helps students’ knowledge of basic language skills.

## **2.5. Assessment**

### **2.5.1. Definition**

Assessment is one of the most significant and challenging features of English Language Teaching that demands accuracy and clear discernment. Although it has been seen negatively by learners because it is considered an

instrument to attack, speaking assessment goes beyond a simple instrument to measure knowledge since it is used to inform the weaknesses and strengths and make decisions to improve students' outcomes. Likewise, classroom assessment contributes to creative ways of leading necessary changes to fortify student's acquisition of the English language. Llosa (2011) mentions that English Language Teaching assessment gives teachers the chance to set new challenging standards and make effort to create a balance between teaching and assessment techniques. Moreover, Frey, Schmitt and Allen (2012) state that the main purpose of classroom assessment is to make it authentic. Both ideas about assessment are real since teaching without assessment is not real, valid or authentic, which is supported by Green (2014) who points out, "Language assessment involves obtaining evidence to inform inferences about a person's language-related knowledge, skills or abilities" (p. 3). Consequently, assessment fulfils an important role in the teaching-learning process which cannot be avoided because it is the most efficient way to know the students' outcomes. Besides, assessment should be seen as a method for improving communication rather than punishment method, and method to strengthen teachers' decision in favor of improving students' skills and seeks effective techniques to support the teaching practice.

Likewise, Wiliam (2011) indicates that assessment describes the processes of "evaluating the effectiveness of sequences of instructional activities" (p. 3). In other words, the importance of assessment is centered on learning during the process which means that activities are pivotal for assessment because they give the educators the opportunity to follow the students work in detail. Besides, assessment is proved when the activity has finished, so it is at that moment when the learners demonstrate the real outcomes.

Assessment is carried out through several instruments and teachers must be aware of learners' funds of knowledge and the difficulties they must overcome. Assessment also has some purposes which according to Rowntree (2015) are diagnosis, evaluation, and grading. Definitely, the author is right because assessment is just not giving a grade, it bases its work on analyzing

the students' activity during the class in order to detect where they are failing and make the feedback meaningful. However, to achieve the expected outcomes, teachers' commitment is fundamental in the assessment.

Therefore, the success of assessment is supported by the change of teachers' practices so as to emphasize what is not working. Furthermore, assessment provides information about what learners know and can do, and so teachers can seek strategies to achieve the development of the skill.

### **2.5.2. Types of assessment.**

To determine the most appropriate type of assessment, it is relevant to establish the most common ones to assess students' progress. Two types of assessment are analyzed in this study. The first one is *formative* which is considered on-going teaching and learning as it detects what elements of learning teachers need to work to improve students' knowledge. Teachers and students are the main part in this type of assessment. The second one is *summative*, this assessment is focused on students' performance and it is evaluated at the end of the unit, semester or academic year. For the latter, the grades are very important. However, the author indicates that it can easily be turned into formative when the educator reassesses the weak knowledge (Wiesnerová, 2012).

Furthermore, Brookhart (2013) states, "If formative assessment information says students' work is close to the learning target, those students obviously don't need as much practice and are ready to demonstrate achievement on a summative assessment" (p. 5). Interestingly, when the teachers are aware of the purpose of the assessment, it is easier to achieve effective results because educators can make decisions which allow students to favor their success and support the weaker ones, and this is because the results of assessment demonstrated it. Poor assessment hardly ever indicates the real attainment of learners. Even when the assessment seems irrelevant, it contributes deeply to enrich the students' learning.

In addition, Berry (2008) states that the objective of assessment is improving students' learning based on "multiple sources of evidence" (p. 17), such as projects students have finished, assignments they have turned in, and tests administered at the end of the learning process following opportunities to accomplish learning outcomes. For this reason, the author advises to use multidimensional methods to assess students' performance. For instance, the use of summative strategies to determine students' quality of learning by the end of the class term. Likewise, teachers must use formative assessment methods to identify learning problems and monitor progress. Therefore, the use of formative and summative assessment methods helps to promote greater learning and regular feedback as well.

On the other hand, Mohan (2016) adds that formative and summative assessments are different in their ability to provide significant feedback to achieve learning, especially how the students are treated at the time of assigning a grade. Likewise, they differ in the sense that summative is the last part of the process, but formative has enough time to make adjustments. Thus, it is clear that both types of assessment give feedback; summative is more limited to reassess which does not happen with formative because it is directed to the students' performance and to give more opportunities to demonstrate the students' achievement. To sum up, both of them give important information to the teacher but with their own characteristics.

### **2.5.3. Methods of assessment.**

The development of speaking requires detailed analysis of its features which is got through assessment practices and use of methods that support the achievement of skill. Hafler (2011) indicates, "There is a variety of preferred methods used in different countries and by different organizations within the same country. Among them are reflection, portfolio, peer evaluation, self-assessment, observation, supervision, 360-degree feedback, and critical incident techniques" (107). The methods aforementioned are focused on assessing the students' performance rather than the groups and it is what formative assessment pursues. In the formative assessment process,

students learning is monitored to provide ongoing feedback to adjust learning to improve students' achievement.

Wright (2005) adds, "You should always use a variety of verification methods" (p. 46). This means that assessment methods have to be functional in order to facilitate and verify the achieved competence. Competency verification also implies to follow the process to measure the outcome and see the final product.

Also, assessment concerns the ability to use language knowledge in various and authentic situations. Assessment methods should be varied and the criteria, according to Efthymiou (2012), "should be based on the predetermined learning objectives avoiding the comparison of learners with each other" (p. 202). Communicative tasks are a good help for the effective assessment of oral skills. Aliakbari and Jamalvandi (2010) say that communicative tasks are pieces of classroom work that involve learners in a "comprehending, manipulating, producing, or interacting in the target language which their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form" (p. 19). Thus, the application of more communicative tasks is essential for developing the speaking skill. It is key to involve learners in actual use of language and meaningful interaction, so that they will achieve effective communication in the target language.

#### **2.5.4. Language elements focused on assessment.**

Oral language is the most important way of communication since through this skill people can express experiences, transmit information, make friends and have better jobs. Nevertheless, to achieve a clear and accurate communication is not easy, it requires time, practice and control since speaking skill has to be assessed during the activity process.

The Board of Editors (2011) indicates, "Elements that are important for effective speaking are intelligibility, comprehensibility, and the correct pronunciation, word stress, rhythm and intonation" (p. 28). These elements promote the understanding of what the speakers are saying because while the

audience is listening, the speakers are recognizing words, connecting ideas and applying sounds of the language to fulfil the ability to speak naturally. Aside from that, the Board of Editors adds that comprehension of grammar and use of effective vocabulary is not enough to speak English fluently; moreover, the ability to talk without problems and eloquently with correct pronunciation and intonation support the skill. Hence, learning to speak a language requires a structured process, creating situations with real-life communication practice.

For assessing speaking it is necessary that English language teachers have an awareness of some relevant areas so that, as Goh, Goh and Burns (2012) express, educators can “teach speaking effectively rather than simply do speaking” (p. 2). Being able to speak involves the combination of various skills, knowledge, and processes that result culturally and socially relevant and appropriate. They also propose that the speaking competence implicates the use of linguistic knowledge, core speaking skills, and communication strategies which enable fluent and intelligent speech production (p. 2). Firstly, the linguistic knowledge according to Hinkel (2011) encompasses “structure, meaning, and use” (p. 243). Speakers must be able to produce the language at the segmental and suprasegmental levels of pronunciation. Although grammatical knowledge is vital for speaking any language, syntactical knowledge is also necessary. Lexical knowledge is also indispensable for a speaker to know. Thus, the learner can establish semantic relationships for productive performance. Another important part is discourse knowledge which implies the understanding of the functional purpose of different kinds of talk and how factors influence the various linguistic resources.

Secondly, Hinkel (2011) presents core speaking skills which are central for learners become effective speakers. These four categories of core speaking skills are: pronunciation, speech function, interaction, and discourse. Learners need to be able to put in action such knowledge through the use in different contexts. McKay and Brown (2016) argues that in light of the use of English as an international language, English teachers and learners must consider the importance of being able “to speak the language fluently” (p. 2).



This focuses on the importance of fluency which is the key element during communication. Lastly, the implementation of language in an authentic environment and the use of communicative strategies are vital to achieve effective communication. Likewise, fluency is not enough in the communicative context, without accuracy misunderstanding may occur. That is why language teachers must emphasize both fluency and accuracy to teach students to use a language.

#### **2.5.5. Assessing speaking skill.**

Speaking constitutes one of the most complex skills to assess since the evaluator has to consider the assessment tool and the activity to assess the ability without forgetting the objective of the test. Assessment of oral communication is unique and totally different from the other skills. Teachers do not immediately teach speaking when they teach writing, and they do not assess competence in speaking skills when they assess writing. Likewise, each student manages his or her situation of success depending on the purpose, the topic, the person, time and place. To establish the level of developed competence, it is important to follow and observe the students' performance which is proved through an assessment tool, but it does not mean that it demonstrates the students' levels of speaking (Christ, 2013).

Nevertheless, the assessment of speaking skill is an issue of concern among teachers since this skill plays a substantial role in teaching a foreign language. Thus, educators recognize the importance of assessing their students' communicative competence. Oliver, Haig, and Rochecouste (2005) indicate that teachers need to work from students' needs and this "should be reflected in curriculum documents and support materials" (p. 113). Hence, educators need to be aware of the importance of developing oral language and provide more meaningful activities for their students. This provides the opportunity for teachers to work in their classroom practice those oral language skills that they observe as important for successful communication.

In addition, the authors also say that current assessment of speaking skill generally offers an "overall summative score" (p. 16), which shows

students' general level of competence. The authors also express that formative assessment and summative evaluations without feedback do not inform what students need to improve in order to increase their level of skill performance.

Subsequently, speaking test tasks should focus on procedures based on constructing validity to ensure accurate, correct measurement of what the evaluator wants to measure. This is an important consideration in creating good tests. Validity gives the assessment the sense of being effective, and well-grounded. Furthermore, to fulfil the validity, it is relevant that learners get on a meaningful context where they perform in interviews and conversations with authenticity (Ekbatani, 2010). Therefore, speaking assessment goes beyond applying a simple speaking activity, it involves credible procedures which ensure the validity and authenticity of tests.

The assessment of speaking skill in the classroom, as it is stated by Pan and Pan (2011), is measured in two scoring scales which are holistic and analytic scoring scales. In the case of holistic scale, the whole is better than the sum of its fragments. Besides, the scoring of this scale is fast and accurate. Concerning the analytic scales, Omaggio (1986) mentioned that "these scales provide specific aspects in each component of communicative competence – fluency, pronunciation, or intended features to be covered in speaking assessment" (as cited in Astorga-Cabezas, 2015, p. 38). This kind of scale is very precise for assessing learners' language proficiency because it focuses on essential characteristics of the speaking skill. Definitely, this type of scale is more accurate and convenient because it centers on important language characteristics for oral improvement.

#### **2.5.6. Performance-based assessment.**

Performance-based assessment emerges when the most traditional tests or assessments showed their limitations and did not measure students' problem solving, reasoning, and critical thinking skills which made it difficult to establish the progress of students' skills. However, at the moment that performance-based assessment appeared, it becomes a valid alternative to

involve the students in the real and practice world of performance tasks to fulfil authentic assessment. Likewise, this method of assessment is focused on recognizing the multiple intelligences since it includes techniques such as portfolios, exhibitions, performances, investigations, experiments, and so forth to reach a final product that demonstrates the developed competence (Luongo-Orlando, 2003).

Performance-based assessment is a collection of performance tasks and Stecher (2010) claims,

A performance task is a structured situation in which stimulus materials and a request for information or action are presented to an individual, who generates a response that can be rated for quality using explicit standards. The standards may apply to the final product or to the process of creating it. A performance assessment is a collection of performance tasks. (p. 3)

This definition focuses on main components which occur in a structured situation. The tasks are limited to time and access to materials. Likewise, the standardized structure repeats the forms so that the assessment can be applied to other people and compare their performances. Moreover, as Scherrer (2013) argues the use of performance-based assessment as an evaluation method might support “the development of higher thinking skills by creating internally motivated learners with a perceived competence of specified, important and informational skills” (p. 11). In fact, performance-based assessment is valid and reliable in creation and interpretation, therefore, it is necessary to increase the insight of acquiring competence in a convenient manner.

Apart from that, Lund and Kirk (2010) state, “Performance-based assessments can enhance student learning when teachers systematically measure student ability to apply the skills, knowledge, and dispositions that they are taught in class” (p. 1). Undoubtedly, that is true because the educators have the opportunity to work and assess the activity in parts and they do not have to be worried of assessing the whole. Additionally, with this

method the teacher is able to judge students' progress based on what they did so as to reach the goal.

Similarly, these authors add that performance-based assessment can be applied with formative and summative assessments which makes it easier for the educators to concentrate on students learning, their interests and needs. This is because teachers give the space to learners to demonstrate what they have learned by means of games or other activities that allow teachers to assess meaningfully.

Assessment based on performance is a method used to evaluate how students master the material presented by teachers in class. According to Espinosa (2015), educators who practice this method consider that students "demonstrate their real learning and understanding by performing tasks or creating products" (p. 2442). This happens because this kind of assessment entails students use high-order thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, problem solving, and critical thinking. Some educators are in favor of using performance-based assessment because they take into consideration meaningful and engaging real-world activities and combine language abilities with knowledge and skills of different context as well. Herrera, Murry, and Cabral (2013) cited by Espinosa (2015) indicate that through performance-based assessment, students' understanding and reasoning are tested to determine how well they relate what they know (p. 2442). Thus, this evaluation instrument delivers deep information about students' knowledge capacity. Unlike traditional methods performance-based assessment focuses on feedback as a very important tool to improve student learning and teacher instruction.

The author also mentions benefits of performance-based assessment that cannot be assessed by other means, and they are:

- Involve students in their own learning process and encourage confidence and motivation for learning.
- Compare students work using a set of criteria.

- Promote learning rather than assigning only grades.
- Permit students to create their own responses instead of choosing them from a list of options.
- Offer teachers the chance to reflect on their own strengths and weaknesses.
- Reinforce instruction defining what is appropriate for the curriculum and identify strategies for developing collaborative work.

Nevertheless, everything about performance-based assessments is not viewed with rose-colored glasses, and Gallavan (2008) points out “Understanding performance-based assessment is critical” (p. 6). Per se, assessment is complicated because it requires time to elaborate and analyze the tasks and documents to support the assessment. Therefore, it is worth clarifying that performance-based assessment does not look for making the educators’ work complicated. On the contrary, it seeks to be easy for them. Additionally, the author states that teachers should check what students understand, but it goes beyond a test. Teachers have to pay attention to the activities developed in the classroom and to assess before, during and after the learning process so that the students demonstrate their outcomes. Apart from that, teachers should consider what students need to know, how learners show what they know, what learners do and when, where the assessments and feedback go in the curriculum.

## **2.6. Evaluation Tools**

### **2.6.1. Definition.**

The United Nations Development Programme (2002) cited by Mertens (2014) provides the following definition that is relevant in evaluation:

Evaluation is defined as selective exercise that attempts to systematically and objectively assess progress towards and the achievement of an outcome. Evaluation is not a one time-event, but an exercise involving assessment of different scope and depth carried out at several points in time in response to evolving needs for evaluative knowledge and learning during the effort to achieve an outcome. (p. 49)

Evaluation should be constant so as to reach what teachers have proposed with their students. Therefore, to solve a problem is pivotal that teachers make decisions based on the results since evaluation without decisions does not have sense. Patton (2008) asserts evaluators not only must offer final judgments about the overall effectiveness of programs but also “gather process data and provide feedback to help solve problems along the way” (p. 17). Thus, evaluations can be used to reduce uncertainty about decisions that should be made to prove effectiveness so that necessary modifications could improve performance.

Furthermore, evaluation is a term broadly used in the educational process. Mohan (2016) points out, “Evaluation is the set of procedures used to determine whether the student meets a predetermined criterion. This uses assessment (measurement as well as non-measurement) techniques to determine whether the student qualifies or not” (p. 25). Evidently, this instrument is foremost in the teaching-learning process because it makes it easier for the teachers to determine the level of knowledge that students have acquired; to realize the success obtained at the end of the academic year or course. Notwithstanding, the evaluation has its support in the assessment which trains and assesses the students during the process to empower students’ progress.

Likewise, Mohan (2016) asserts that evaluation needs of data gathering to provide information about students’ outcomes, make suggestions and make decisions based on results obtained in the evaluation. Hence, to have a successful evaluation, the evaluators need to examine the results obtained to determine objective and useful information from learners.

Evaluation tools are means used for rating learners’ perceptions of instruction utilizing scales for developing reliable rating instruments for teachers. Berk (2013) cited by Baker (2014) notes that there is more experience in higher education with students’ ratings that with all the other measures of teaching (p. 14). Besides, students’ evaluation is a guide for measuring teaching efficacy and focus on students’ educational development.

Moreover, Baker (2014) mentions that the use of students' assessment should be "primarily for the benefit of the instructor for formative reflection" (p. 18). It involves the active involvement of educators in the learning process and the time taken for reflection. Teachers who use assessment and techniques are better prepared to meet diverse students' needs so it promotes effective and constructive cultures of evaluation including higher levels of student achievement.

### **2.6.2. Types of evaluation tools.**

Using evaluation tools can result complex mainly because in the classroom educators manage students with different interests. Aside from that, it results hard to find the appropriate instruments for assessing students learning. However, educational practice is demanding results since it is not enough to give a class and develop some activities; on the contrary, it requires the implementation of practices directed to learning. Hence, evaluation becomes foremost in the monitoring of learning students' progress. Although evaluation by itself does not perform, it needs tools that support its existence which has to be real and with a purpose. It means that it should be reliable, verified, and valid and addressed towards specific evaluation which can be diagnostic, formative or summative.

Papay (2012) indicates that evaluation tool is "a summative assessment that must provide a high-quality measure of how well teachers contribute to students learning" (p. 128). Thus, evaluation is essentially a measurement tool that helps improve learning. The author also explains that it is important that a good measurement instrument distinguishes reliability and validity. Hence, reliability is related to classroom observations. Considering that reliability takes substantial investment, evaluators must use different standards. Kane, Taylor, Tyler, and Wooten (2011) state that teachers' effectiveness measures students' achievement growth. On the other hand, Papay (2012) says that validity is one of the most imperative criteria, but it is also the most difficult to assess. Moreover, Fenstermacher and Richardson (2005) express that successful teaching means "that the learner actually acquires, to some reasonable and acceptable level of proficiency, what the teacher is engaged

in teaching” (p. 10). Thus, the improvement of teaching is a key element in improving student learning. Therefore, a good teaching involves using practices that are developmentally appropriate and pedagogically sound, so that this produces results.

Also, Covacevich (2014) states that educators have to establish the purpose of evaluation and know the level of knowledge of the students and their perspectives about the language they are learning to apply the evaluation tool. Nevertheless, it is not enough as teachers have to see if the tool is suitable, useful and measurable for learners, and if the content is adapted to the evaluation objectives. Additionally, teachers should consider costs, time of application, content, level of complexity and the type of tool that will be used to evaluate.

The author aforementioned indicates that among evaluation tools are:

- Parametric and non-parametric instruments which are designed in the first case to compare the results and the second to diagnose the students' knowledge.
- Norm-referenced instrument is used to compare the score obtained by an individual with the score obtained by the group.
- Criterion-referenced instrument gives meaning to the result which is compared with pre-determinate learning standard and provides quantitative data. For example: Pass or fail an exam.
- Open-ended or closed-ended response instruments. In the first one, the response must be created, such as essays, reports, oral examinations; the second one is related with multiple-choice questions.

On the other hand, although Gallavan (2008) does not use the term evaluation but assessment, she indicates that educators can collect data in a formal and informal way. To gather data in a formal way, students are prepared to complete the information required by means of checklist or a rubric; but in an informal way, students are assessed by means of observations, conversations, and interactions which facilitate the



understanding of learners in different situations. Interestingly, instruments of evaluation are a great contribution to develop learning experiences in the students.

## **2.7. Rubrics**

### **2.7.1. Definition.**

In the field of education, Burke K. (2011), points out the word rubric as a scoring guide that gives constructive feedback to learners by making them realize the characteristics of quality work. It implies that a rubric is a guide that describes and criticizes the characteristics of a work outlined in standards. Rubrics indicate behavior categories which are used to assess performance. Reco (2011) cited by Dandis (2014) also defines a rubric as a scoring matrix to “provide students with criteria to help them evaluate their own work” (p. 96). A rubric gives information to students about the language skills they must develop and contains a set of standards where it is indicated what to do to reach those skills. Experts say that a good rubric guides student work starting by revision and improvement until the excellence and informs self- and peer assessment as well. Furthermore, Choudhury (2012) mentions that a rubric has three essential features that are: “evaluation criteria, quality definitions and a scoring strategy” (p. 13). Thus, evaluation standards serve to differentiate the acceptable from unacceptable responses, while quality definitions present parameters to evaluate subjective answers. Finally, the scoring strategy refers to the aggregative or criterion based on a rubric.

Similarly, a rubric is a tool that sets out detailed expectation for scoring a task. Stevens and Levi (2013) state that rubrics separate a task and give specific description to every part about what acceptable or unacceptable is each part of the performance levels. Rubrics are generally used to grade different kinds of assignments such as discussion participation, oral presentations, research papers and more. Rubrics can become an effective part of the teaching process because they offer many benefits for classroom assessment, mainly for grading. Rubrics are constituted of basic parts and their parameters are set out by the professor. The basic format of a rubric

stays the same although the process in making it varies greatly. The simple rubric format includes a description, a scale of some sort or levels of achievement, the breakdown of the skills, and descriptions of what constitutes each level of performance, and all this is set out on a grid. The purpose of the rubric is to assess what students do during the process.

Moreover, the authors say that using rubrics help to save time, offer essential feedback, and they are an effective part in the teaching and learning process since they clarify students' performance and the grade of understanding of the target theme. However, in some education centers, rubrics are not being used because teachers are unaware of them; thus, teachers prefer to teach as they were taught because they do not have experience using any rubric. The reasons to use rubrics are quite important, rubrics are not only a well-organized resource, but also, they meet basic principles of equity and fairness.

### **2.7.2. Types of rubrics.**

Rubrics, as it is stated by Brookhart (2013), offer essential feedback and play a main role in the assessment. They are a useful tool to clarify goals, improve teaching learning process and identify criteria for the evaluation of students. There are two types of rubrics: holistic and analytic rubrics which will be analyzed in detail in this research.

#### **2.7.2.1. *Holistic rubric.***

For assessing multiple components per element is used the holistic rubric. The design of a holistic rubric, according to Selke (2013), "requires that the performance or product be broken down into individual components" (p. 24). Thus, all criteria included in the evaluation is considered together in a single scale. A holistic rubric is characterized because the components are grouped, and they allow similar components to be put together in one strand instead of scoring each element in its own strand. Nevertheless, the main threat in the design of holistic rubrics is to address the components at each level despite those components are integrated into criterion groups and not presented as detailed criteria. Similarly, the challenge of the elaboration of

these rubrics is being convinced that all components are contemplated at every level. The way to be certain that threads are overcome is to change the holistic rubric to an analytic one. Supporters of holistic rubrics claim that the use of this rubric brings flexibility, and this helps to give an overall score based on most of the evidence (Selke, 2013).

Furthermore, the author recommends that a holistic rubric is a good option when the performances of the students are considered instantaneously as a base for giving a score. Hence, the holistic rubric is contemplated for evaluating in the formative process and for the assessment of final performances. For example, holistic rubrics assess the overall performance of students and give an overall picture of speaking in the classroom. So, the rubrics strength is to inform the progress and the assessment of students' outcomes.

Holistic scoring criteria also comprises general guidelines that outlines a good performance at each score point. As Becker (2011) emphasizes, the holistic rubric produces a score that “does not deliver explicit evidence of where and how much supplementary instruction is needed” (p.116). In other words, this rubric does not include complete criteria of evaluation. It allows an overall score to be given based on a majority of evidence. Holistic rubrics are more appropriate to assess written performance in large-scale settings.

Additionally, Balch, Blanck, and Balch (2016) add, “A Holistic Rubric is the most general kind and lists three to five levels of performance, along with a broad description (holistic) of the characteristics that define each level” (21). Thereby, this type of rubric is not focused on specific details of learning or specific problem solving; on the contrary, the descriptions of the holistic rubric is general. To clear up its use, some advantages and disadvantages are presented:

*Advantages:*

- The creation of a holistic rubric takes not much time than others and grading is faster.

- The educator can give a holistic score by just looking over the assignment.
- This kind of rubrics deliver an overview of students' accomplishment.

*Disadvantage:*

- Holistic rubrics offer detailed information which does not give students specific feedback.

**2.7.2.2. Analytic rubrics.**

Analytic rubrics according to Brookhart (2013) “describe the work on each criterion separately” (p. 6). These types of rubrics are better for giving instruction and for delivering formative assessment because they emphasize the work in every criterion. Thus, pupils can see what part of their work needs to be improved. Moreover, focusing on the criteria will be good for teachers to plan summative assessment because it will help to resolve how to follow up the units or how to teach next time. In addition, these types of rubrics also present distinct ratings for every dimension and offer several grades on the performance.

*Advantages and Disadvantages of Analytic Rubrics*

Becker (2011) comments that one of the greatest advantages is that “the reliability of scoring is typically improved when raters use analytic rubrics” (p. 115). Thus, analytic scoring offers the greatest chance for reliability. Besides, Brookhart (2013) notes that analytic rubrics are characterized for specifying various dimensions of performance. These types of rubrics also present distinct ratings for every dimension and offer several grades on the performance. In addition, he also presents some advantages and disadvantages of analytic rubrics which are:

*Advantages of Analytic Rubrics*

- Give a clear diagnostic about students' strengths and weaknesses which provide suitable feedback about students' performance.
- Offer specific elements to determine students' performances.
- Present scorers as a variety of information to grade the same piece of work.

- Emphasize the same criteria by the provision of extra elements for many grade levels.

#### *Disadvantages of Analytic Rubrics*

- Developing analytic rubrics takes more time than other different types of rubrics
- Reaching inter-rater reliability is more difficult because it requires to spend long time to communicate information about what to improve.

Balch, Blanck, and Balch (2016) recommend analytic rubrics because they allow the scorer to “itemize and define exactly what aspects are strong, and which ones need improvement” (p. 21). One important characteristic that makes the analytic rubrics different from others is that they contain criteria which later will be analyzed for setting the level of proficiency. Besides, the elaboration of analytic rubrics implies that teachers at the same or similar levels work together to create a rubric because they all have in common their students’ performance from the specific to general behavior.

Hibbard and Wagner (2013) indicate that teachers can use “the analytic rubric to identify the strengths and needs of students and then plan to adjust and differentiate instruction to improve student performance” (p. 17). This definition points out that the use of analytic rubrics serves to find out what students need to improve and design new ways to promote the instruction students deserve.

Additionally, the use of analytic rubrics during the whole course or the rest of the levels can allow the teaching staff to realize the progress over the time in students’ performance. This process is a contribution for setting classroom or the center improvement objectives. Even though at the A1 level generally the application of the whole analytic rubric is not used directly, teachers might prepare some changes and adapt the descriptions to students’ behavior until they reach their goals.

## **2.8. Analytic Rubrics in the Assessment of Speaking Skill**

Conducting speaking test in the classroom is one of the challenges that teachers usually face. As it is shown by Latifa, Rahman, Hamra, and Jabu (2015) “the excessive use of time” (p. 166) of scoring the students’ test result is one of the difficulties in testing speaking implementation. This is a problem that causes frustration during the conduction of speaking tests in the classroom. Researchers explain that this problem commonly occurs when it is used the instrument of a rating rubric which can be holistic or analytic. Notwithstanding, the assessment of the language is indispensable to gain authentic communication. Thus, teachers should motivate learners to see the rubrics as an instrument to improve their speaking weaknesses rather than as an attack instrument. Currently, language assessment requires an effective rubric that provides specific information of learners’ language growth. In fact, the rubric development should focus on the creation of a practical scoring mechanism.

Although holistic and analytic rubrics support the assessment, the system of scoring of the analytic rubric is more detailed since it consists of four speaking sections which are content, accuracy, comprehension, and fluency, but it depends on the purpose of the assessment. Tuan (2012) states that “when using analytic scoring schemes, it is necessary to treat each criterion or part as separate to avoid bias towards the whole product” (p.673). This system of scoring makes the teacher gives a better score for a definite criterion. Moreover, Tuan points out that analytic scoring system has a preference over the holistic system for various reasons. Firstly, it offers valuable diagnostic evidence about students’ speaking skills. In this way, learners can know where their strengths and weaknesses are. Hence, examinees might identify specific elements of speaking that must be developed. These results also help teachers to adapt instruction to students’ needs. Secondly, analytic scoring rubrics are more appropriate for second language learners because although some learners have poor grammatical control, they are good at speaking in terms of content and organization. On this part, analytic scoring scales indicate the progress in the dimensions that students make over a period of time when

the same rubric categories are employed frequently. Besides, it is emphasized that analytic scoring schemes are recommended for inexperienced scorers (Weir, 2005, p.190). This makes that scorers find easier to work with an analytic scale instead of a holistic one. These kinds of rubrics are very powerful because they are used as an instructional methodology that allows student self-evaluation and direct instruction on traits.

On the other hand, Tuan mentions disadvantages of the use of analytic scorings schemes. For example, the main difficulty is that rating the speaking performance takes time because the teacher has to check, consider and score each criterion and then give the final score. Additionally, there are critics of analytic scoring rubrics, as it is stated by Fulcher (2009), when scorers are asked to make several judgments, they actually do one, and this can affect all other judgments. However, the teachers' attitude works a main role in the use of analytic rubrics because they are capable of organizing a schedule which helps to distribute the time appropriately. Besides, they can use the students' failings to provide positive feedback that foster the students to continue practicing.

Finally, Liao and Hsu (2014) also remark that the positive use of the analytic rubric is significant enough because it helps to "increase learning motivation and self-efficacy" (p. 325). Thus, students can show a positive attitude and a strong motivation for learning speaking. The main reason of developing a rubric is based on the tasks of oral communication and the score validity rely on the rating criteria. So, rubrics designers should keep in mind all the criteria of the rating tasks because they are based on institutional requirement. The assessment of students' speaking performance must be more practical, for this reason, the analytic rubric is convenient. This analytic rubric also allows to analyze elementary factors of the student's performance and it presents simple stages of scoring students' performance and it is more informative as well. Indisputably, the analytic rubrics present students with more evidence about their ability, and the educators are benefited with the analytic rubric because it orients them to work over the students' failings.

## 2.9. Effective Speaking Practice Standards

Attaining effective speaking is not as easy as the other skills. Learners need to be actively immersed in practice in spite of their differences, but it does not guarantee the success so that teachers apart from focusing on methods and strategies, they should consider other benchmarks to strengthen the skill. Herrera and Murry (2011) argue,

It is unrealistic to think that teacher efforts, which constitute effective practice for a given population at a given point in time, will be equally effective in situations in which one or both of these variables differ. A more practical way to ensure that students are receiving quality education is to incorporate the three benchmarks of effective practice: self-assessment, critical reflection, and the refinement of practice.  
(p. 366)

The authors are being realistic since to believe that methods and strategies are enough in the process of learning, it is not true. Educators need other standards which complement the reinforcement of their work, so that they ought to seek other strategies to support the real growth that teachers want to achieve in education. In this case the activities are not enough if educators want to establish strengths and weaknesses of effective speaking practice; on the contrary, the standards aforementioned empower the effective practice of speaking due to students are called to reflect about their strengths and weaknesses through self-assessment and improvement since when learners are in this position, they become aware of the knowledge.

In most countries English language teaching according to Khamkhien (2010) “is a major educational priority” (p.18). It shows the importance that government attribute to the learning of English. Today, the Ecuadorian educational model as stated by Cortijo (2015) cited by Soto (2015) has its foundations on the “critical pedagogy on which the constructivist and cognitive methodological structures predominate” (p. 5). Accordingly, students are expected to receive a productive and meaningful learning. Moreover, teachers have the responsibility, as the author says, “to modify and adapt the curriculum for their specific group of students when they plan for their classes” (p. 5). This shows that teachers can approach the curriculum by choosing learning



objectives based on students' needs and interests to encourage learners to acquire knowledge in a subject area. The idea is that teachers need to improve the teaching of English by promoting communication.

Teaching speaking is one of the goals in educational system, for this reason, it is necessary to create sufficient opportunities for interaction in the language classroom. Furthermore, Khamkhien (2010) mentions that an important part of the language instruction is testing and evaluation. So, to assess how learners improve their speaking skills, both proficiency and achievement test should be focused on the instruction and curriculum. It is crucial for teachers to offer students enough learning facilities and teaching media appropriate to learning context.

However, it is necessary to emphasize that assessment does not have to focus only on self-assessment method, educators can turn to peer-assessment and group assessment to assess students' progress. With regard to self-assessment, learners reflect critically about themselves and in some cases, they suggest grades for their own learning respecting the teacher's final grade, while peer assessment is the process of reflecting critically to suggest grades for learning of their classmates. Notwithstanding, group assessment consists in giving a short comment of classmates within the group. (Roberts, 2006)

Moreover, it is essential, as Kaplan (2016) says, that teachers use assessment instruments to determine if students meet standards that reflect learning expectations (p. 503). It is important to involve students in conversations and provide them with authentic activities. For example, preparing students to speak English regularly in class with partners or in small groups. Likewise, teachers should realize the need to grade students work. Hence, the focus must be on students' practices which can be driven for frequent assessment for preparing students to reach the proficiency level required.

## **2.10. Activities for Assessing Speaking Skill**

Although it is a pity that not all students consider the importance of

speaking activities to develop oral skill, teachers have the goal of fostering students to participate consciously so as to reach the proposed goal (Pachler and Redondo, 2014). In other words, the activities that teachers incorporate in their classes should motivate learners to take part in the interventions without anxiety to make learning dynamic. Taking into consideration aforementioned, some techniques are suggested as a way to assess the skill.

### **Ask questions**

Beebe, Beebe and Ivy (2007) cited by Livingston (2010) list four reasons why we ask questions “1) To obtain additional information; 2) To check how a person feels; 3) To ask for clarification; 4) To verify that you have reached an accurate conclusion about your partner’s intent or feeling” (p. 183). In other words, ask questions let speakers clear up ideas, understand messages and discuss an issue so as to establish conclusions and give final responses.

### **Role play**

According to Nickerson (2007) cited by Akdeniz (2016) “It is a special kind of case study, in which there is an explicit situation established with students playing specific roles, spontaneously saying and doing what they understand their “character” would do in that situation” (p. 224). This technique encourages students to perform in real situations since they have the opportunity to take roles and create real settings which make students feel comfortable and free to practice what they have learned.

### **Group and pair work**

Johnson and Johnson (1987) cited by Shrum and Glisan (2015) argue, “The benefits of group and pair work include higher retention and achievement, development of interpersonal skills and responsibility, and heightened self-esteem and creativity” (p. 130). Indeed, both techniques foster cooperative learning activity and interaction among participants. With these activities teachers give the opportunity to practice, encourage learners’ independence and develop meaningful learning.

### **Conversation**

English conversation is an important part of language learning.

Nowadays, everybody needs this foreign language to communicate. Conversations can take place in natural environments which encourage people's activity, interaction and persuasion. Besides, in conversations, language is learned in context. That undoubtedly makes teaching conversational skills require much work and energy in relation with teaching grammar and writing skills. (Reed, 2010)

## **Interviews**

Although interview has been seen as a list of prepared questions and a technique which is learned through experience, in practice, interview has resulted useful. Hess (2010) has considered this idea, "Many accomplished investigators define an interview as a conversation with a purpose" (p. 2). Definitely, this definition is asserted considering that when learner's interview someone is because they need some information, and it can be to collect information, to coordinate a meeting, respond questions, share experiences, and so on. Therefore, it results excellent to use interviews in the class since each class has a purpose to reach.

### **2.11. Importance of Assessing Speaking**

Developing speaking for communication is the main objective in EFL classrooms. Goh, Goh and Burns (2012) add, "The contribution speaking makes to academic learning is less frequently highlighted" (p. 21). Speaking can be a language of instruction across the curriculum in some environments, but it is an essential tool for reaching academic progress in the foreign language. Recent research concludes that EFL needs to develop speech to be able to foster thinking skills so that learners become involved critically with their social and physical world. Using communicative activities is a positive idea for learners to acquire oral skills in a natural mode. Speaking is the productive skill that takes place in front of others, mostly during classroom assessment. Nevertheless, this practice must not constraint learners because they are expected to respond appropriately. On the contrary, the authors state that teachers must plan learning tasks to practice orally skills which contribute to overall language development as well.

Today, oral skills, according to Tsagari (2016), are “very recognized as desirable and attainable objectives” (p. 132). Speaking is considered the most prized language skill. Being able to speak a second language infers the ability to comprehend it. Assessing speaking involves the application of tasks to demonstrate students’ level comprehension. Furthermore, Pawlak and Waniek-Klimczak (2014) suggest that students should also “experiment with different assessment instruments and choose aspects of the target language performance they want to focus on at any time” (p. 264). It is necessary to provide systematic training and design instruments that activate students’ involvement for developing accuracy in the target language.

Assessment is crucial for improving learners’ English speaking skills through instruction. Being able to speak fluently and communicate accurately in the foreign language places people in an important position in society. But the existing difficulty in assessing speaking makes English teachers face challenges in university classroom contexts. Munby (2004), as cited in Matsugu (2013), “found difficulty in conducting reliable assessment and students’ low speaking ability and motivation caused problems in teaching the skill” (p. 5). It emphasizes the essential that is supporting learners during schooling. Appropriate assessment enhances the learning experience by permitting students to meet their language needs.

Assessment should be joined into a communicative curriculum, so it can stimulate learners to receive timely feedback. Besides, Matsugu also mentions that students’ proficiency level problems presented at the beginning of an academic year influences throughout the year. For this reason, it is better to lessen those problems by restructuring the language speaking assessment. A solution is the application of a good rubric that makes an efficient assessment possible. As speaking is normally hard to assess, including administration, scoring, and rater training, it is necessary to adopt a fair form of scoring to facilitate the assessment of speaking.

## **2.12. Analytic Rubric as an Instrument to Assess the Speaking Process**

As it is stated by MTD Training (2010) oral communication involves speech, presentation, discussion, and interpersonal communication aspects. This implies the ability learners develop to participate in different communication forms. For oral performance assessment, Pineda (2014) says that “it is necessary to consider some specific aspects when assessing this skill, for instance, the context in which the assessment takes place, the students’ ages, their cognitive and linguistic levels, the characteristics and appropriateness of the assessment task” (p. 187). This focuses on the characteristics that teachers need to have in mind when planning its application. This author also illustrates a basic thing that should be considered by foreign learners, i.e. foreign speakers are not able to produce rich vocabulary, or a good structured syntax.

In fact, learners have language problems regarding their social status. Above and beyond, Pineda recognizes how imperative it is to plan assessment following the next steps: recognizing the purpose, preparing the assessment, elaborating the rubric, setting the standards, encouraging students in self-and peer assessment, choosing assessment tasks, and keeping record of the information. Some authors propose oral assessment tasks such as oral interviews, role plays, debates, and so on. They all have different language functions and are cognitively demanding. Nevertheless, assessment is time consuming and teachers complain doing it because it means more responsibility. Local investigation demonstrates the lack of clear assessment criteria and this involves the quality of education. Therefore, the rubric is a suggested instrument that may contribute for assessing more authentic activities and for attaining objectives. Similarly, the use of the analytic rubric depends on the purpose of the evaluation.

Besides, for the assessment of the speaking skill Kim (2011) states that it is important to achieve consistency (p. 5). He emphasizes the appropriate use of scoring criteria of the rubric. The author also expresses that although achieving consistency takes long time, instructors must apply their knowledge and strategies for rating performance. Hence, the rating performance will be

sustained with chances to monitor students work and provide feedback on time. Therefore, analytic criteria instruments are a good option to score speaking performance because it lets the grading process be consistent.

According to Spence (2010), analytic rubrics “divide and weight textual constituents” (p. 338). This focuses on each constituent which has a scoring scale with descriptive statements, and it is extended according to their descriptors. The analytic rubric can measure speaking traits which are carefully chosen by teachers regarding students’ levels and needs. Some of the traits to be considered are: Grammar and vocabulary, pronunciation, and interactive communication. The score for each of the trait is ranked from *needs work to excellent*. The selection of an analytic rubric is for obtaining detailed information about students’ performance. The assessment of English speaking should aim to improve students’ communication. As Spence also mentions, students’ language background and personal experiences should be considered useful sources for credible assessment. A good way to do it is through interaction and observation in the classroom. Thus, teachers may access rich information and develop credible assessment that responds to students’ needs. Additionally, Spence (2010) suggests some steps for using in assessment practices:

- 1) Analyze the rubric
- 2) Examine the sociocultural and classroom context
- 3) Be attentive to various manners of expression
- 4) Use assessment information in speaking activities
- 5) Assess English learners properly.

(Spence 2010)

### **2.13. Sources of Feedback**

Feedback fulfils a pivotal role in the process of attaining the assessment for learning and to improve the learners’ progress; apart from that, it provides corrections to improve the work. Hattie and Timperley (2007) state that an effective feedback must be “clear, purposeful, meaningful, and compatible with students’ prior knowledge” (p. 104). Undoubtedly, to acquire new information

and get the effectiveness of the knowledge, the learners need to be involved in the process of feedback. As long as the feedback has been given based on students' needs, the information can be significant. Feedback cannot be superficial, it has to be based on the constant learners' performance and assessment, overall in the latter because the assessment results will allow to adapt other tasks to support the new knowledge and reach the goals.

On the other hand, Askew (2000) asserts "Positive feedback refers to judgement implying satisfaction with the learner's performance and negative feedback implies criticism and the need for changes" (p. 7). Definitively, both points are true because when educators provide motivating words to learners, they feel more comfortable and with the desire of learning from mistakes; apart from that, they increase their self-esteem. But when they receive negative judgement about what they say, it could cause low confidence and lack of self-esteem which can affect students' outcomes. Therefore, educators need to be assertive when they are developing feedback with their students in order to keep fostering their learners in spite of mistakes. Notwithstanding, Brophy (1981) cited by Askew (2000) indicates, "Giving praise in a general or indiscriminate way may be unhelpful" (p. 7). It may be because the students could misunderstand the main idea of what teachers are trying to say, and they could spoil them to listen to compliments when sometimes it is good that they listen to the true. That is why teachers should be assertive and look for strategies to assess their learners. The strategies may include compare and contrast answers, competitions and games which may conclude with individual assessment based on an instrument to find the failings. So that authentic feedback depends on educators because they are called to assess and generate the best strategies to develop it.

While, Hattie and Timperley (2007) cited by Brookhart (2017) adds, "Feedback about the task includes information about errors - whether something is correct or incorrect" (p. 24). Thereby, there are not sources of feedback if there is not any previous evidence of activities or test results to analyze. Consequently, feedback is a powerful process to analyze the results obtained from the activities done which looks for revealing strengths and

weaknesses found in the activities in order to improve them. Likewise, feedback let learners clarify ideas, have more opportunities to broaden their knowledge, and make learning more significant.

In addition, Martin and Alvarez Valdivia (2017) present three types of feedback which are: teacher feedback, peer feedback, and self-feedback (p. 5). The teacher feedback as Gielen, Tops, Dochy, Onhema, and Smeets (2010) cited by Martin and Alvarez Valdivia (2017) say it is more complicated than peer feedback, but it is considered more reliable as well. Teachers are experts in judgment and offer solutions in different ways. While, as it is stated by Kavaliauskiene and Anusiene (2012), peer-feedback examine students' attitudes and find out that peer-feedback works effectively in a supportive atmosphere. Besides, during students' speaking activities, they must not be interrupted to avoid weakening them. Similarly, students that are assessed usually feel pressure if their interlocutor have higher knowledge. On the other hand, self-feedback is seen as the more convenient option to assess foreign language learners, but likewise, it implies difficulty for accurate interpretations, it still can be used for evaluating language learning. Consequently, even when feedback seems simple, in practice it requires authenticity and reliability to work in order to get expected results.



## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodological Framework**

This chapter describes the methodology applied to get valuable information to answer the research questions which are focused on assessment tools used to evaluate speaking skill and how the implementation of a guide of analytic rubrics can benefit the process of speaking skill assessment in A1 Level students at Language Center at Universidad Técnica de Machala. Similarly, it is worth indicating that students who attend the Language Center come from five faculties: Social Sciences, Chemical Sciences, Civil Engineering, Agricultural Sciences and Business Sciences which count with a total of forty-eight (48) academic programs to train students in different fields of knowledge including English language, and who have to take English classes as a requirement to graduate from their academic programs.

It is worth indicating that the Language Center offers eight modules of 90 hours each one. The students of five faculties have to study two modules of English, except the students of the Nursing academic program placed in the Chemical faculty who have to do four modules as a graduation requirement. This program seeks that learners achieve the use of English. Regarding the First module or A1 level, the institution has 15 courses, and the objective is that the students at the end of this level are able to understand and use simple phrases and expressions of common use to satisfy immediate needs, besides, they are able to introduce themselves and others, ask for and give basic information, such as directions, belongings, and talk about people they know in an elemental way.

#### **3.1. Research Design**

The objective of this research is to determine the assessment tools used to assess speaking skill and to develop analytic rubrics that complement the speaking skill assessment process of A1 level students at the Language Center. So as to attain this objective, the researchers have considered the

action research approach as an instrument to solve the educational problem raised in the first module. According to Lippit, (1979) as cited in Coghlan & Brannick (2010):

Action research is defined as a procedure in which the participants of a social system are involved in a data collection process about themselves and they utilize data they have generated to review the facts about themselves in order to take some form of remedial or developmental action. (p. 39)

The action research goes beyond analysis of theory and planning of strategies and techniques to solve the problem; it emphasizes the organization of the procedures in which participants are involved to achieve the implementation of strategies and techniques which collaborate to improve the problem or necessity of educators and development of the competences of learners in order to establish achieving outcomes for them.

Action research through organized inquiry and analysis of the process in the classroom is able to improve teaching practices and students' learning. In this way, action research results adaptable to the object of study who are the students of A1 level at the Language Center at Universidad Técnica de Machala. Likewise, the problem raised about assessment and its existing assessment tools applied by teachers at A1 level will be steadily supported by action research since it is integral and real.

Similarly, Somekh (2005) states, "Action research is conducted by a collaborative partnership of participants and researchers, whose roles and relationships are sufficiently fluid to maximize mutual support and sufficiently differentiated to allow individuals to make appropriate contributions given existing constraints" (p. 7). To this extent, action research is a well-supported approach for researchers who are looking for the responses to the research questions through the research in order to activate the change in spite of limitations. Therefore, action research constitutes a powerful instrument to analyze the cases, to reach the goals, and transform the object of study in the research.

Regarding the methods, Thyer (2010) adds, "This term generally encompasses the study design, sample selection, study procedure, and data collection" (p. 345). In other words, the data should be interpreted, analyzed and contrasted to clarify the research problem. In addition, for this study quantitative and qualitative methods will be used since the research is approached to determine the assessment tools applied by first level teachers to develop the speaking skill in order to contribute to authentic assessment. In addition, to empower the research process qualitative and quantitative methods have been considered to gather and analyze the data which will support the issues found in the study. Thomas (2003) indicates that quantitative and qualitative can be differentiated easily because in the qualitative method the researcher describes the object of study which can be the events or people without assigning a number or amount, its results are more naturalistic, experiential and case study; on the other hand, in the quantitative method the researcher gathers statistical data or amounts. Qualitative method was selected to analyze the teachers' knowledge regarding the oral assessment and its tools gathered from teachers' interview (see Appendix B), and process analysis by means of observation. Similarly, quantitative method was chosen to analyze and calculate the teachers' survey (see Appendix A), and students' survey (see Appendix D). Undoubtedly, both methods were important to collect the data and to support the proposal.

Nonetheless, during the process of gathering data, the researchers should support the authenticity in research avoiding bias. Briggs, Morrison, and Coleman (2012) proclaim the reliability and validity as two ways to increase the quality of the research. Reliability is connected with probability since there is certainty when the researchers repeat the process and the results are similar, and validity judges if the research accurately depicts the issue that they are planning to describe. To conclude, the two methods and their instruments should be supported by these two concepts to make this study trustworthy to the proposal.

### **3.2. Research Setting**

The Language Center is located on 10 de Agosto and Marcel Laniado Street of Machala city. The data were gathered in the period from February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018 to March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2018 (see Appendix F), and the study involved teachers and students from A1 level (First module). However, the Language Center has eight modules that students can study to ensure a tantamount level to B2; likewise, after students have finished the eight modules, the students ask for a tutor to guide their research and finally defend it in front of three members of jury. If the student explains and defends the research successfully, he is ready to get the "Certificate of Proficiency".

On the other hand, it is relevant to indicate that the Language Center has seventeen teachers and 816 students. The courses are programmed in the morning from 8:00 to 11:30 a.m., in the afternoon from 14.00 to 17:30 p.m. and in the evening from 18:30 to 22:00 p.m. with a duration of 90 hours and they are divided into intensive which are from Monday to Friday and extensive which are only on Saturday from 8:00a.m., to 13:00 p.m.

The data collection was applied to the teachers of A1 level at the Language Center at Universidad Tecnica de Machala who are in charge of getting the students to be able to understand, use every day expressions and exchange information in a simple way so as to satisfy immediate needs which are the competences that learners of the A1 level of the CEFR have to show.

### **3.3. Participants**

The participants of this research were six teachers from A1 level from the Language Center at Universidad Técnica de Machala who have from two to more than five years of experience; moreover, five of them have the bachelor's degree in Education with major in English, and one of them has the degree in Civil Engineering. On the other hand, three of the six teachers have two intensive A1 levels from Monday to Friday and one extensive A1 level on Saturday, the other two teachers have two intensive A1 levels from Monday to Friday, and one of them has one intensive from Monday to Friday.

The six teachers from A1 level were interviewed and observed during speaking activities and a sample of two teachers were observed during the final exam.

Additionally, to support the research, 250 students of first course were surveyed with the purpose of determining the degree of students' interest for the speaking skill and how they feel when they are evaluated, as well as 11 teachers from second to eight courses were included in a survey. Finally, the results obtained from the interview, survey and observations were analyzed in order to prove the authenticity of their responses with the practice.

### **3.3.1. The researchers' role.**

The researchers fulfil a main role in the qualitative and quantitative research. According to Coffey and Atkinson (1996), as cited in Lichtman (2010), the qualitative researcher is in charge of analyzing the information obtained in a detailed and verifiable manner so that he understands and makes the information comprehensible. Consequently, qualitative researcher has a well-defined role in the research. Nevertheless, Lichtman (2010) adds that the quantitative researchers' role is limited as it is centered on statistics and it is critical because the researchers are concentrated on interpretation, organization and report of data. On the other hand, the author points out that the qualitative researchers' role is different since they decide what data to collect. Besides, the data are processed through their experience, knowledge, skill and background which make them fairer and without bias.

However, postmodernists, interpretivists, constructivists, and feminists admit that this kind of analysis is less objective and biased, but the author does not share these thoughts because likewise qualitative research is based on data which are described, understood and interpreted to make the research meaningful. Thus, the researchers' responsibility is pivotal in this research inasmuch quantitative and qualitative methods are part of the research. Furthermore, this study is directed to establish a proposal to solve a found issue, hence our role as researchers is to make the data reliable, valid and objective.

### **3.3.2. The participants' role.**

The participants' role is fundamental in the research and if the role is not defined, it can affect the process and results of research. Midgley, Danaher and Baguley (2013) affirm that for researchers and participants can work in harmony respecting their roles, it is essential to establish ethical regulations that strengthen and compromise the participation of participants in the research. Likewise, the Commonwealth of Australia (1999) cited by Midgley, Danaher and Baguley (2013) argue that "The primary purpose of a statement of ethical principles and associated guidelines for research involving humans is the protection of the welfare and the rights of participants in research" (p. 3). Therefore, participants deserve respect and protection of their responses in the research. Furthermore, the research should aim to benefit the participants' work rather than to harm them. In short, participants' role is complex but pivotal because it requires an honest participation to obtain reliable results that support the research.

On the other hand, Sieber (2012) adds, "ethical dilemmas often arise not because roles are unclear but because they are clearly in conflict" (p. 87). Undoubtedly, the data can be cause of conflict since many authorities in their position demand to have access to the information which is not ethical, but this situation brings role conflict. Furthermore, the author states that the role conflict can arise between participants and researchers when what participants or teachers are doing is not what researchers believed. Thus, the researchers have to manage a high degree of professional ethics to maintain the protection of the results in spite of strong demands they are exposed.

Aside from that, the author indicates that to resolve role conflicts, it is important to establish roles that allow to make clear agreements, announce possible role conflicts so as to solve them through collaborative work and talk about ethical research to avoid future problems.

### **3.4. Data Collection: Techniques and Instruments**

There are different techniques and instruments that can be considered for gathering data. However, which ones to use depends on the purpose of

the research. Colton and Covert (2007) point out, “In the design phase of instrument construction, it is important to consider the type of data that might be produced and how those data will be collected” (p. 16). Accordingly, the researchers need to analyze the problem and the objective carefully in order to determine the kind of information required. Once the researchers have established the data, they need to select the instruments and techniques which better fit to gather the data. The instruments and techniques chosen for this research are the following:

#### **3.4.1. Teachers’ survey**

The instrument used for gathering information from the 17 teachers of the Language Center was a survey adapted from the current practice of classroom speaking assessment in secondary schools in South Korea (Lee, 2010). The survey asked information related to experience, speaking assessment, purpose of assessment, methods of assessment, and assessment tools to support the analysis of this research and establish the weaknesses and strengths of assessment.

A survey, according to Fowler (2014), is the main way of collecting information by “asking people questions; their answers constitute the data to be analyzed” (p. 1). A survey asks the respondents to answer questions in an easy and accurate way. Moreover, Kitchenham and Pfleeger (2002) say that it is essential that the survey questions “relate directly to the survey objectives” (p. 2). Thus, the information people give can be used to precisely describe characteristics of the respondents. Furthermore, the authors focus on the importance that a survey must be assessed for validity and reliability. These are entities of instrument development to report with confidence the results obtained from the survey. Burton and Mazerolle (2011) express that reliability refers to the consistency of a test or measurement while validity emphasizes the “degree that an instrument actually measures, what it is intended to measure” (p. 28). Hence, validity is truly essential to allow researchers to draw legitimate conclusions from their findings; and help to ensure if the survey instrument is applicable for the population investigated.

### **3.4.2. Teachers' interview**

The current interview was adapted from Lee (2010). Brinkman and Kvale (2008), as cited in Chenail, (2011), state that an interview is one of the “major ways qualitative researchers generate and collect data for their research studies” (p. 255). Investigators who attempt to discover what is known about a particular situation, tend to structure open-ended questions and suggest the respondents answer in an expansive manner. Qu and Dumay (2011) add that the research interview is “one of the most important qualitative data collection methods, has been widely used in conducting field studies” (p. 1). The interview method is employed often as a pilot study to collect preliminary data before a survey is designed. To this researcher, an interview is considered as a casual everyday conversation. Although it may seem that conducting an interview with little preparation is simple, it could lead to disappointed results.

Consequently, conducting qualitative research interviews requires the use of various skills, such as intensive listening and note taking, but also cautious planning and preparation. Additionally, Doyle (2004), as cited in Qu and Dumay (2011) asserts that during the interview design process, there are decisions that must be considered carefully such as how many interviewees will be required, what type of interview to conduct, and how the interview data will be analyzed. In fact, interviews are a useful way to learn about the world of others, the real understanding can sometimes be elusive. Although the interviewer and the interviewee seem to be speaking the same language, their words can have different cultural meanings. As it is said by LeCompte, Singer, and Weeks (1999) an interview has the purpose to “elicit extensive responses despite clear cultural differences” (p. 38). Therefore, even though communicating becomes difficult when people have different viewpoints, it is necessary to plan well.

The purpose of the interview in this research is to study the teaching approach, assessment methods, language elements of speaking, speaking assessment and assessment tools that the six teachers use in their classes to



support the improvement of speaking skill in the first levels at the Language Center.

### **3.4.3. Students' survey**

This survey was adapted from the Oral communication in the English language classroom by Törnqvist (2008). A survey is a systematic method for gathering information from entities and as it is said by Groves, Fowler, Couper, Lepkowski, Singer, and Tourangeau (2009) a survey has the purpose of “constructing quantitative descriptors of the attributes of the larger population of which the entities are members” (p. 1). Surveys attempt to measure each person in a population and sometimes just a sample. Furthermore, De Vaus (2013) express that surveys are characterized by a “structure or systematic set of data” (p. 3). In this way, a survey will simply collect systematic data that allows systematic comparison between cases on the same characteristics.

The present survey was applied to the 13 classes of first course at the Language Center and aims to investigate learners' opinions related to preferences of skills, oral activities, and attitude towards speaking process to achieve speaking learning. The type of questions included in the survey were close-ended ones which according to Babbie (2013) are questions that ask respondents to “select an answer from among a list provided by the researcher” (p. 519). Hereafter, students from first levels were asked to choose their views from among a given set of responses. Finally, these results will be very useful for the researchers since they will provide information to strengthen this study.

### **3.4.4. Analysis process**

Content analysis according to Elo and Kyngäs (2008) is a technique of analyzing “written, verbal or visual communication messages” (p. 107). This method focuses on describing and quantifying phenomena in a systematic way. Researchers use this method for testing theoretical issues to build up understanding of the data. Although critics consider this is a simplistic method that does not give to detailed statistical analysis, research indicates the contrary. Despite criticism, content analysis can contribute with the

understanding and identification of critical processes (Lederman, 1991, as cited in Elo and Kyngäs, 2008). Besides, content analysis helps to make valid inferences from the data to their context in order to give new insights, description of facts, and practical guide for action.

On the other hand, content analysis allows researchers to test and improve understanding of the data which is supported by the three main phases into inductive and deductive analysis processes that are preparation, organizing and reporting (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008). In spite of pros and cons, we have seen analysis process, according to Fischer & Schneeberger (2013), as a method to “achieve underlying strategic process objectives” (p. 248). Undoubtedly, analysis process constitutes a useful method to support this study which seeks to determine if the teachers are applying or not instruments to assess speaking skill in order to achieve authentic communications. Therefore, to attain the data, six teachers from A1 level will be recorded previous their permission, and additionally, two of the six teachers will be recorded during the speaking exam in order to analyze and report the results.

## Chapter 4

### Data Analysis

This research project was structured to study the speaking assessment process of the A1 level students at the Language Center at Universidad Técnica de Machala. Thus, 17 teachers were surveyed, and six teachers were also interviewed. Likewise, 250 students were observed during speaking activities and exams. The information collected is given to understand how assessment is working in class, similarly, qualitative findings are presented and reported below.

#### 4.1. Teachers' Survey

Seventeen teachers from the Language Center at Universidad Técnica de Machala were surveyed from 8 to 10 minutes after they finished their classes. The results obtained in the survey are analyzed through a qualitative analysis. During the survey the teachers collaborated with useful information related to years of experience, speaking assessment, purpose of the assessment, methods of assessment, and assessment tools.

#### Section 1: Background information

##### Teachers' gender

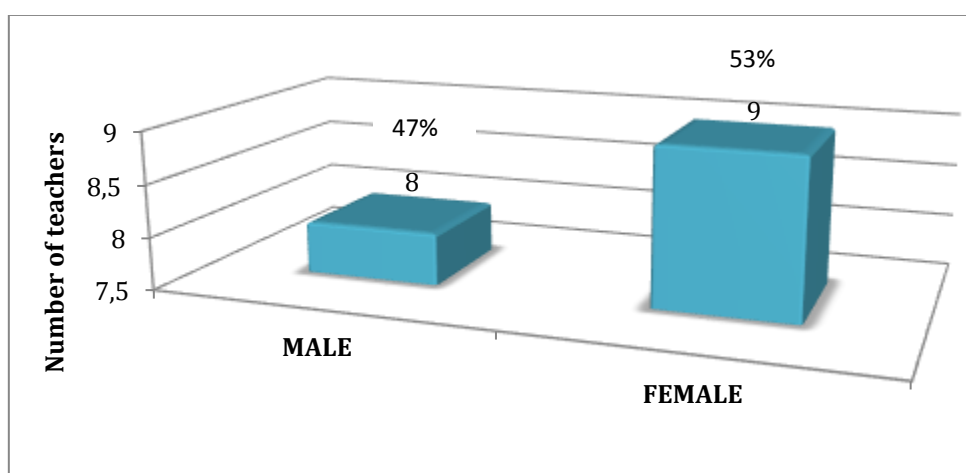


Figure 1. Teachers' gender

Source: The Language Center of the UTMACH. Prepared by authors, 2018.

Figure 1 indicates that 53% of the teachers are women, and 47% are men. It means that there is a reasonable number of women at the Language Center of the Universidad Técnica de Machala (UTMACH)

### Teachers' age

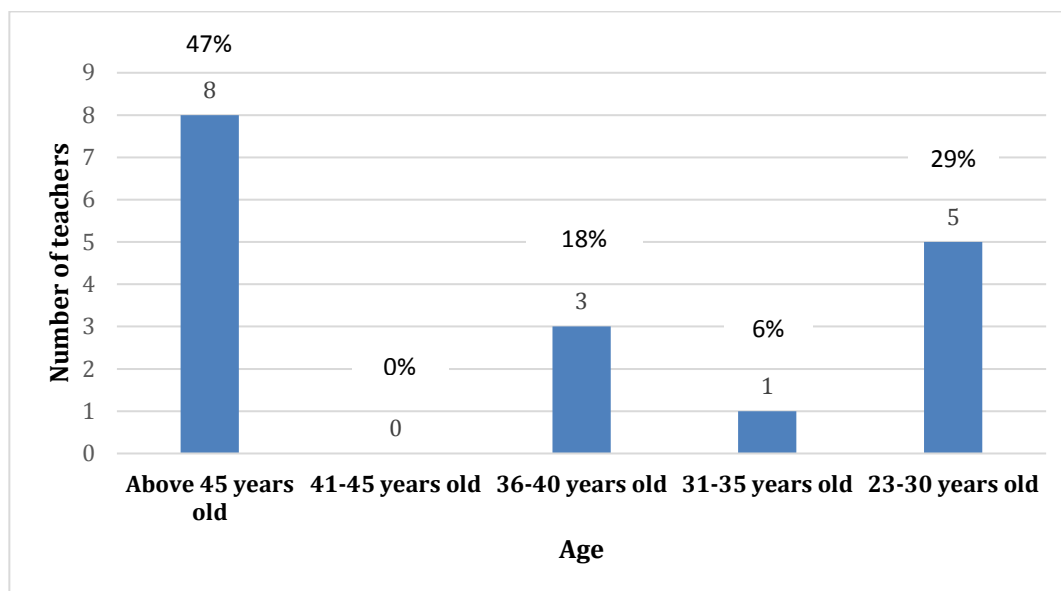
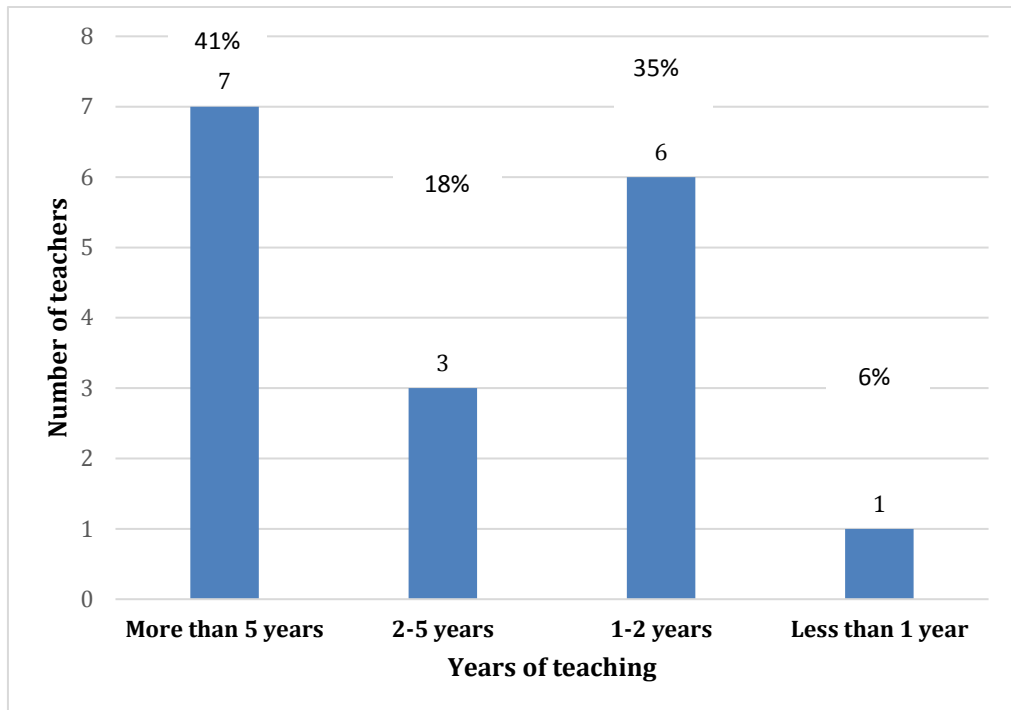


Figure 2. Teachers' age  
Source: The Language Center of the UTMACH. Prepared by authors, 2018.

Figure 2 demonstrates that the majority of teachers, eight, are above 45 years old, that is 47%; this number is followed by five teachers, that is 29%, who are from 23 to 30 years old; and in a smaller number, three teachers, are from 36 to 40 years old, that is 18%; and only one teacher is from 31 to 35 years old, that is 6%; but no one is from 41 to 45 years old.

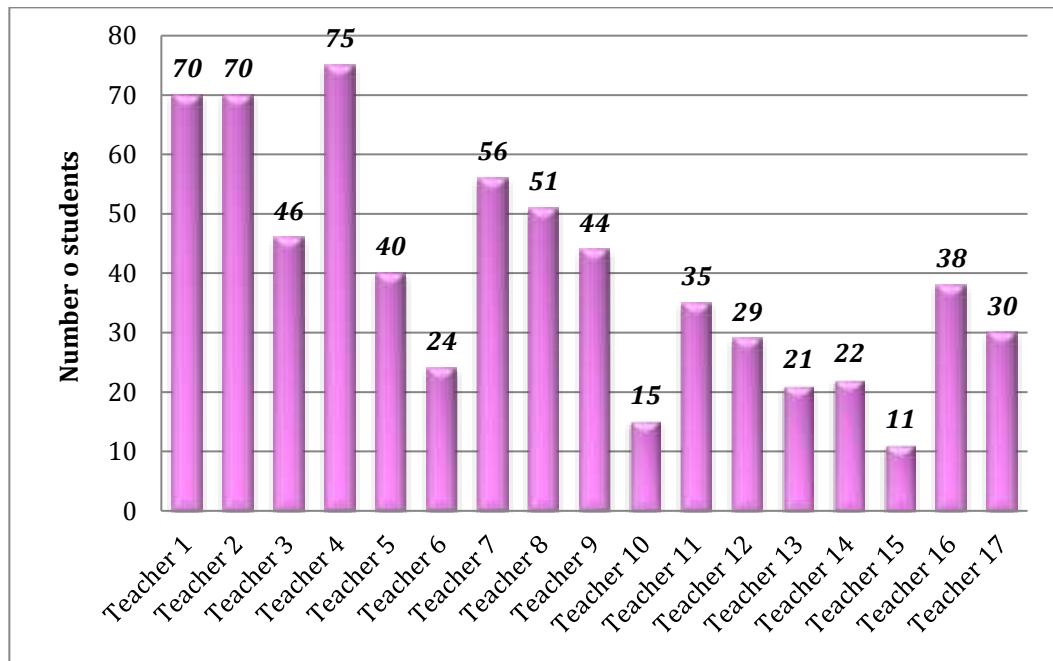
## Years of teaching at the Language Center



*Figure 3.* Years of teaching at the Language Center.  
Source: The Language Center of the UTMACH. Prepared by authors, 2018.

Figure 3 indicates that seven teachers, who are 41%, have taught for more than five years at the Language Center. Additionally, six teachers, who are 35%, have one to two years of experience. Likewise, there are three teachers, who are 18%, have from two to five years of experience. Finally, there is only one teacher who has less than one year. In short, most of the teachers have experience in the teaching area.

## Number of students per class



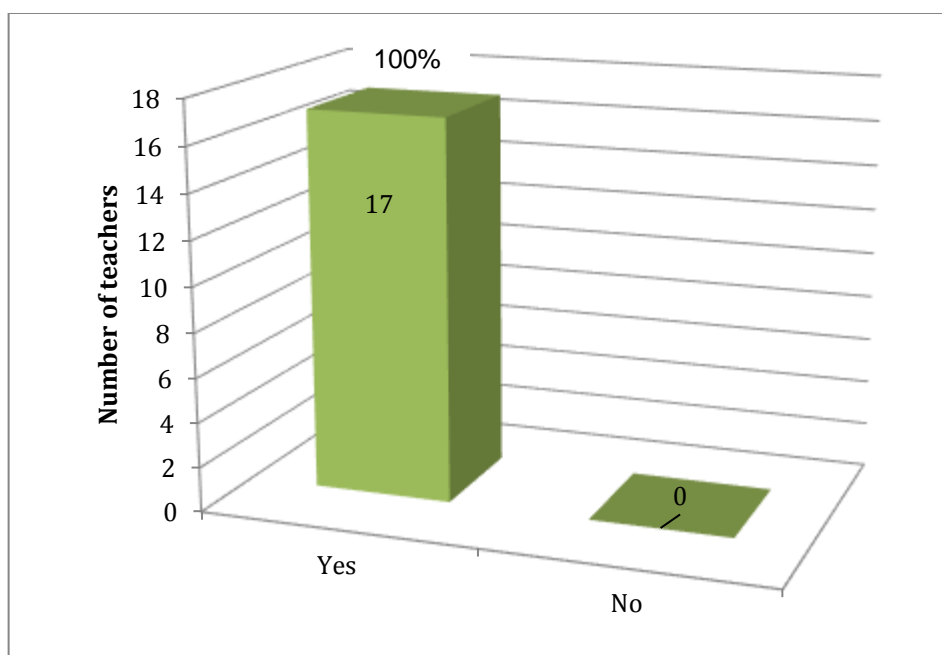
*Figure 4.* Number of students per class.

Source: The Language Center of the UTMACH. Prepared by authors, 2018.

Figure 4 indicates that each teacher manages different number of students. It is due to the levels; lower levels have more students than higher ones. It is worth pointing out that teacher 4 has the highest number of students (75 students), followed by teachers 1 and 2 who have 70 students. Nevertheless, we can see that teachers 10 and 15 have the least number of students in their classes.

## Section 2: Speaking assessment

### Speaking assessment in your classroom

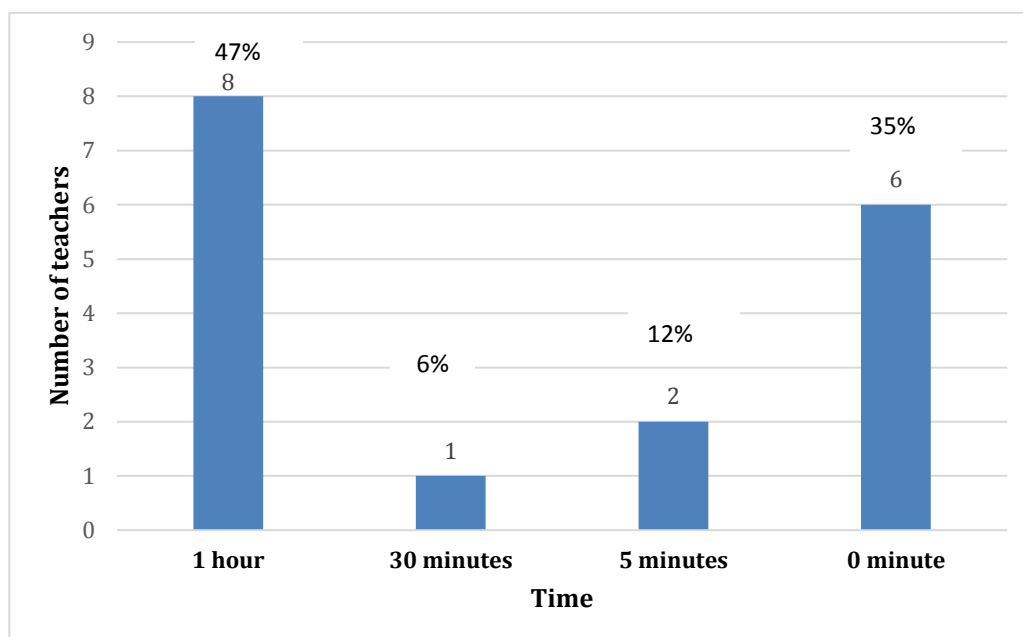


*Figure 5.* Speaking assessment in your classroom

Source: The Language Center of the UTMACH. Prepared by authors, 2018.

According to Figure 5, 100% of teachers have expressed that they include speaking assessment in their classroom. It shows that assessment is indispensable as it is stated by Larson and Keiper (2012) "Assessment is an integral part of instruction that informs and guides teachers' decisions" (p. 80). Interestingly, assessment is vital for teachers make decisions in favor of developing speaking skill. Likewise, assessment makes the teaching-learning process more authentic and real.

## The real purpose of assessment: Time spent on class placement test

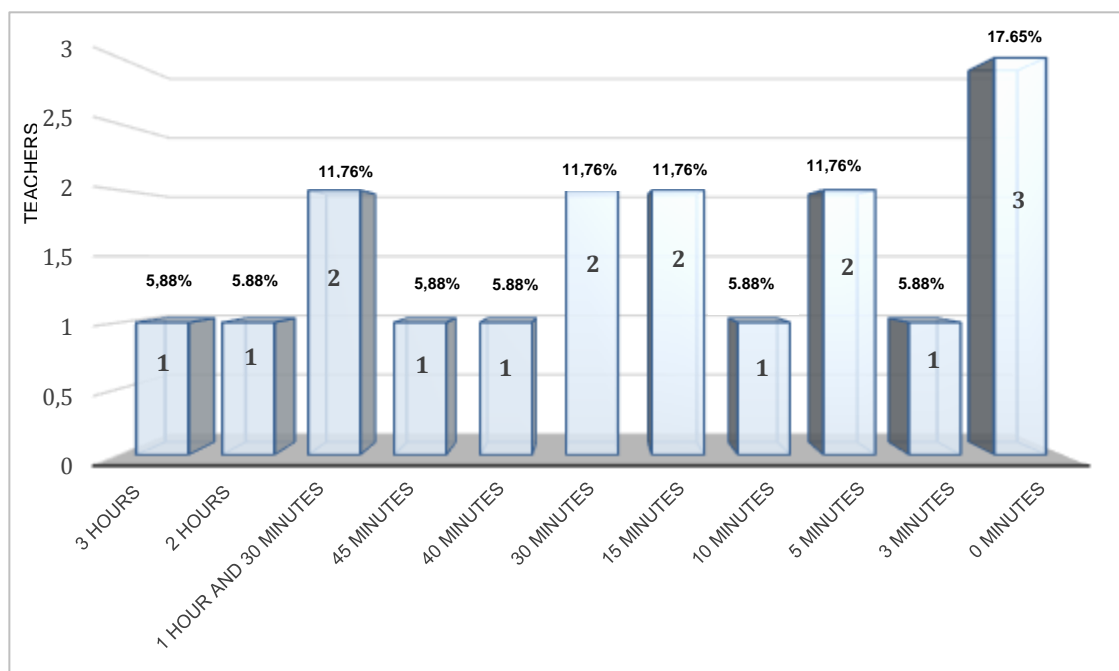


*Figure 6.* The real purpose of assessment: Time spent on class placement test  
Source: The Language Center of the UTMACH. Prepared by authors, 2018.

According to Figure 6, eight teachers out of 17, who represent 47%, spend one hour on their class placement test; meanwhile, six of them, who are 35%, indicated that they do not spend time on that. One teacher, who is 6%, added that he spends thirty minutes on this assessment, while two of them, who are 12%, said they spend five minutes. To sum up, it seems teachers are not giving the value a placement test has even though it is an important pedagogical tool, and only eight teachers are completely involved in this kind of test.



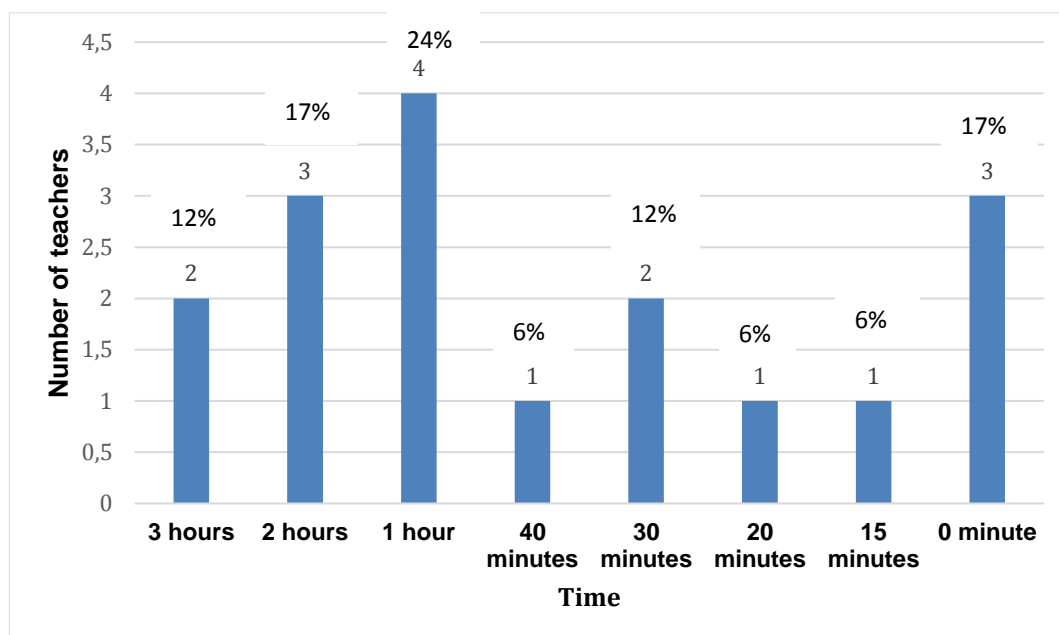
## The real purpose of assessment: Time spent on pre-topic planning



*Figure 7.* The real purpose of assessment: Time spent on pre-topic planning  
Source: The Language Center of the UTMACH. Prepared by authors, 2018.

According to Figure 7, teachers provided different responses. Three teachers, who represent 17.65%, indicated that they do not spend time on the pre-topic planning; while one, who is 5.88%, said that he invests three minutes, likewise, other ones stated ten minutes, forty minutes, forty-five minutes, two hours, and three hours. Two of them, who are 11.76%, added they spend five minutes. In addition, the same number of teachers expressed fifteen minutes, thirty minutes, and one hour and thirty minutes. In brief, teachers plan their topics with the purpose of using classroom speaking assessment according to their needs or interests.

## The real purpose of assessment: Time spent on ongoing programming (Lesson planning)

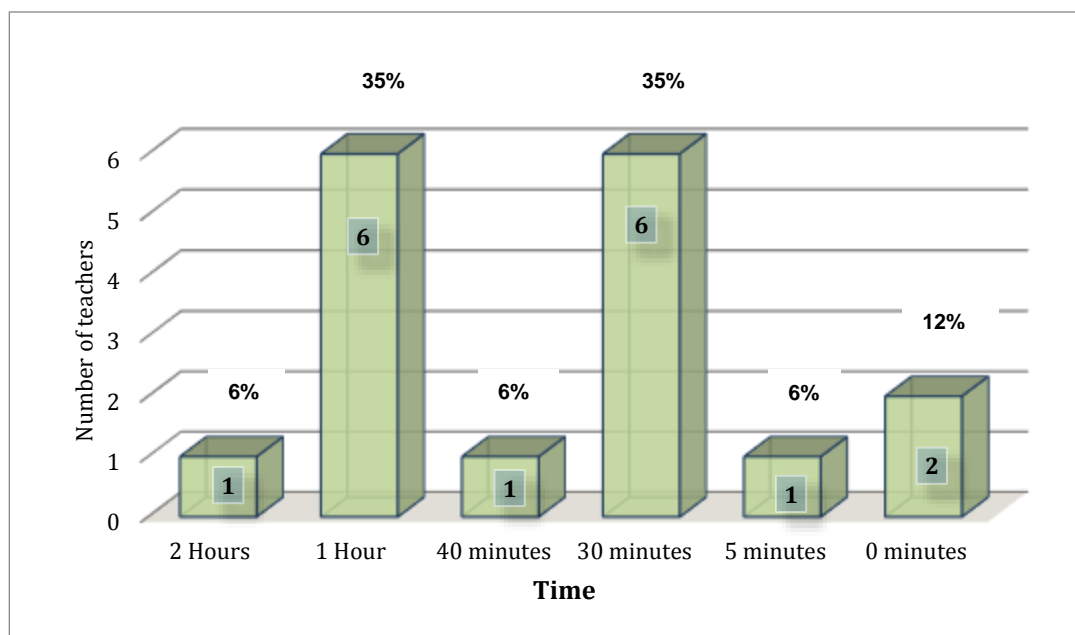


*Figure 8.* The real purpose of assessment: Time spent on ongoing programming (Lesson planning)

Source: The Language Center of the UTMACH. Prepared by authors, 2018.

According to the results in Figure 8, four teachers, that is 8.23%, stated they spend one hour on ongoing programming to employ classroom speaking assessment. Likewise, three of them (18%) mentioned that they spent two hours on this activity. Moreover, there are other three teachers (18%) who said they do not invest time on ongoing programming which means that classroom speaking assessment is not relevant. Aside from that, there are two teachers (12%) who answered they invested three hours applying this activity. The other two teachers (12%) used thirty minutes on this purpose. Lastly, other teachers, who represent 6%, spent forty minutes, twenty minutes and fifteen minutes on this purpose.

## The real purpose of assessment: Time spent on ongoing student assessment (e.g. marking, feedback)



*Figure 9.* The real purpose of assessment: Time spent on ongoing student assessment (e.g. marking, feedback)  
Source: The Language Center of the UTMACH. Prepared by authors, 2018.

Regarding Figure 9, six teachers (35%) expressed that they applied ongoing student assessment for one hour so as to establish weaknesses and strengths. Meanwhile, six teachers added they invest thirty minutes for this purpose. There were two teachers more (12%) who do not spend time on ongoing student assessment, one, who is 6%, applied two hours, another applied forty minutes and the last teacher invested five minutes. In brief, it is seen that the time for assessment varies depending on the teacher's assessment objectives.

## The real purpose of assessment: Time spent on final evaluation of topic / unit of work

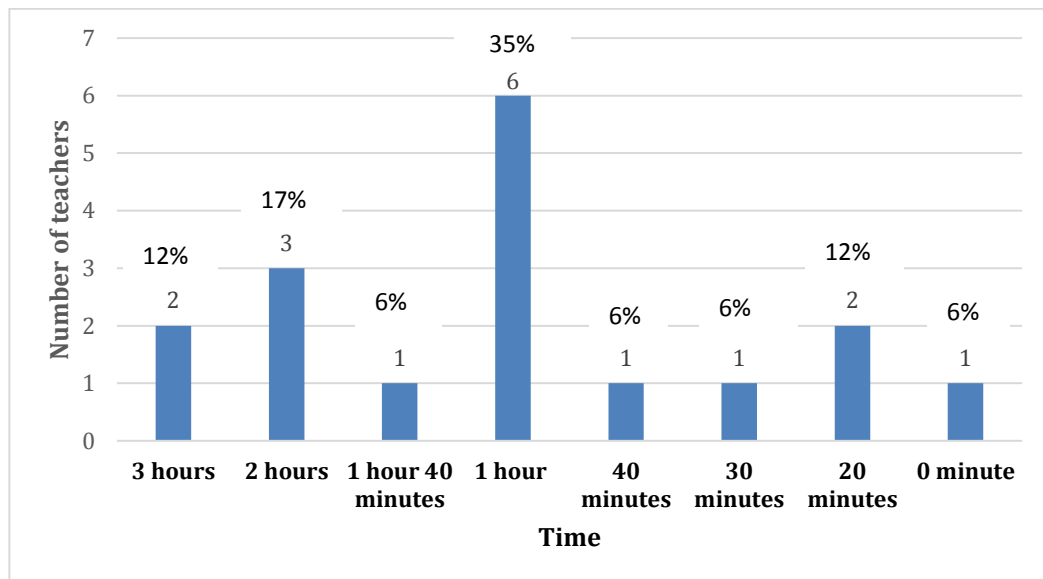


Figure 10. The real purpose of assessment: Time spent on final evaluation of topic / unit of work

Source: The Language Center of the UTMACH. Prepared by authors, 2018.

Regarding Figure 10, six teachers, who are 35%, pointed out that they spend one hour on the unit evaluation. Three teachers, that is 17%, indicated that they spend two hours; and there were two teachers, who represent 12%, state they apply three hours on this activity. Besides, there were 12%, that is two teachers, that invest twenty minutes, and others invest one hour and forty minutes, forty minutes, thirty minutes and the latter do not spend time on assessment. All in all, teachers invest time on assessment to provide feedback for developing better instruction.

### Ideal purpose of classroom speaking assessment: Give learners feedback on progress

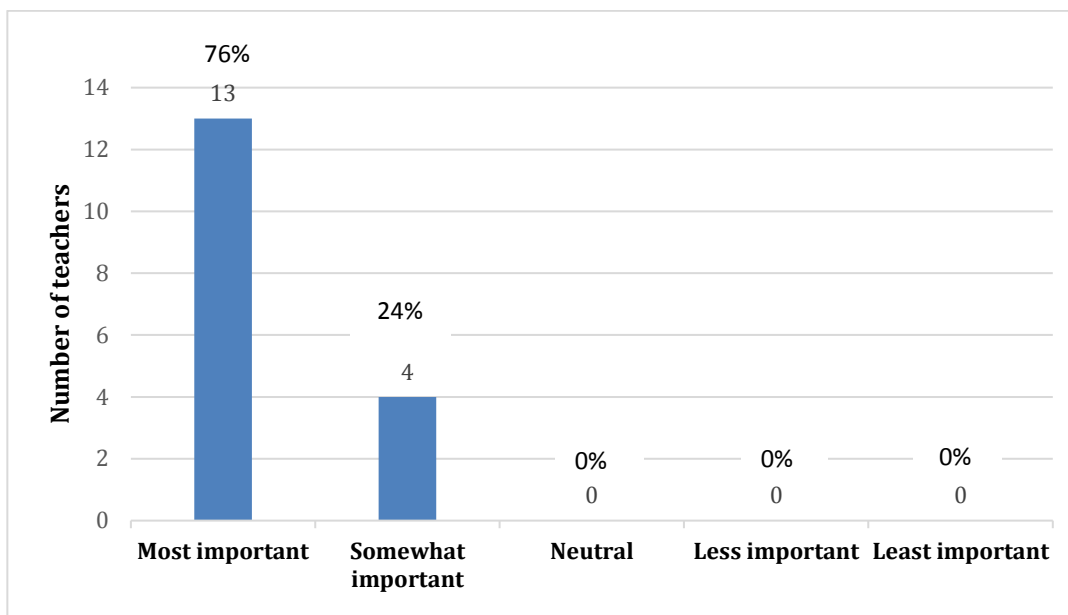
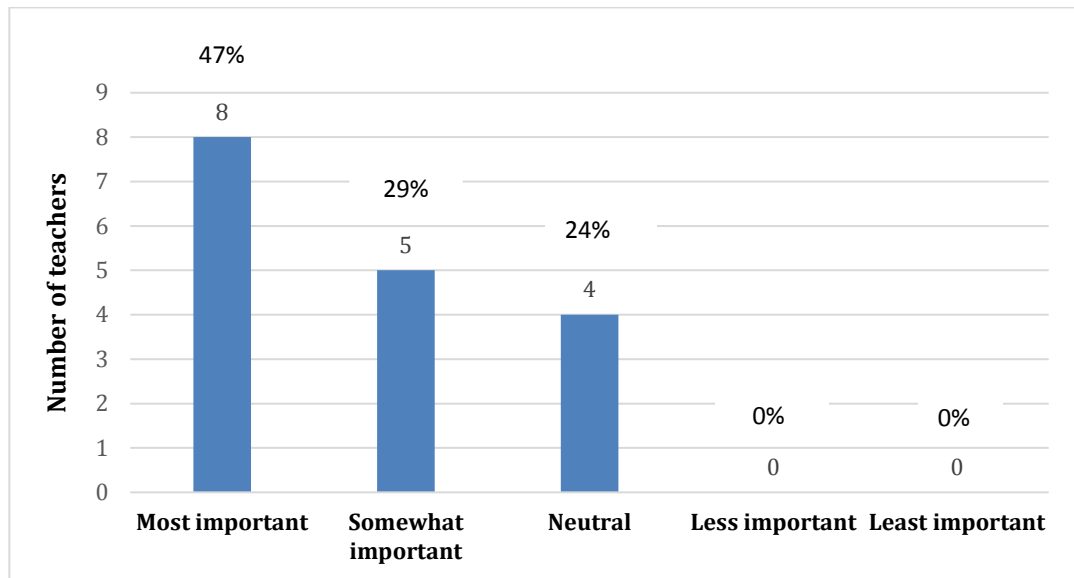


Figure 11. Ideal purpose of assessment: Give learners feedback on progress  
Source: The Language Center of the UTMACH. Prepared by authors, 2018.

Figure 11 shows that 13 out of the 17 teachers responded that it is important to give learners feedback during the lesson, but only four of the 17 expressed that this is somewhat important. As Brookhart (2017) states “feedback is an important component of the formative assessment process” (p.1). It implies that feedback is very important because students need to know where they are. Indeed, feedback is an essential part in learning and gives students a clear guidance on how to improve their skills.

**Ideal purpose of classroom speaking assessment: Give teachers feedback on learners' progress**

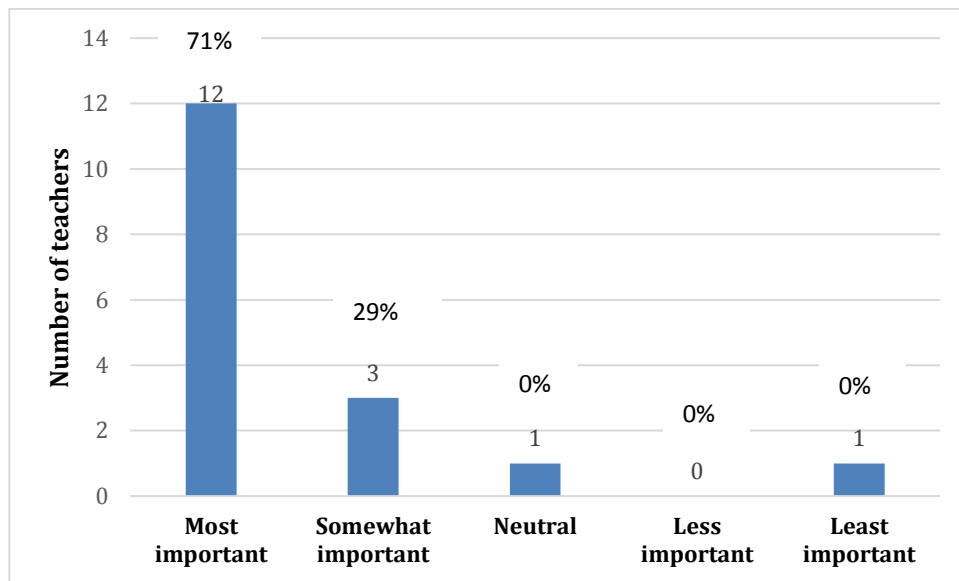


*Figure 12.* Ideal purpose of classroom speaking assessment: Give teachers feedback on learners' progress

Source: The Language Center of the UTMACH. Prepared by authors, 2018.

According to Figure 12, eight of the 17 teachers reported that for them it is important to give teachers feedback on learners' progress. Five out of the 17 teachers mentioned that for them it is somewhat important, while only four said that this is neutral. Brookhart (2017) also says that giving feedback about the process is scaffolding the transfer to all students (p. 25). Thus, an effective feedback gives teachers information about what students understand and what to do next for their progress. Both teachers and students can find out their strengths and weaknesses and enhance their learning.

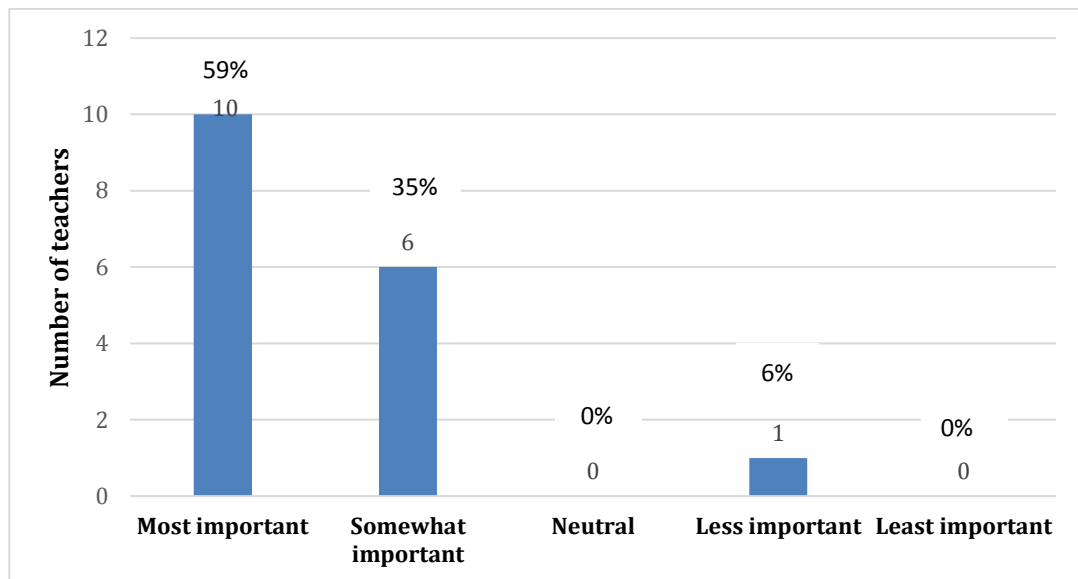
**Ideal purpose of classroom speaking assessment: Diagnose strengths and weaknesses and set further learning objectives**



*Figure 13.* Ideal purpose of classroom speaking assessment: Diagnose strengths and weaknesses and set further learning objectives  
Source: The Language Center of the UTMACH. Prepared by authors, 2018.

Figure 13 reflects that 71% of the teachers, who are 12, responded that it is important to diagnose strengths and weaknesses and set learning objectives; while 29% of the teachers, who are five, revealed that for them it is somewhat important. Considering these data, Larson and Keiper (2012) mention that the diagnosis of students' strengths and weaknesses help teachers to discern the curriculum to meet students' unique needs (p. 79). Hence, it is essential to make a diagnosis of students' language level and depending on the grades, the teacher can place students into the appropriate course. This also helps to set objectives to ensure students' learning progress.

## Ideal purpose of classroom speaking assessment: Levels of general speaking proficiency

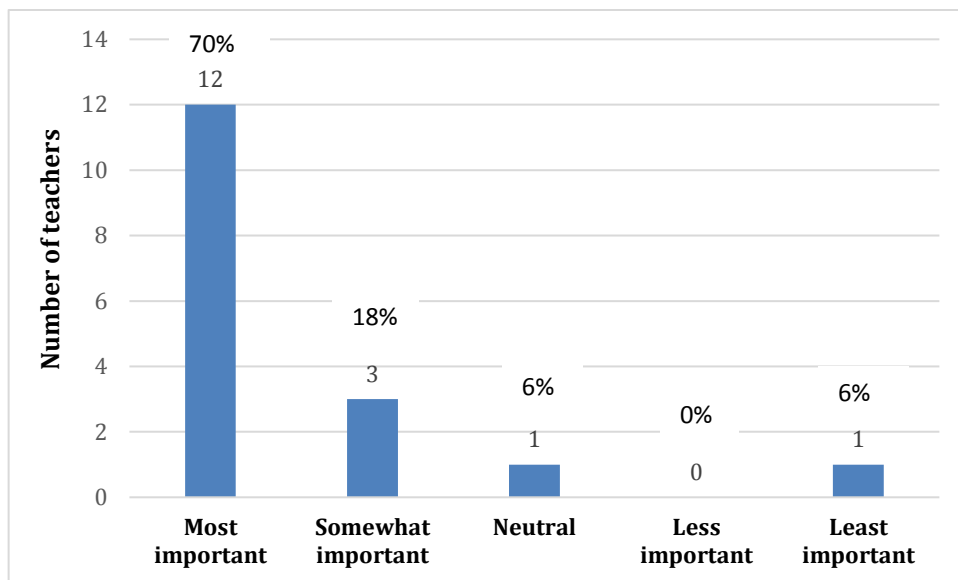


*Figure 14.* Ideal purpose of classroom speaking assessment: Levels of general speaking proficiency  
Source: The Language Center of the UTMACH. Prepared by authors, 2018.

In relation to Figure 14, ten of the 17 teachers (59%) announced that indicating levels of general speaking proficiency is the most important. Likewise, six teachers, who are 35%, said that it is somewhat important, and only one teacher (6%) responded that this is less important. This shows that for most teachers is very important to know students' speaking proficiency so that they can help them to develop the language skills to be academically successful.



### Ideal purpose of classroom speaking assessment: Students' achievement of course objectives



*Figure 15.* Ideal purpose of classroom speaking assessment: Students' achievements of course objectives  
Source: The Language Center of the UTMACH. Prepared by authors, 2018.

Figure 15 shows that 12 out of the 17 teachers (70%) said that it is important to indicate students' accomplishment of language courses, but three (18%) answered that this is somewhat important. While, one of them (6%) chose neutral and the last one (6%) said this is least important. In short, it is observed that most of the teachers from the Language Center agree on indicating students their learning outcomes.

## Methods you use in your course

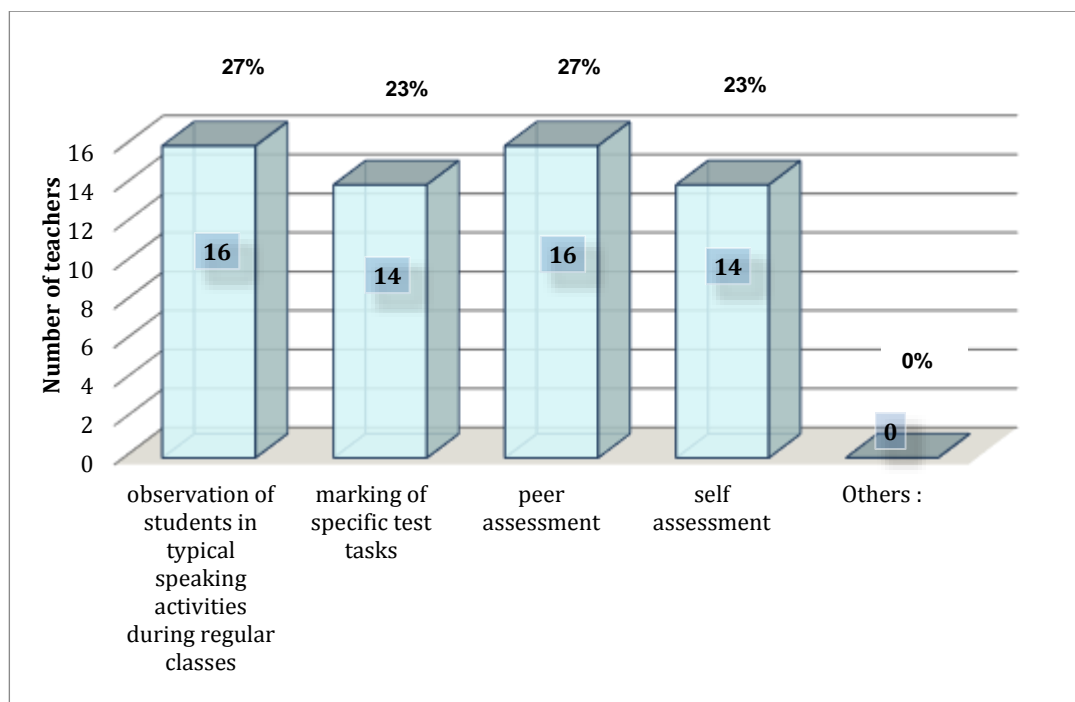


Figure 16. Methods you use in your course  
Source: The Language Center of the UTMACH. Prepared by authors, 2018.

Figure 16 shows that the methods of assessment most used by the teachers of the Language Center are observation of students in typical speaking activities during regular classes and peer assessment. Two more methods used are marking of specific tests tasks and self-assessment. Thus, it is seen that teachers used the observation as a direct method and peer assessment more than others to determine students understanding as Llosa (2011) states that good assessment techniques support teachers' methodology. By using assessment methods teachers check students understanding and this provides information that can be used to modify course content and adjust teaching methods to support students' language success.

## Frequent use of methods of assessment

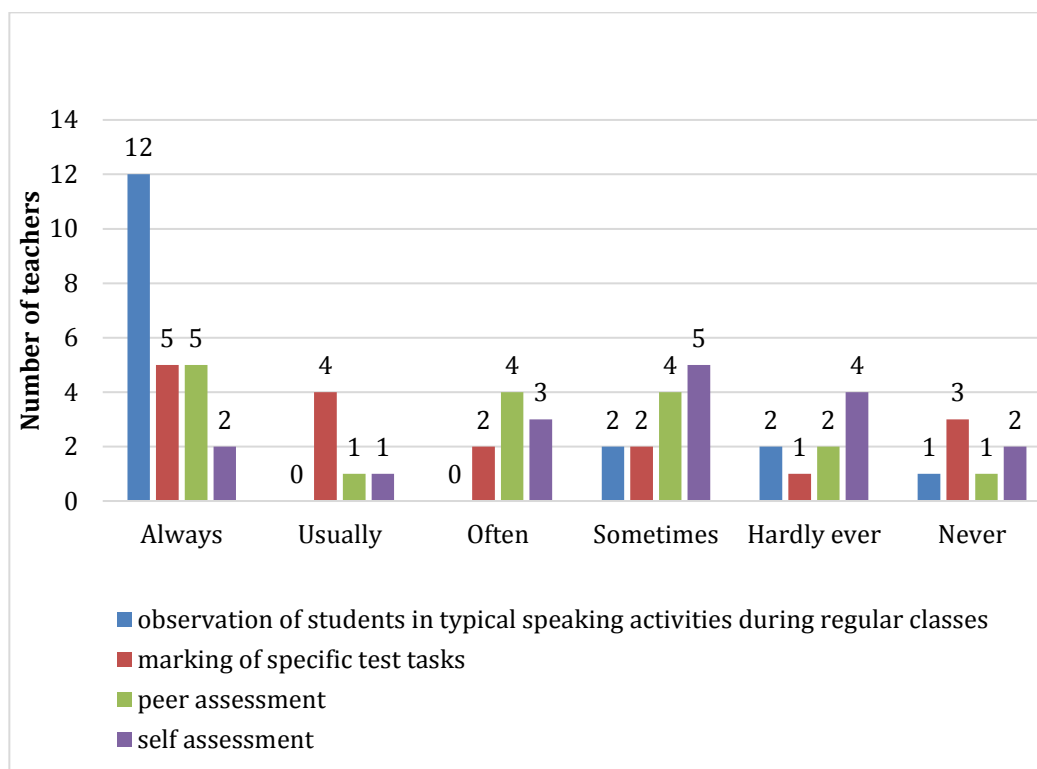
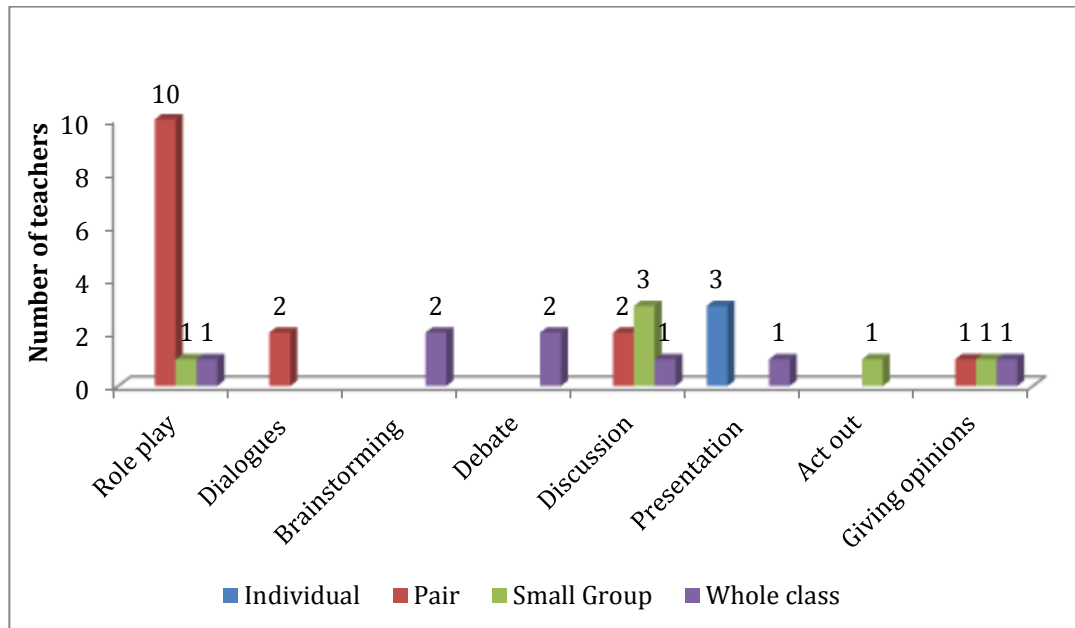


Figure 17. Frequent use of methods of assessment

Source: The Language Center of the UTMACH. Prepared by authors, 2018.

Figure 17 shows that most of the teachers, that is 12, apply “Observation of students in typical speaking activities during regular classes” which is right, but it does not help to know what elements of speech the students are failing, and it makes assessment subjective. This method is followed by “Marking of specific test tasks” and “Peer assessment” which are more reliable than the first method due to the existing evidence. However, it does not say that they are the best since their success depends on assessment tools that the teachers use with them. Finally, two teachers state that they apply “Self-assessment”, which makes students be more confident, but it is also important to receive the teacher’s judgment. Likewise, most of the responses for “Usually” and “Never” are for marking of specific test tasks, “Often” are for peer assessment, “Sometimes” and “Hardly ever” are for self-assessment. To conclude, the application of authentic assessment procedures as it is stated by Wolf and Butler (2017) provides the opportunity to demonstrate what students know and do in exclusive ways.

## Methods of assessment: Specific test tasks



*Figure 18.* Methods of assessment: Specific test tasks  
Source: The Language Center of the UTMACH. Prepared by authors, 2018.

Regarding Figure 18, ten out of the 17 teachers responded that they use the role play in pairs. Three teachers apply discussion, individual and small group presentations. Two teachers employ dialogues, discussion, brainstorming, debate in pairs and whole class and one teacher makes use of role play, giving opinions, acting out, discussion, presentation in pairs, small groups, and whole class. All in all, as it is stated by Pachler and Redondo (2014), teachers must support students so they can reach their language goals. Therefore, the application of these creative techniques will motivate learners to develop their speaking skill.

## Format of feedback

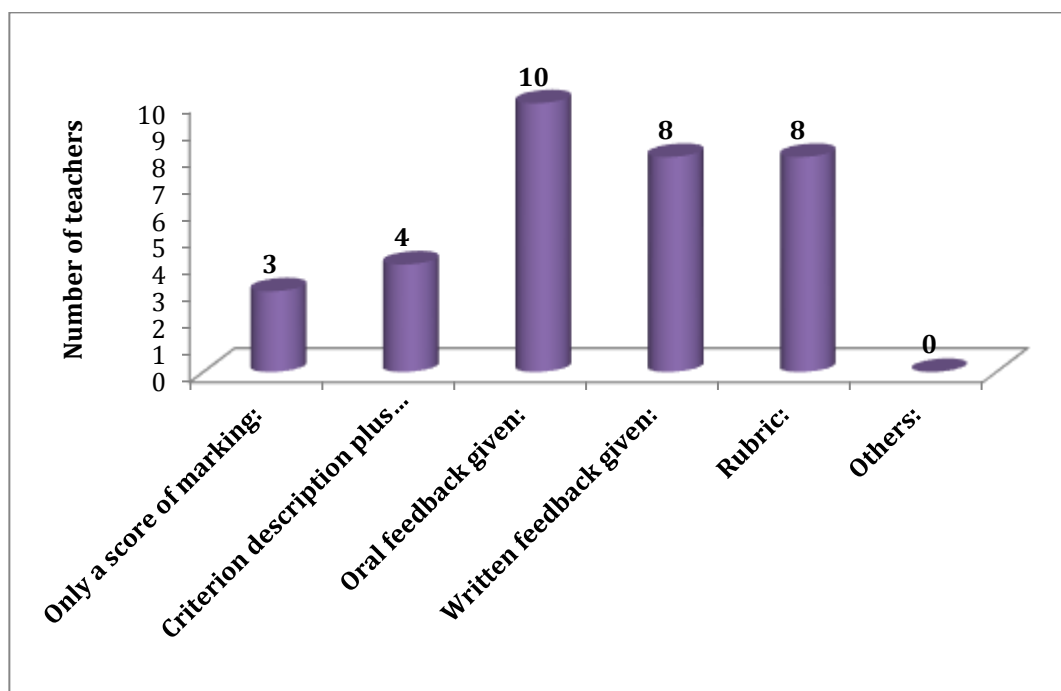


Figure 19. Format of feedback

Source: The Language Center of the UTMACH. Prepared by authors, 2018.

According to Figure 19, most of the responses indicate that the teachers use “Oral feedback given”, followed by “Written feedback given” and “Rubric”, which is positive when the teachers know how to apply and overall when all students are part of assessment to achieve the results. On the other side, score of marking and criterion description are not used much. It is pivotal to add that the format of test assessment according to Willingham and Cole (2013) raises fairness and provides opportunities to score well students’ knowledge and skill (p. 231). Definitely, these authors are right and are aware of assessment strengthens the knowledge and develop the learners’ skills.

### 4. 2. Teachers’ Interview

Six teachers from the Language Center at Universidad Técnica de Machala were interviewed from 20 to 30 minutes after they finished their classes. To identify the results, the researchers did a qualitative analysis of the information obtained in the interviews. Teachers cooperated with the interview and it was enriched with educators’ opinions about speaking

assessment and other questions such as assessment methods, language elements, assessment tools, rubrics and forth.

#### **4.2.1 Results.**

To identify the results, the qualitative method was applied in order to describe teachers' responses. The questions were adapted from Lee (2010) and based on the following categories:

- Language teaching approach
- Assessment methods
- Language elements
- Function of classroom-speaking assessment
- Positive effects of classroom speaking assessment on teaching and learning
- Difficulty in conducting classroom-speaking assessment
- Useful sources of feedback about teachers' performance
- Definition of assessment
- Opinions about the best tools to assess speaking
- Use of rubrics to assess speaking

#### **4.2.2 Analysis of the results.**

The results are contextualized and based on the teachers' responses and supported with bibliography. The interviews were carried out from February 26th to February 28th in the morning and afternoon. Regarding the answers, the educators expressed the following:

##### *1. What is your language teaching approach?*

Four teachers indicated that their language teaching approach is "Communicative" because when learners exchange ideas and interact, they are able to achieve effective communication. Wei and Liu (2013) argue "Communicative Approach to the subject is training the students' communicative ability" (p. 512). Undeniably, this approach pursues the real communication through using a variety of strategies to foster language acquisition and its use in real situations rather than on grammatical structures.

Two teachers were not able to specify their teaching approach, but they mentioned activities based on exercises from the book and some techniques such as individual work, pair work, and team work. Overall, teachers' responses are a good indicator because teachers know where to go.

On the other hand, although other teachers address their activities and techniques towards interaction, they do not have a defined teaching approach. Nevertheless, teachers' instruction must be compatible with a communicative approach which, according to Richards and Rodgers (2014), "permits learners to accomplish communicative objectives of the curriculum and involves them in communication" (p. 96). In other words, teachers need to be clear about what they want to get with the learners, and it is possible when they have a well-defined approach which opens the path to accomplish communicative objectives. When teachers do not manage or do not know the real purpose of their approach, they tend to fail in getting students' results. Thus, to achieve communication, teachers need to master and apply the principles of the approach more than to say what an approach is.

## *2. What are your assessment methods?*

When teachers were asked about assessment methods, one teacher indicated she applies "Pair to pair speaking evaluation" and additionally, she said that she likes to use TPR, which is related to direct method of assessment. Two teachers stated that they apply the observation method since they prefer that the students perform. For instance, one of them said, "I like to see if my students are working and help them", and another said, "I motivate my students to speak although they make mistakes". It means that they are just observers. Another teacher pointed out that she applies diagnostic, formative and summative assessment; and the other two teachers make their students participate in dialogues, role plays and individual work.

In fact, some teachers do not identify the methods of assessment and they do not use them suitably. Consequently, teachers do not have enough knowledge about assessment methods which is discouraging because assessment is essential in the teaching-learning process to prove the students'

failings and strengths. In short, teachers need to learn more about assessment since the interview demonstrated that two teachers were assertive with the assessment methods, but the others mix up assessment methods with activities and types of assessment.

3. *What is the language element focused on the assessment?*

Five of the six teachers indicated that they focus the assessment on intonation, pitch, pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, and grammar, but one of them said that he focuses on oral communication, although this is too general. In short, most of the educators know about the language elements in the assessment, which is positive because it facilitates this process. However, it does not guarantee effective results due to the elements are being used in the current assessment are not enough to measure students speaking skill and support their progress as well.

4. *How do you perceive the function of classroom-speaking assessment?*

Three of the six teachers considered that the function of classroom-speaking assessment is fundamental because it allows them to be more careful when they participate, more confident with the topics they are learning and to answer questions with security. Moreover, one of them said that the main function of assessment is communication without mattering the kind of mistakes they make since the most important is to convey the message. Another teacher pointed out that the function of classroom speaking assessment is to contribute with information about students' current level of speaking skill and how this helps to improve this skill. Finally, the last teacher focuses her attention on quality of intonation and stress of words, which is positive.

On the other hand, classroom-speaking assessment could be mainly used to find out where language learners need to make better. Therefore, in assessment for learning, as the Assessment Reform Group (2002) cited by Tsagari (2016) mentions, the information found during assessment is interpreted, and this evidence is used for learners and teachers resolve "where the students are in their learning, where they need to go, and how best to get



there” (p. 187). Definitely, assessment constitutes a paramount process to identify what students have learned and what they have filed through detailed study of results obtained in order to receive the feedback they need to accomplish the skill.

*5. Do you perceive any positive effects of classroom speaking assessment on teaching and learning?*

Four teachers indicated that effects of classroom speaking assessment is positive because students demonstrate more interaction when making interviews, conversation clubs, creating their own experience in different context of real life. Furthermore, it addresses students to develop good oral tests. However, the other two teachers stated that effects of classroom speaking assessment on teaching and learning are not as positive as reading since to have positive effects on speaking, teachers need to start with reading. Likewise, the other one indicated that it is difficult to get positive effects because in spite of practicing, students make mistakes, however, it is relevant to indicate that making mistakes is positive since mistakes allow students to learn.

*6. If you have any difficulty in conducting classroom-speaking assessment, what are they?*

Among difficulties in conducting classroom-speaking assessment, five teachers indicated the following:

- Students’ pronunciation is difficult to conduct.
- The anxiety that students feel when it is time to speak.
- When students do not understand the instructions and teachers have to speak.
- When there are students of different ages in the same classroom.
- When exercises are not according to the level of knowledge of the students.

Finally, the last teacher was not clear with his answer since he just indicated that mistakes are a problem, and that teachers have to encourage students to solve mistakes.

*7. What are the most useful sources of feedback about your performance?  
Can you give an example? Why those?*

The answers were varied, and it seems that various teachers do not know about this topic too much. One teacher said that “The most useful source of feedback for me is the students”. The second teacher added that the most useful sources of feedback should have a purpose and should be focused on an integrated evaluation because it includes all the students in the teaching-learning process. The third teacher expressed that the most useful sources of feedback about performance is that students participate and see how they apply grammar and speaking. The fourth teacher pointed out that she brings photos or graphics from the internet for the feedback. The last two teachers indicated that they ask questions and make observations about students’ participation so as to give opinions of the students’ activity.

Apart from that, they answered two sub questions, the first was about the most useful sources of feedback in their classes, and the second was about if they do self-assessment to know if it is useful and why or why not. Regarding the first sub question, the teachers stated that they use the workbook, practice exercises, participations, and correction of mistakes to evaluate students individually and in groups. For the second sub question, four teachers said that self-assessment help them to identify mistakes and correct them and clear up doubts. The other one indicated that he has not done self-assessment, and he works on the mistakes, and the last teacher does not do it very often; although it is useful, he prefers to keep the students under observation. In brief, the teachers are clear about the activities to develop speaking skills, even they know sources of feedback and consider useful, but in practice, the interview indicated that it is difficult to apply these sources for them.

8. *What is assessment for? What does it involve?*

The six teachers have the idea of assessment although three of them are more connected with its real purpose since they consider that assessment let learners develop the skills and teachers assess where the students have to improve to ensure the knowledge. ARG (2002) cited by Gardner (2012) indicates that assessment is a process that seeks “to identify where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there” (p.3). This implies that teachers must plan a variety of activities to assess students and engage them in order to evaluate understanding and support learners to progress in the education process. This also supports what teachers said in this interview considering that assessment aims to enhance the outcomes more than to measure a content. On the other hand, four teachers expressed ideas such as assessment is “The percentage that students have learned”, “Assessment provides a grade”, and “To know how much they learned”. Thus, assessment more than to measure, it assesses, i.e. “to make a judgement about a person or situation after considering all the information” (Longman Dictionary, n. d.). Likewise, two of the six teachers indicated that assessment involves the correct use of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, apart from participation.

9. *What do you think are the best tools to assess speaking skill?*

The six assessed teachers do not really know about assessment tools. When they were interviewed, five of them indicated that they use role plays, questions and answers, dialogues, short questionnaires, pair work, short personal information, real life situations, reading analysis to assess speaking skill. However, one of six said that she uses a rubric to show the parameters of assessing such as accuracy, fluency, pronunciation and intonation so as to notice what elements they are failing in. Only one teacher expressed he uses a rubric to assess the speaking skill with indicators such as fluency, grammar, and pronunciation.

10. Have you used rubrics to assess speaking skill? Which ones? How many times have you used it/them in this level?

One teacher expressed that he rarely uses rubrics for a few activities and when he has done it, he assesses fluency, correct use of words, accuracy. The second teacher explained that she applies a rubric, but she does not show it to the students. In that instrument she includes items such as vocabulary, use of grammatical structures, intonation, body language, pronunciation, and cooperation. The third teacher responded that he uses analytic rubrics to assess speaking, and he has applied rubrics three times during the course.

The other two teachers stated that they use holistic rubrics, one of them put it into practice once in her class and the other one said that she uses it every class. Finally, the last teacher responded that he uses the rubric in the middle and final exam, and when he applies a speaking activity in the class, he only tells the students that they have to use grammar and vocabulary correctly, and assesses fluency and pronunciation, but he does not use a rubric. All in all, rating scales are not being used formally, and it does not allow to see the real weaknesses and strengthens in the students.

### 4.3. Students' Survey

#### Sex

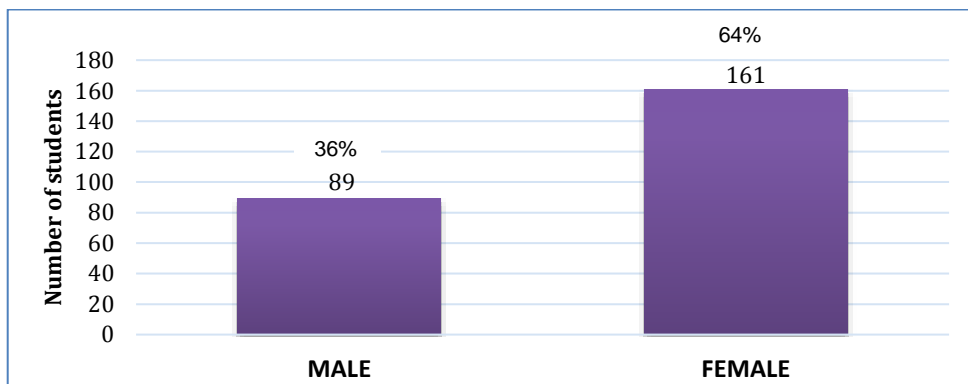


Figure 20. Sex

Source: The Language Center of the UTMACH. Prepared by authors, 2018.

According to Figure 20, 64% of the students of A1 level are female, and 36% of them are male. It indicates that women are more interested in learning

English than men. Or may be that there are more women studying at the University.

### Age

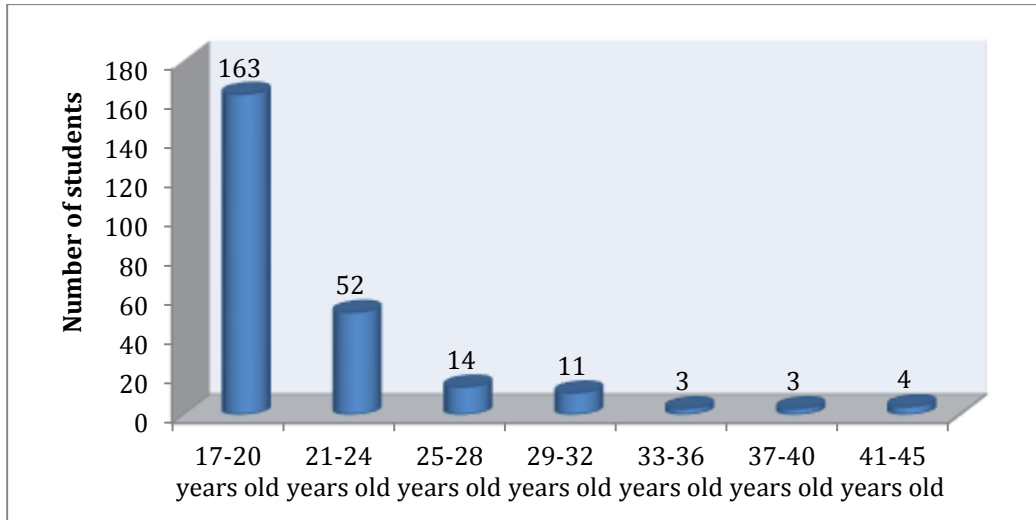


Figure 21. Age

Source: The Language Center of the UTMACH. Prepared by authors, 2018.

Regarding Figure 21, 163 students are between 17 and 20 years old, followed by 52 students from 21 to 24 years old. Likewise, it is observed that a fewer number of students from 33 to 45 years old. All in all, although students of different ages can register, the results indicate that there is a reasonable number of young adult students and middle-aged who are interested in the English classes.

### Do you think English is fun?

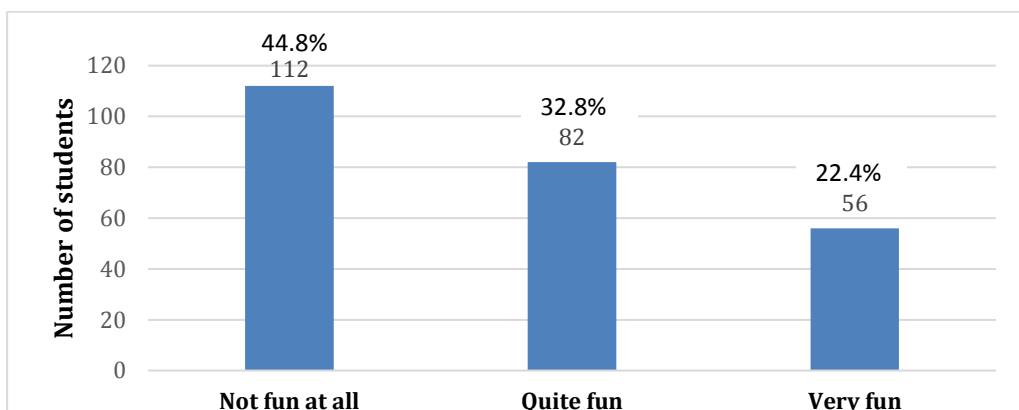


Figure 22. Do you think English is fun?

Source: The Language Center of the UTMACH. Prepared by authors, 2018.

Figure 22 shows that 44.80% of students said that English is not fun at all, but 32.80% considered it quite fun, and a smaller number 22.40% indicated that English is very fun. To sum up, despite differences, English is interesting for learners, and as it is stated by Bland (2015) it depends on the high level of motivation that educators provide for engaging students in enjoyable activities, apart from the most appropriate techniques and assessment tools used to reach the development of skills. It means that teachers are called to foster learners to achieve their goals.

### Are you good at English?

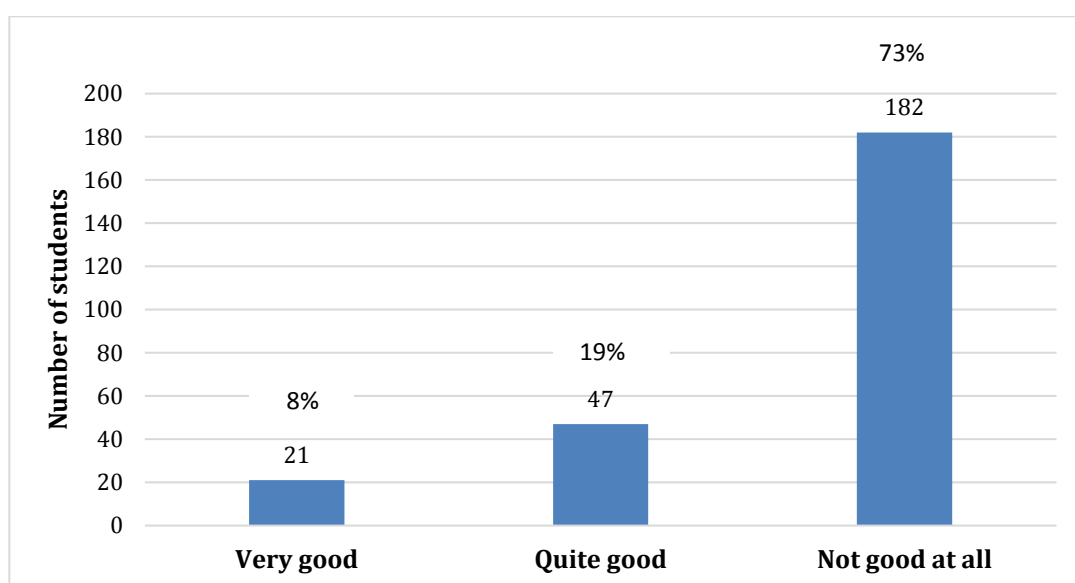
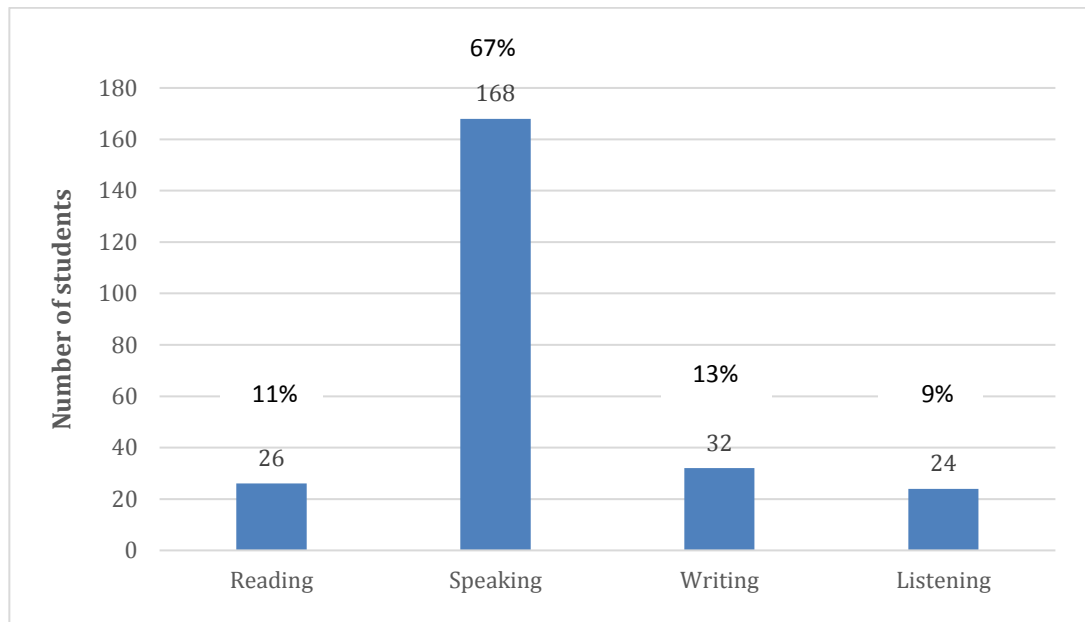


Figure 23. Are you good at English?  
Source: The Language Center of the UTMACH. Prepared by authors, 2018.

As it can be seen in Figure 23, 73% of students indicated that they are not very good at English, only 19% stated that they are quite good at this language, and 8% expressed that they are very good. Thus, educators have a big challenge which is become the facilitators who according to Ruan and Leung (2012) “direct students to speak as often as they can in class” (p. 110). It has a great importance because teachers can implement classroom activities that help students to overcome shyness and other emotional barriers which block to achieve an authentic communication.

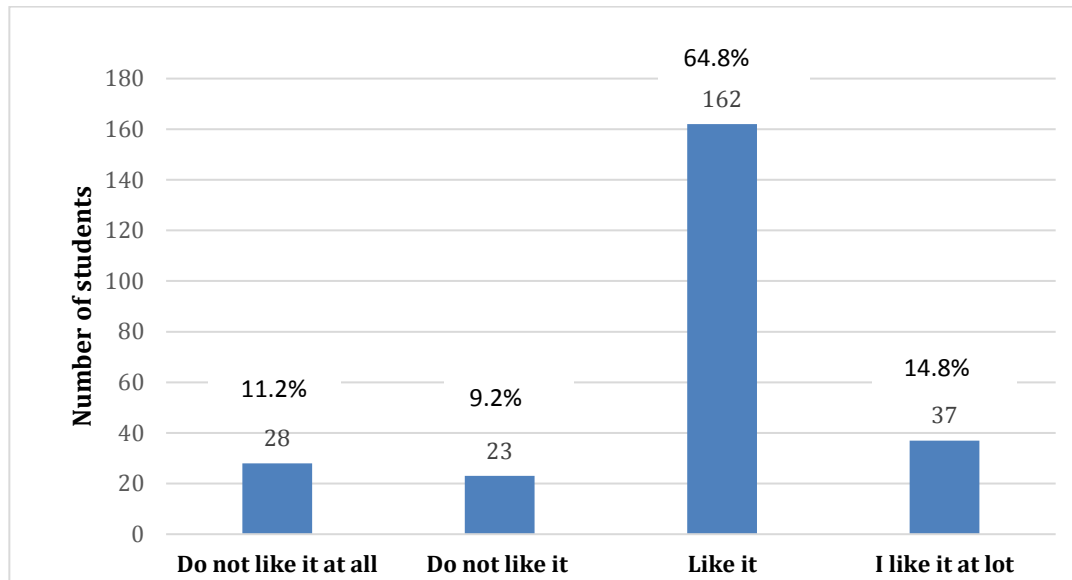
## What do you think is the most important skill of English?



*Figure 24.* What do you think is the most important skill of English?  
Source: The Language Center of the UTMACH. Prepared by authors, 2018.

As it is shown in Figure 24, 67% (168 students) of the responses demonstrate that speaking skill is the most important skill of the four, followed by writing with 13% (32) of students' responses, reading with 11% of responses which are 26 and finally, listening with 9% of responses which are 24 students. It allows to see that speaking skill is pivotal for learners. Therefore, the current research based on assessment tools to assess would be a good contribution for teachers and learners since this study would empower the development of speaking.

## What do you think about speaking English in the lessons?

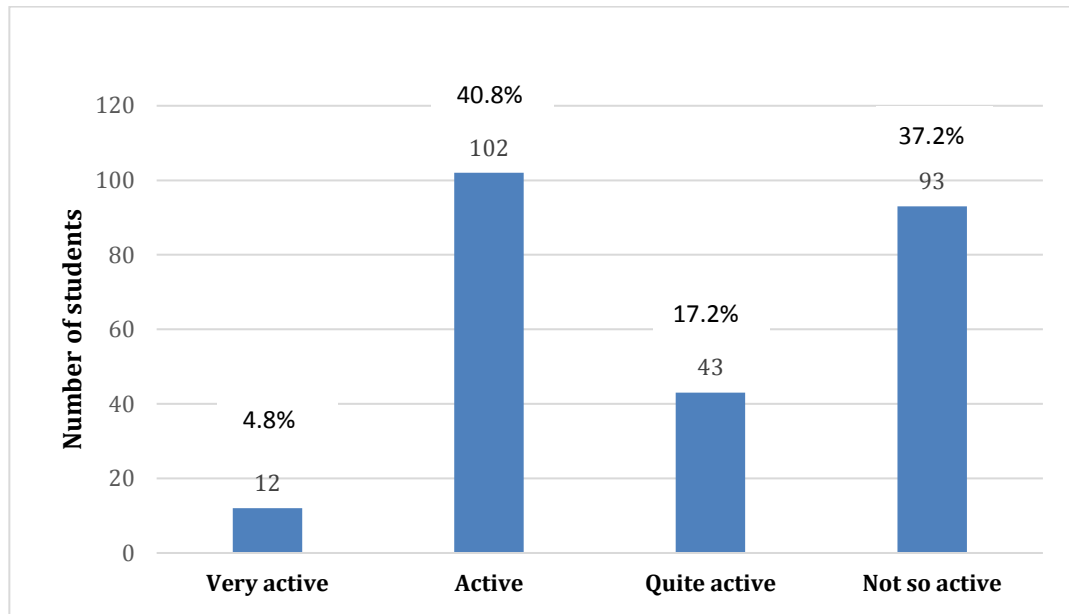


*Figure 25.* What do you think about speaking English in the lessons?  
Source: The Language Center of the UTMACH. Prepared by authors, 2018.

According to Figure 25, the results indicate that 162 students like this activity, while 28 students said that they do not like it at all, 37 students stated they like it a lot, and 23 students do not like it. The results determine that students feel encouraged by oral activities, and as Love and Reilly (2004) indicate “Oral language remains the predominant mode of communication in our society” (p. 3). In other words, communication is foremost during interaction and the best opportunity for exchanging information, expressing feelings and experiences in a foreign language, resulting attractive for learners.



## How active are you orally when you communicate in your class?



*Figure 26.* How active are you orally when you communicate in your class?  
Source: The Language Center of the UTMACH. Prepared by authors, 2018.

Figure 26 shows that 102 students responded that they are active. While 43 indicated to be quite active and 12 students replied that they are very active. On the other hand, 93 students answered they are not so active. This shows that students are willing to communicate, and MTD Training (2012) stated “Communication skills are the tools that we use to remove the barriers to effective communication” (p. 11). This means that communication is the best way to be in contact with people who speak a foreign language, and overall when they are among partners who pursue the same goals.

### How active are you orally when you communicate in small groups?

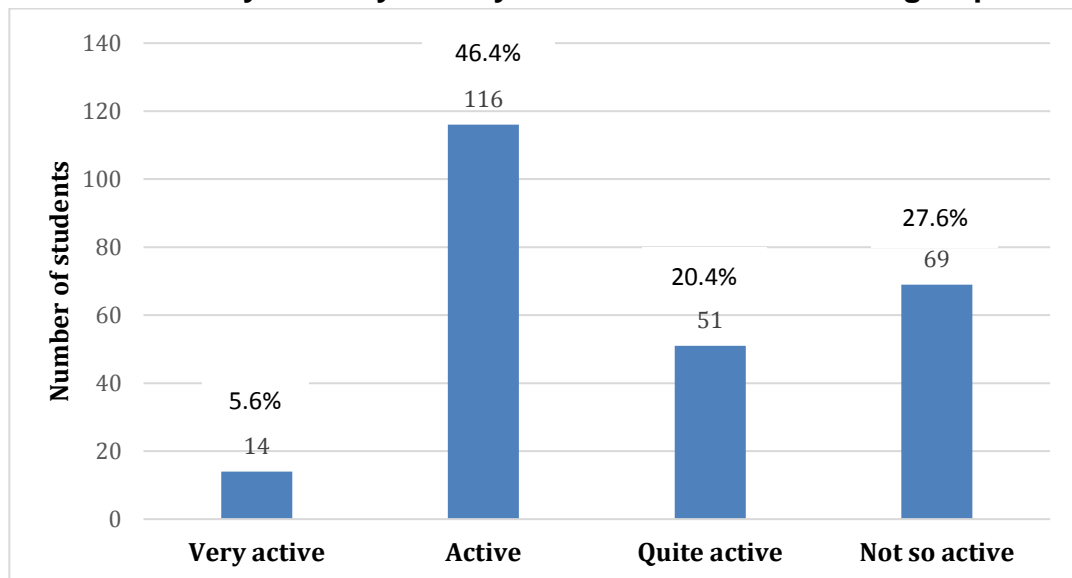


Figure 27. How active are you orally when you communicate in small groups?  
Source: The Language Center of the UTMACH. Prepared by authors, 2018.

In Figure 27 the results illustrate that 116 students are active. Whereas, 69 respondents said they are not so active. Fifty-one students mentioned they are quite active and 14 answered they are very active when working in groups. These results allow the researchers to see that when a group has the same purposes, the activity results more interesting.

### How active are you orally when you communicate in pairs?

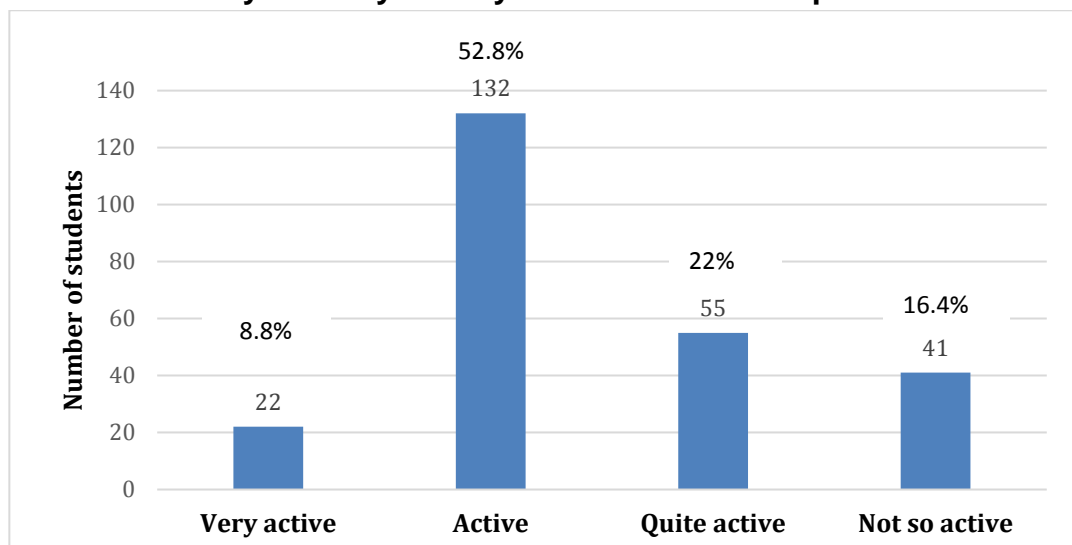


Figure 28. How active are you orally when you communicate in pairs?  
Source: The Language Center of the UTMACH. Prepared by authors, 2018.

Figure 28 shows that 132 respondents answered they are active. Fifty-five students mentioned they are quite active. However, 41 expresses that they are not so active, and 22 said they are very active. All in all, as Sit (2017) comments, in the leaning process students establish relationships with group members when they talk and it enhances the communication in the target language (p. 113). Thus, learner interaction facilitates acquisition of the target language since when they are with partners who have the same interests and are the same age, it lets them interact easily.

**What factors does affect your activity when you practice oral communication in English?**

**a) What students do in group**

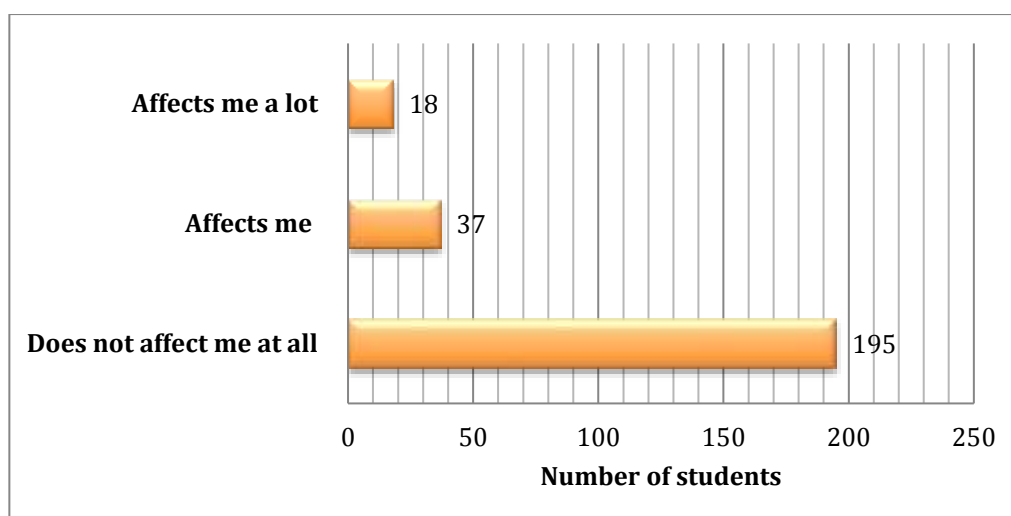


Figure 29. What students do in group  
 Source: The Language Center of the UTMACH. Prepared by authors, 2018.

In Figure 29 the results regarding oral communication indicate that 195 students are not affected by what their partners do in the group since they can communicate without any fear. Whereas 37 students expressed those factors affect them, and 18 students responded that they are affected a lot.' It means that when students have to interact with their partners, they feel comfortable. Krashen and Terrel, (1992) as cited in Colombo and Furbush (2008) adds “The affective filter is thought to be influenced by a learner’s motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety” (p.38). Indeed, to share and practice with partners

encourage them to produce and talk without any fear; on the contrary, they strengthen communication.

**b) If the teacher is present**

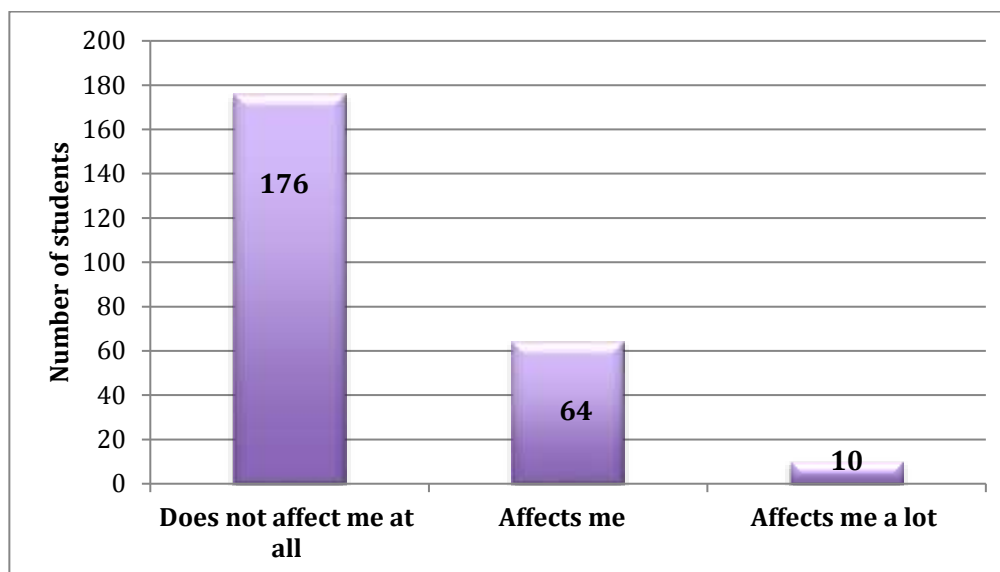


Figure 30. If the teacher is present  
Source: The Language Center of the UTMACH. Prepared by authors, 2018.

Figure 30 shows that 176 students are not affected at all if the teacher is listening to them, while 64 students mentioned that they are affected if the teacher listens to them. On the other hand, ten students indicated that the fact that the teacher is with them affects them a lot. Interestingly, students demonstrate a positive attitude towards presence of the teacher when they are communicating. As Gallagher (2008) states “Krashen believes we need states of low anxiety, low stress and high motivation for optimal language acquisition to occur” (p. 46). In other words, teachers have to create a good atmosphere in class so as to encourage the students to participate actively, so that they are not afraid of communicating and feel free to interact with each other. When teachers motivate their students and create self-confidence among them, it is when students demonstrate what they know.

**c) If I feel confident in the classroom**

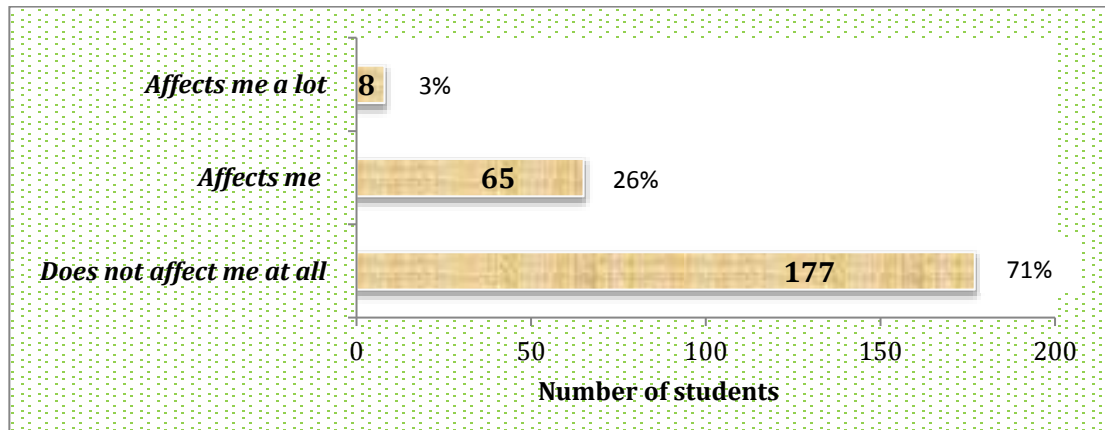


Figure 31. If I feel confident in the classroom  
Source: The Language Center of the UTMACH. Prepared by authors, 2018.

Figure 31 shows that 177 students (71%) feel confident when they communicate with each other, but 65 of them, who represent 26%, state that interaction affects them, and finally, 8 students, who are 3%, do not like to communicate orally, which makes them feel unsure. In short, confidence is very important to develop speaking skill.

**d) If the teacher assesses me**

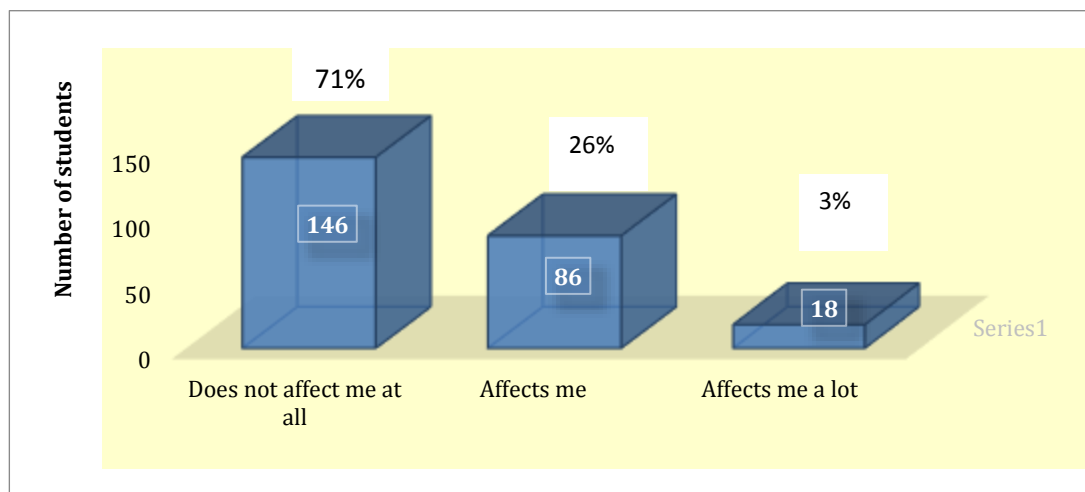


Figure 32. If the teacher assesses me  
Source: The Language Center of the UTMACH. Prepared by authors, 2018.

Regarding Figure 32, 71% of students (146) stated that if teacher assesses, it does not affect them at all, but 26% (86) said it does, and in a

smaller number, 3% (18), indicated it affects them a lot. These results are a good indicator because students see assessment as part of learning rather than a method to judge them. Herrera and Murry (2011) pointed out “Assessment provides teachers with valuable information regarding lesson effectiveness” (p. 259). Thus, teachers have to take advantage of students’ predisposition to assess them and determine strengths and weaknesses in oral communication in order to make decisions in favor of their students and achieve an authentic communication.

### e) If I do not know all the words in English

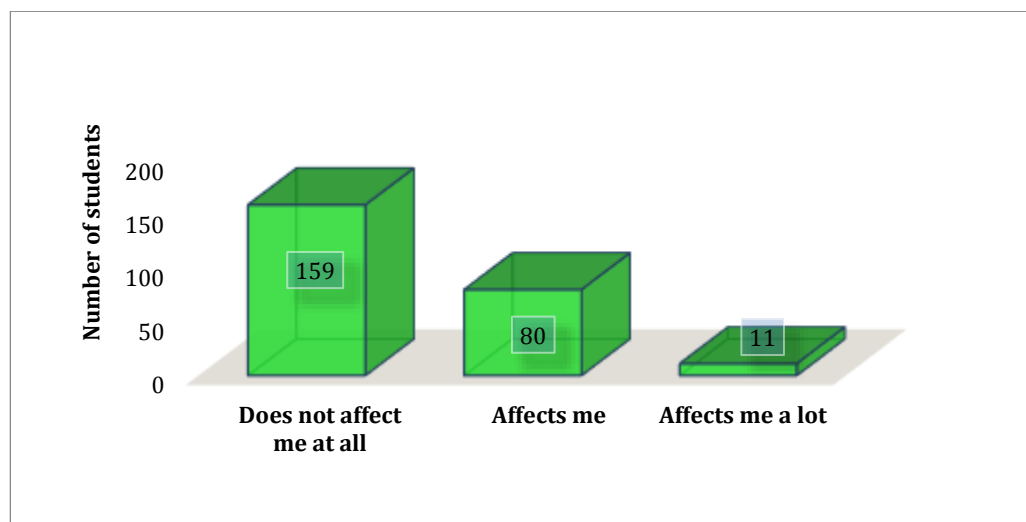
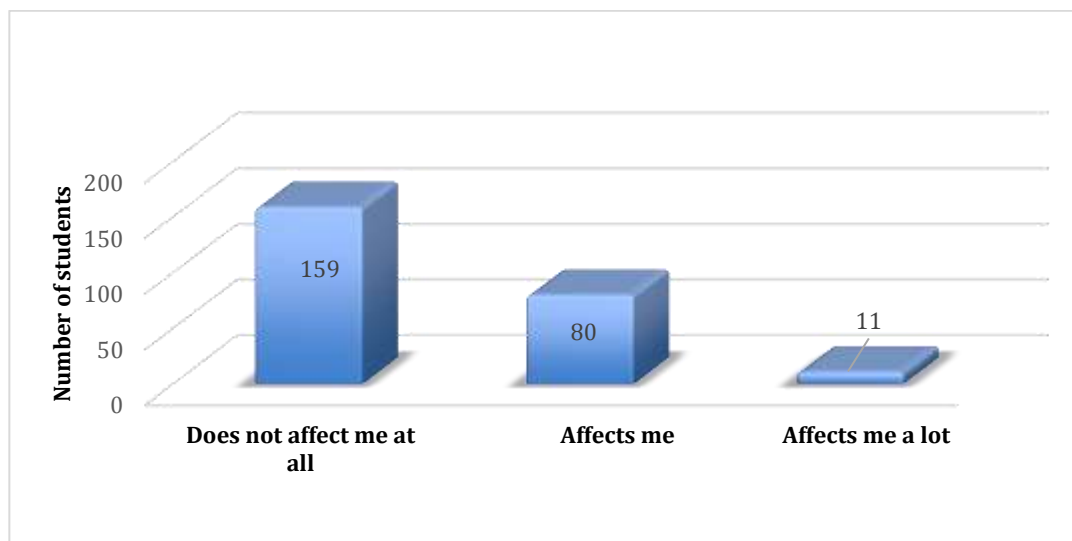


Figure 33. If I do not know all the words in English  
Source: The Language Center of the UTMACH. Prepared by authors, 2018.

As it can be seen in Figure 33, 80 students answered that it affects them when they do not know enough vocabulary in English, similarly, 11 students said it affects a lot, while 159 students indicated that they are not affected at all. Therefore, it is foremost to consider what Herrera and Murry add, “Using more consistent vocabulary with appropriate repetition” (p. 276). It is what teachers need to incorporate in the teaching process since this activity allows students to increase their vocabulary and its use in language structures causing self-confidence. However, repetition does not mean that students are repeating the words in a mechanical way, on the contrary, teachers have the

opportunity to use activities such as songs, stories, games, completion, etc., to support the vocabulary object of study.

### **The size of the group, if we talk in the whole class, half the class or smaller groups**



*Figure 34.* The size of the group, if we talk in the whole class, half the class or smaller groups

Source: The Language Center of the UTMACH. Prepared by authors, 2018.

Figure 34 indicates that 159 students responded that they are not affected by the size of the group at all when they communicate; while 80 students responded that it affects them, and only 11 students said that it affects them a lot. This shows that learners are aware of importance of working in groups which is supported with what Wasley (2006), as cited in Burke A. (2011), mentioned, “Students who participate in collaborative learning and educational activities outside the classroom and who interact more with faculty members get better grades, are more satisfied with their education, and are more likely to remain in college” (p. 87). Undoubtedly, learners are sociable by nature and when they are in contact with people who have the same interests, they feel more confident and with predisposition to learn.

## How often do you practice oral communication in the English lessons?

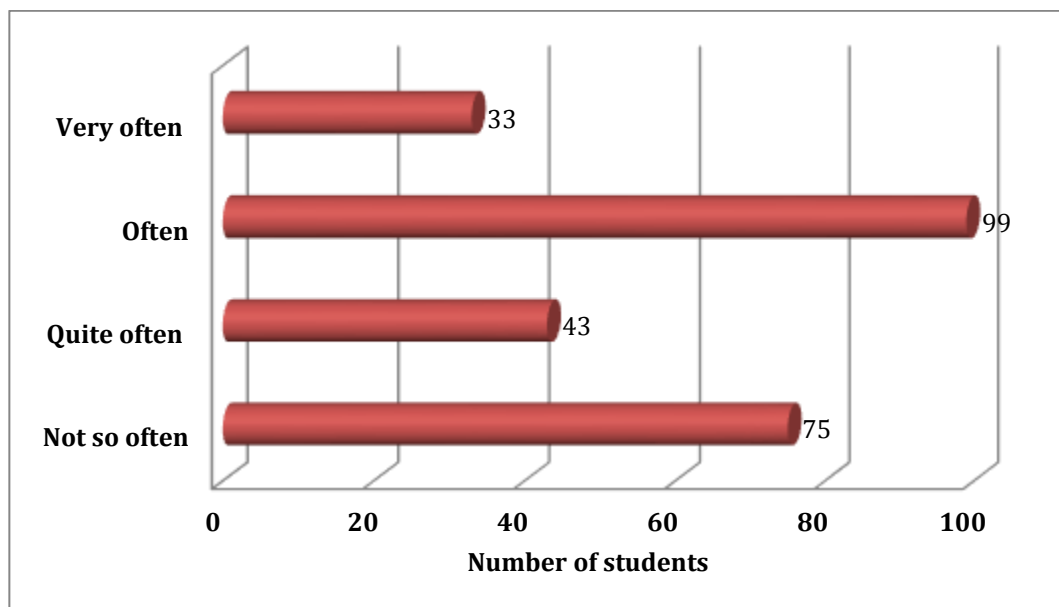


Figure 35. How often do you practice oral communication in the English lessons?  
Source: The Language Center of the UTMACH. Prepared by authors, 2018.

According to Figure 35, 99 students said that they often practice oral communication in their classrooms, while 75 students do not practice so often. On the other hand, 43 students communicate in a verbal form quite often, and 33 students do it very often. In short, it is vital that students develop skills needed to communicate effectively in the target language as it is stated by Palmer (2011) “speaking well enables us to feel more confident and become more respectable” (p. 5). This shows that being able to communicate in the target language makes learners feel comfortable because they can exchange ideas, feelings, opinions, etc.

### 4.4. Process Analysis

In order to support the validity and authenticity of the speaking assessment and assessment tools used during speaking activity and evaluation in the first level at the Language Center at UTMACH, eight observations were done. The observed teachers were asked if they informed their students about the elements of the language which would be considered for speaking performance and assessment. These elements of the language are related to fluency, pronunciation, intonation, etc. Likewise, the researchers



asked about assessment tools that they use to assess students in order to establish weaknesses and strengthens of the learners.

#### **4.4.1 Speaking activity**

For speaking activities six teachers from First Level were observed and asked about tools used for assessment.

##### **Observation 1**

###### *Preparation*

The researchers asked the teacher to let them observe his speaking class and explained the importance of observing it. They told him about the goal of analyzing the process of evaluation and the assessment tools used for developing this skill. Furthermore, previous to the observation, the observed teacher indicated that he did not use a specific tool, but he has taught the students to identify the indicators “Good”, “Fantastic”, “Good job” or “Excellent” when they participate orally. These words help him to assign a grade, and he feels more comfortable and encourages the students to perform.

###### *Organizing*

It was observed that the teacher fulfilled the three stages of the class which are: introduction, development and conclusion, but the aim of this observation was to establish assessment tools used to assess speaking activity. At the beginning, the teacher started the class with questions and this activity ended in the minute 8. Then the teacher asked students to open their books to read and complete the activity. After that, the students listened to a dialogue and were asked to memorize it. This part of speaking activity ended in the minute 24. Next, he projected a page where students had to identify places using prepositions. Additionally, the teacher asked students questions. This part of the activity ended in the minute 32.

The analysis of the first part of the observation demonstrated that the teacher applies traditional assessment which evaluates mostly the acquisition of content. In other words, the purpose of the teacher is not to measure students' speaking skill because he did not apply real life tasks to provide

Students' avenues to learn.

In addition, the teacher asked students to look at a picture of a neighborhood and made questions using new vocabulary to practice with their partners. After that, the students (in pairs) were invited to go to the board to perform the activity and at the end of each participation, the teacher said "Good" or "Fantastic" to the pairs. This activity ended in the minute 58. Finally, the teacher asked questions to check students' understanding and this part of the speaking activity ended in the minute 60.

In conclusion, the speaking activity was not completely developed, and the teacher did not provide feedback to help students to manage their own learning. Besides, the teacher did not use any assessment tool to prove the development of the speaking skill.

### *Reporting*

At the end of the speaking activity, the teacher said that he did not use any assessment tool to assess what students did. He indicated that he corrects the mistakes of the students and makes general feedback. Undoubtedly, with general feedback it is difficult to determine the strengths or weaknesses of each student. Therefore, students will hardly ever achieve to attain speaking skill and authentic communication.

## **Observation 2**

### *Preparation*

The researchers asked the teacher to let them observe his speaking class and explained the need of analyzing the process of evaluation and the assessment tools used for developing this skill. Furthermore, it was asked about the assessment tools used to assess speaking which the teacher indicated that he does not use any assessment tool or indicators to assess, and he just provides feedback.

### *Organizing*

The teacher presented the topic "Can you call me back?" and the objective of the class was "To ask someone to leave a voicemail". Then the

teacher started the class explaining expressions used to make calls for 12 minutes. After that, he asked his students to complete an activity from the book and asked questions to check the information provided by students until minute 16. Next, the students listened to a dialogue from the book, and then the teacher asked questions related to the listening, this activity lasted until minute 21. Then the teacher read a dialogue and emphasized the pronunciation and asked students to practice the dialogue with their partners until minute 36. By analyzing this first part of the class, it was noted that the teacher focused on the students' ability to memorize and recall information, instead of enhancing students' ability to apply the speaking skill to real life situations. Similarly, students were provided with limited options to demonstrate their speaking skills.

Then the teacher asked them to perform the dialogue in front of the class. At the end of this practice, the teacher wrote down a grade in a notebook; this part of the speaking activity ended in the minute 43. Finally, he concluded saying to the class that this activity was easy because the students only personalized their voice. In brief, the students received just a grade, but they did not know their strengths and weaknesses to enhance their speaking.

### *Reporting*

The teacher reported that he does not use any assessment tool to assess the elements of language, but he usually provides feedback, but the observation demonstrated that the teacher did not do any reliable feedback; on the contrary, he simply stated that it is good to do this kind of activity because the students have the opportunity to practice, but that is not feedback. Assessment goes beyond saying that the activity was good or not. Unfortunately, teachers are not aware of what feedback implies and how useful it can be for developing communication.

### **Observation 3**

#### *Preparation*

The permission to observe his class was given after letting the teacher know that the research work was focused on analyzing the process of

evaluation and the assessment tools used to develop the speaking skill. Once the teacher was asked about how and what tools she uses for assessing speaking, she only mentioned the use of a holistic rubric, but without any other valid explanation.

### *Organizing*

This observation lasted about fifty minutes. Firstly, during ten minutes it was observed that the teacher presented the topic of the unit “Family”, and also the objective of the class: “To ask students and answer questions about their family to contrast the present and past tense of *be* to practice it”, which is an important component as Middleton and Perks (2014) express that students must know “why they are learning something” (p. 109). Thus, it is fair students know about what they are learning and understand why the work is relevant.

After that, the teacher started presenting the grammatical structures and used exercises for students differentiate tenses. Besides, she asked questions to check students understanding for ten minutes. Later, the teacher divided the class into two groups and asked students to use new vocabulary to make their own sentences. Next, the teacher invited students to share their sentences with the whole class and started correcting by making the rest of the students participate. Until here, it is seen that the teacher applies instructional strategies such as direct observation, guided practice, and group work. However, some students were confused, and it took time for some of them to fully understand. For this reason, she reinforced learning goals throughout the lesson by monitoring what students did. This activity took 15 minutes. Lastly, the teacher, asked students to make affirmative, negative, or interrogative sentences, and then to contrast them. This activity was assessed in an individual and oral way and lasted 15 minutes.

On the other hand, the teacher used relevant data to guide instructional content and provided feedback to students, but she did not use appropriate instruments to support the report of final grade, and overall the developed ability in relation to the planned objective.

### *Reporting*

Although the teacher stated that she gives feedback and explains the strengths and weaknesses found during the process as a way of evaluation, in practice the observation indicated that she did not use assessment strategies or instruments valid for assessing students' performance. In fact, she did not give appropriate feedback to support the speaking grades based on the students' performance.

### **Observation 4**

#### *Preparation*

Previous to the observation, the researchers talked with the teacher in order to explain that the purpose of this activity was to examine the process of evaluation and assessment tools used with her students. The teacher agreed with the observation and informed that she uses rubrics to evaluate students and they keep the format in their notebooks. She also answered that she uses numerical score to grade students' work.

#### *Organizing*

The class was observed for around 50 minutes. In this class the teacher presented the topic "Family", and the objective of the lesson was "To learn to talk about your family and family history". She also started with a warm up activity displaying flashcards and a review to reinforce previous knowledge for ten minutes. In the first part of the class the teacher began engaging students with visual material to activate knowledge, linking present content with past and future learning experiences. Besides, the teacher addressed the lesson objective aligned to the level.

In addition, during this class the teacher asked their pupils to complete the vocabulary in the books. These activities took ten minutes. Then she invited students to listen to an audio for five minutes and then asked questions and students had to tick the correct answers and put life events in the correct order. Later, the teacher made a brief explanation of past simple rules and encouraged students to complete a table with the correct forms of *be* for ten minutes. In the course of the activities the teacher monitored the work and

checked the answers with the whole class. For the last 15 minutes, the students had an evaluation and answered questions orally and individually.

The development of final activities allowed the authors to analyze that the teacher did not use pair or group activities for motivating collaborative work. Besides, she just graded students' performance by listening to their answers and assigning a grade immediately. In other words, she did not use what she mentioned at the beginning "targeted feedback" which is to assign a grade based on rubrics or other set of prescribed criteria.

#### *Reporting*

By the end of the oral evaluation, the teacher did not provide feedback to point out areas of weaknesses or strengths so as to improve students' speaking skill. She just used a scale from one to ten to grade students' performance. Although most of the teachers of first levels said that the provision of good feedback is the most important, it was not seen during the observation. This teacher did not use any method of assessment such as pair group, role play, etc. to motivate students.

### **Observation 5**

#### *Preparation*

For the observation of this class there was a previous conversation with the teacher, likewise it was explained that the purpose of the study was to examine the process of evaluation and the assessment tools used for assessing students. Consequently, the teacher stated that when evaluating speaking, he considers elements of language such as grammar, intonation, pronunciation, and fluency. In addition, he emphasized that he does not like his students learn anything by heart.

#### *Organizing*

This class was observed for around 50 minutes and the teacher began with a review of the previous class. He asked students to remember phrases to give directions. Thus, he invited students to the board to write down as many directions as they could; this practice took around five minutes. While students

participated, he asked the whole class to correct the mistakes orally. Then the teacher asked students to write full sentences using vocabulary taught previously and supported students each time they made mistakes. The teacher also provided some explanation about “asking for and giving directions” and made students questions that they responded individually. This activity took ten minutes. During the observation, it was noticed that the teacher did not present the objective of the lesson which is important for students in order to know what the learning outcomes are. The teacher also used cooperative work strategy for promoting face to face interaction.

In the next part of the class, the teacher gave directions to evaluate students’ speaking, but first, he paired them to practice for five minutes. Once the teacher had monitored the students work, the evaluation started in front of the class. This part lasted ten minutes and after each presentation the teacher provided feedback to the whole class. Finally, it was viewed that the teacher manages the instruction based on the curriculum objective because students were evaluated in the speaking skill. However, the teacher applied informal assessment and he did not mention the parameters to be scored at the beginning of the class as he had told the authors.

### *Reporting*

The teacher commented that he usually makes students know the parameters of grading only at the beginning of the class and he does not use a tool at the end. Nevertheless, the researchers did not observe that the teacher used assessment strategies to evaluate and ensure students’ progress. Moreover, although this teacher said during the interview that he evaluates some elements of oral communication, however, the researchers observed that he did not do it.

## **Observation 6**

### *Preparation*

For the development of this observation it was asked the teacher permission some days before. Likewise, she was also informed about the objective of the research that is to examine the process of evaluation and the

assessment tools used for speaking skill. Besides, some questions about assessment tools were asked to her and she responded that the students often have oral evaluation at the end of every lesson, and she usually informs them what the parameters of evaluation are but orally.

### *Organizing*

The present class was observed for around forty minutes. The teacher started introducing the topic “places” and invited students to review vocabulary related to places for five minutes. The teacher also engaged students to remember phrases for asking for and giving directions and they had to go to the board and write the phrases down. Then she invited other students to complete the sentences to arrive at some places. It lasted five minutes. After that, the instructor asked students to complete a conversation by listening to an audio for ten minutes. The instructor provided students clear explanation and made connections of prior knowledge for further understanding but he did not give learners feedback on progress.

In the following part of the class, the teacher divided students into pairs and gave some guidelines for the speaking evaluation. Here students had to create their own map and give directions to different places using the phrases and the vocabulary they had already seen. It took them ten minutes. Lastly, students presented their work taking turns and the teacher gave the grade. To conclude, the grades were not socialized with the students and they did not receive any kind of feedback at the end of each participation.

### *Reporting*

Although the teacher pointed out that after speaking students’ performance, she gives feedback to the whole class about what they did so they can realize their mistakes; however, the assessment was not observed in the class. Assessment is seen as filler, but not as a method to foster the speaking autonomy among learners.



#### **4.4.2 Final exam**

Two teachers from First Level out of six were observed when they were administering the final exam.

##### **Observation 1**

###### *Preparation*

Previous to the observation, the researchers asked the teacher if she used assessment tools to assess speaking in the exam. She indicated that all the teachers use a holistic rubric where elements of language such as fluency, pronunciation, intonation, vocabulary are considered to evaluate the students. However, the teachers can add other elements of language or use a different rubric to assess speaking. Additionally, the teacher pointed out that she informs the students about the parameters that she uses to evaluate speaking, which are printed on the paper exam.

###### *Organizing*

A role play was used for the speaking exam. To start, the teacher asked one number from the list to establish the order of participation of the groups. Then the students took four minutes approximately to define the roles, and nine minutes to perform in a role called "The restaurant". Each student had defined his or her role which allowed to see that they were well-organized. Once they finished the role play, the teacher wrote down the grade in her registry, but without using the rubric of the exam as tool to assess the elements of language which are pivotal to develop speaking skill. All in all, the students did not know where they failed.

###### *Reporting*

The teacher expressed that she does not give students their grades verbally, and she only tells them to check the grade in the paper exam. However, the observation demonstrated that she did not use the rubric to register the observance of developed parameters during the role play. On the contrary, she used the registry to give a grade without providing any reliable feedback to indicate weaknesses and strengths of the students.

## **Observation 2**

### *Preparation*

After the researchers talked with the teacher about the objective of the observation, they asked him if he used assessment tools to assess speaking in the exam. The teacher expressed that the Language Center has a format of exam and it includes a model of holistic rubrics to assess speaking. Furthermore, the teacher indicated that he sits down with the student, shows and explains the structure of the rubric of the exam.

### *Organizing*

The teacher started the speaking exam indicating the order of participation and saying the elements of language which would be evaluated. Then the teacher provided the students the questions since the exam was based on questions and answers in pairs. Likewise, the teacher added that during the intervention each student could ask their partners to repeat the questions until three times. After that, the teacher informed students their participation turns. This observation lasted 1 minute and 30 seconds. When the oral exam finished the teacher thanked them and wrote down the grade, but he did not say anything about the speaking progress to them. To sum up, the teacher did not explain to students about their performance to complete the process of assessment which is relevant for learners.

### *Reporting*

Although the teacher added that he tells the students their grades when they finish the evaluation, the observation proved the contrary since when the students finished the oral exam, he thanked and called another pair. The idea of authentic assessment is not an important part for some teachers. The teachers need to reconsider the assessment practices as a main point to improve the skills and especially speaking competence which has not been developed successfully among learners.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The analysis revealed that although teachers indicated that they assess speaking, the study showed they have a vague knowledge of assessment tools. Although, most of the educators know about feedback, in practice, it is used in general, which is not productive because general feedback does not provide opportunities for all students due to it does not allow them to establish what elements of speech they are failing and which ones need to improve in order to achieve an authentic communication. On the contrary, if educators applied authentic and valid assessment tools, the feedback would be meaningful because the students would be able to demonstrate their speaking outcomes and teachers would provide authentic feedback.

Likewise, most of the educators have added that they use rubrics to assess speaking, but they do not do it very often. When the speaking activities from the recordings were analyzed, the results showed that they did not use them. It indicates that teachers do not know deeply about the assessment tools, and some feel comfortable working in the same way they have been working, where they emphasize the activities, but they do not do a lot to prove the development of the skill. This is unfortunate because speaking is essential for interaction, in addition to offering better employment opportunities. It draws the attention of researchers that in practice assessment speaking skill is not relevant for teachers. Even when speaking activities are excellent in the teaching learning process, they do not show authentic communication. Teachers have to take into account the assessment and its instruments as method of support to achieve students' speaking outcomes.

Moreover, the recording demonstrated that even when the teachers have a holistic rubric to follow in the final exam, they did not follow the criteria to assign the grade. On the contrary, they use the grade registry directly to write the grade and it was observed an absence of feedback on the results obtained from the holistic rubrics. However, rubrics are placed in the exam as

a requirement, but it is not something pivotal for them because at the end the educators listen to the students and assign a grade without indicating where the mistakes were and what they did well. It demonstrates that teachers are not giving the importance and use that the speaking assessment tool has although it does not take much time and even when the students consider speaking skill as one of the most important for them.

In short, it is probable that teachers need a major immersion in assessment tools to be aware of the importance of assessment as a way to improve the speaking skill. Consequently, after the researchers finished the study, they have elaborated a guide of rubrics based on the most common activities applied in classes to facilitate a valid speaking assessment to demonstrate the weaknesses and strengths of speaking in the students.

On the other hand, the researchers have considered foremost to share some recommendations which will help educators to enhance the speaking assessment. The recommendations are:

- Teachers should be aware of the importance of using analytic rubrics because they are reliable tools that provide a reasonable assessment based on each element of speech. Besides, analytic rubrics give a clear idea of students' language performance.
- Despite holistic rubric is another type of assessment tool, analytic rubric is more recommendable because it is aligned with the Common European Framework which measures the level of comprehension and communication through its standards in order to fortify this productive skill.
- Whilst analytic rubric consumes a lot of time, it does not have to constrain the teachers' work; on the contrary, teachers should organize speaking activities by means of selecting which rubrics are more important to assess without avoiding using them since rubrics support the speaking assessment process and indicate the educators where their students are failing, and what elements of speech they need to improve.

- Promote the use of an analytic rubric guide among the A1 level English teachers and other teachers from the Language Center by means of two-day workshops. The first day will be a three-hour session, and the researchers will explain the importance of speaking assessment, the types of assessment tools and the relevance and usefulness of rubrics especially analytic ones and likewise the time constraint that the application of these rubrics can have. The second day will be a three-hour session, and the researchers will share the analytic rubrics guide and explain how to use them and how to apply them in a real practice. To fulfil that workshop the researchers will bring activities to be shared with the teachers in order to do the process of speaking assessment using the analytic rubrics. At the end of the activity they will explain each criterion based on what the rubric indicates.
- Lastly, the educators will fill in a survey related to the application of the analytic rubric so as to gather their opinions which will be analyzed, published through statistical figures, and displayed to the director of the Language Center at Universidad Técnica de Machala (see Appendix E).

To conclude, this proposal seeks that the educators are immersed and more engaged with speaking assessment tools to improve the oral communication during their classes and achieve better students' outcomes.

## Chapter 6

### Proposal

#### 6.1. Introduction

The goal of teaching a foreign language is that the learners masters it. In this study, the present proposal looks for providing tools to support the speaking assessment. Before providing information of assessment tools, it is foremost to introduce the term “Communication” because the assessment tools are focused on improving it.

Developing a good communication implies the mastery of the four language skills. However, the target of this research is speaking. Palmer (2011) states “Oral communication will make it easier to teach the skills involved and will make it easier for students to become competent communicators” (p. 12). Thus, teachers and students fulfil a relevant role on communication since when there is a good interaction between the two parts, it is possible a clear communication. In addition, to have effective results, the teachers need to master the skills to facilitate learning. Consequently, speaking is vital in the teaching-learning process because it makes learners express freely in different circumstances.

Likewise, speaking may become a complex process, especially for beginners, for this reason, learners need to be immersed in constant language practices. The observation of students’ language competence is important to demonstrate understanding. Besides, this will help determine the students’ proficiency level through the assessment tool application. Therefore, according to Chapman and King (2012) “The teacher chooses the most efficient assessment tools for each purpose” (p. 1). Evidently, educators have in their hands the power of applying the most appropriate assessment tools according to the students’ needs. It implies that the gathered data will support the analysis of the results for the benefit of students’ progress. Thus, the data analysis will allow to identify students’ needs and strengths which will help make decisions in favor of learners.

Furthermore, speaking assessment requires feedback from a diverse audience; students learn more when they receive this feedback from teachers. Nevertheless, giving feedback demands a great responsibility because the teacher depends on it to improve teaching, but obviously to reach this level, teachers should have used assessment tools that support the feedback. Hence, the researchers consider necessary to adopt rubrics as instruments to support students' learning performance because they provide educators relevant information about their instruction and allow to make decisions as well, which is supported with what Quinlan (2012) points out "Rubrics are tools to help educators establish the criteria needed to make decisions in order to fairly evaluate and assess student work" (p. 15). Therefore, rubrics are not for limiting students' performance; on the contrary, they are for supporting students' grades. Quinlan also indicates that not all tasks need of a scoring rubric, but it is important to include it.

Although there are holistic and analytic rubrics, for this study the researchers have decided to collaborate with the implementation of analytic rubrics guide to empower the process of speaking assessment in A1 level English teachers at the Language Center. In short, rubrics provide students authentic feedback and constitute excellent assessment tools to determine the students' progress.

## **6.2. Justification**

The current proposal is addressed to A1 level English teachers at the Language Center at Universidad Técnica de Machala and aims to implement a guide of analytic rubrics. The guide will facilitate speaking assessment to the teachers, and they were elaborated to support the speaking activities as according to what the data analysis demonstrated, there is a poor use of assessment tools at UTMACH. On the contrary, most of them indicated that they gave feedback, but in practice it resulted unreal since there is not a tool to prove in what elements of language the students failed. Furthermore, the current didactic system of rubrics intends to make the grading process more reliable for both students and teachers.

To gather the data, the researchers surveyed 17 teachers, interviewed six teachers, surveyed 250 students and observed six speaking activities and two speaking final exams. The study determined that the educators are not applying the appropriate methods or tools to assess the speaking skill. Even though teachers indicated in the interview and survey that they did, the results of observations proved otherwise.

Consequently, the current proposal seeks to contribute with analytic rubrics that allow to enhance the grading system of speaking skill. Analytic rubrics are based on assessing the process rather than general results. When educators assess the process, they are able to specify the students' weaknesses and strengths. Additionally, what analytic rubrics seek is to prove the degree of mastery of the skill object of study.

### **6.3. Objectives**

#### **6.3.1. General objective.**

To facilitate an analytic rubrics guide to the A1 level English teachers at the Language Center to foster the improvement of the grading system of the speaking skill process.

#### **6.3.2. Specific objectives.**

- Suggest the use of analytic rubrics to identify the strengths and weaknesses of speaking skill of the A1 level students at the Language Center.
- Design an analytic rubrics guide to strengthen the speaking assessment process at the A1 level at the Language Center.
- Promote the standardization of analytic rubrics as tool to provide a fair and real grade based on what students know and need to improve.

### **6.4. Types of assessment for rubrics**

Before discussing types of assessment for rubrics, it is necessary to present some information about the term assessment. Banta and Palomba



(2015) describe assessment as “The measurement of what an individual knows and can do” (p. 1). It implies the collection of information and making judgments on language learners’ knowledge. Assessment has the purpose of giving learners diagnostic feedback on their progress and to motivate them to study. During assessment practices it is necessary to provide learners the criteria that will be used to assess their performance and which are present in the rubrics. Before informing about the rubrics, firstly it is important to establish the type of assessment whereby proposed rubrics will work.

With aforementioned, it is necessary educators have an ongoing model of assessment which fortifies the learning process and teachers’ progress where they provide effective classes and feedback. To fulfil the learning process and teachers’ progress, summative and formative assessment are mainly considered since both of them result functional, but with their differences. The summative assessment is focused on what students know and its results are verified at the end of the unit or year exams. On the other hand, formative assessment informs about what students know and based on classroom practice to make decisions for the benefit of the learners. However, its constraint is the time, but the results are more effective because teachers can act upon the results (Overall and Sangster, 2006). Rubrics can work with both types of assessment, but educators have to see which one results more effective to ensure the students’ progress.

### **6.5. Suggested rubrics**

Rubrics are a useful tool to support the learning performance and a guide on feedback. Andrade and Du (2005) state “Rubrics can teach as well as evaluate” (p. 1). Indeed, rubrics can provide valid information about students’ performance that is used by teachers to identify the learners’ weaknesses and develop their potential based on the process analysis. Rubrics are not only used for giving a grade, it pursues the students’ success, and communication is not the exception. Rubrics are essential to attain an authentic communication since for getting it, different elements of language need to be assessed.

The rubrics object of analysis are analytic and holistic ones which should be differentiated first by the criteria, and second if the rubric is general and used with similar tasks or specific and applicable to one assessment. (Brookhart, 2013). Notwithstanding, the researchers consider useful and practical to suggest analytic rubrics because they are formative and provide detailed information of students' performance in which its characteristics are analyzed one by one to determine the improvement of the skill. Therefore, when characteristics are separate rather than combined all of them in one is more productive for learners since they can be aware of their weaknesses and strengths.

## **6.6. Designing analytic rubrics**

### **Analytic Rubrics to Enhance Speaking Assessment Skill**

The use of descriptors in the rubrics are perfect for the assessment since they do not allow to make value judgments which in some cases affect the quality of score; on the contrary, analytic rubrics offer appropriate indicators to strengthen the speaking skill and authentic communication.

Based on data analysis of surveys, interview and observations applied to A1 level classes at the Language Center, the researchers have elaborated some analytic rubrics to support the students' outcomes. So that it is pivotal that the teachers empower and make the decision to apply them in their classes in order to provide authentic feedback.

The analytic rubrics proposed to assess oral activities are the following:

## Speaking assessment rubrics

### Rubric for assessing role play

Name: ..... Date: .....

Role play theme: .....

Class: .....

Performance criteria	Poor	Needs improvement	Good	Very good	Score
Clarity: The learner demonstrates clear interventions	During performance the learner shows difficulty in using the words and grammar structures appropriately which makes comprehension unclear. (1)	During performance the learner shows a little difficulty in using the words and grammar structures appropriately which makes comprehension fairly unclear. (2)	During performance the learner sometimes shows difficulty in using the words and grammar structures appropriately which makes comprehension slightly unclear. (3)	During performance the learner uses the most words and grammar structures appropriately which makes comprehension clear. (4)	
Pronunciation: The learner pronounces the words appropriately	During performance the learner poses frequent problems with pronunciation and intonation which complicates the	During performance the learner poses some problems with pronunciation and intonation which complicates the	During performance the learner poses a few problems with pronunciation and intonation which does not complicate the understanding. (2)	During performance the learner's pronunciation and intonation is very clear which allows the understanding. (3)	

	understand- ing. (0)	understand- ing. (1)			
Organization: activity is well prepared	During performance the role play looks disorganized. (0)	During performance the role play looks fairly disorganized. (1)	During performance the role play looks slightly disorganized. (2)	During performance the role play looks organized and well prepared. (3)	
TOTAL SCORE					.../10

*Note: Adapted from Using rubrics to measure and enhance student performance. Activity – Step 2 for an Analytic Rubric ([Power Point slides] by Karkehabadi, Sharon (2013). Northern Virginia Community College. Retrieved from [https://www.nvcc.edu/assessment/\\_docs/FTW5.usingrubricsmeasurestuperf-spr13.pdf](https://www.nvcc.edu/assessment/_docs/FTW5.usingrubricsmeasurestuperf-spr13.pdf)*

### Rubric for assessing questions and answers

Name: ..... Date: .....

Questions and answers theme: .....

Class: .....

Performance criteria	Poor	Needs improvement	Good	Very good	Score
Content: subject knowledge	Learner hardly ever gives information by answering questions. (1)	Learner gives little information by answering questions. (2)	Learner gives some information by answering questions. (3)	Learner gives much information by answering questions. (4)	
Analysis: detailed information	Learner does not provide any contribution to support the answers to the questions. (0)	Learner provides little contribution to support the answers to the questions. (1)	Learner provides some contribution to support the answers to the questions. (2)	Learner provides much contribution to support the answers to the questions. (3)	
Cohesion: connect ideas clearly	There is no connection between the question and the answer. (0)	There is a vague connection between the answer and the question. (1)	There is some connection between the answer and the question. (2)	There is a complete connection between the answer and the question. (3)	
<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>					.../10

*Note: Adapted from using rubrics to measure and enhance student performance. Activity – Step 2 for an Analytic Rubric ([Power Point slides] by Karkehabadi, Sharon (2013). Northern Virginia Community College. Retrieved from [https://www.nvcc.edu/assessment/\\_docs/FTW5.usingrubricsmeasurestuperf-spr13.pdf](https://www.nvcc.edu/assessment/_docs/FTW5.usingrubricsmeasurestuperf-spr13.pdf)*

## Rubric for assessing dialogues

Name: ..... Date: .....

Dialogue theme: .....

Class: .....

Performance criteria	Poor	Needs improvement	Good	Very good	Score
Presentation: clarity of the dialogue	The dialogue is not clear and unintelligible due to the speaker's volume and pronunciation. There is no eye contact with the listeners. (0)	The dialogue is somewhat clear and intelligible. There is a vague eye contact with the listeners. (1)	The dialogue is quite clear and intelligible. There is some eye contact with the listeners. (2)	The dialogue is clear and intelligible. There is full eye contact with the listeners. (3)	
Message: the goal of the message is clear	The message is unintelligible to the listener. (0)	The message is somewhat intelligible to the listener. (1)	The message is quite intelligible to the listener. (2)	The message is intelligible to the listener. (3)	
Organization: keep logical order	The dialogue does not keep sequence and is disorganized. (0)	The dialogue follows a poor sequence and is a little disorganized. (1)	The dialogue keeps somewhat of sequence and organization. (1.5)	The dialogue keeps sequence and organization. (2)	

Fluency: the ability to express ideas	There is not accuracy or security to communicate. (0)	There is poor accuracy and security to communicate. (1)	There is quite accuracy and security to communicate. (1.5)	There is accuracy and security to communicate. (2)	
TOTAL SCORE					.../10

*Note: Adapted from Using rubrics to measure and enhance student performance. Activity – Step 2 for an Analytic Rubric ([Power Point slides] by Karkehabadi, Sharon (2013). Northern Virginia Community College. Retrieved from [https://www.nvcc.edu/assessment/\\_docs/FTW5.usingrubricsmeasurestuperf-spr13.pdf](https://www.nvcc.edu/assessment/_docs/FTW5.usingrubricsmeasurestuperf-spr13.pdf)*

## Rubric for assessing presentation

Name: ..... Date: .....

Presentation theme: .....

Class: .....

Performance criteria	Poor	Needs improvement	Good	Very good	Score
Presentation: information is well presented	During presentation, the speaker does not demonstrate security with the audience which makes him/her difficult to provide effective information. (1)	During presentation, the speaker demonstrates little security with the audience which makes the information be often ignored by listeners. (2)	During presentation, the speaker demonstrates more security with the audience which makes the information be more effective. (3)	During presentation, the speaker performs as a professional and interacts naturally with listeners. (4)	
Content: well-defined information	The content is not-well defined which makes listeners misunderstand the information. (0)	The content is quite not-well defined or incomplete which makes listeners understand part of the information. (1)	The content is fairly well defined which makes listeners understand most of the information. (2)	The content is well defined which makes listeners understand and analyze the information. (3)	



Organization: activity is well prepared	There is not sequence during the presentation of the topic which makes the audience get lose. (0)	There is little organization during the presentation, but it does not support the topic. (1)	There is some organization during the presentation, but it does not support the topic. (2)	The presentation is well organized and provides extra information that supports the topic. (3)	
TOTAL SCORE					.../10

*Note: Adapted from Using rubrics to measure and enhance student performance. Activity – Step 2 for an Analytic Rubric ([Power Point slides] by Karkehabadi, Sharon (2013). Northern Virginia Community College. Retrieved from [https://www.nvcc.edu/assessment/\\_docs/FTW5.usingrubricsmeasurestuperf-spr13.pdf](https://www.nvcc.edu/assessment/_docs/FTW5.usingrubricsmeasurestuperf-spr13.pdf)*

## Rubric for assessing giving opinions

Name: ..... Date: .....

Opinion theme: .....

Class: .....

Performance criteria	Poor	Needs improvement	Good	Very good	Score
Presentation: information is well presented	During presentation, the speaker does not demonstrate security with the audience which makes him/her difficult to provide effective information. (1)	During presentation, the speaker demonstrates little security with the audience which makes the information be often ignored by listeners. (2)	During presentation the speaker demonstrates more security with the audience which makes the information be more effective. (3)	During presentation the speaker performs as a professional and interacts naturally with listeners. (4)	
Content: well-defined information	The content is not-well defined which makes listeners misunderstand the information. (0)	The content is quite not-well defined or incomplete which makes listeners understand part of the information. (1)	The content is fairly well defined which makes listeners understand most of the information. (2)	The content is well defined which makes listeners understand and analyze the information. (3)	

Organization: activity is well prepared	There is no sequence during the presentation of the topic which makes the audience get lost. (0)	There is little organization during the presentation, but it does not support the topic. (1)	There is some organization during the presentation, but it does not support the topic. (2)	The presenta- tion is well organized and provides extra information that supports the topic. (3)	
TOTAL SCORE					.../10

*Note: Adapted from using rubrics to measure and enhance student performance. Activity – Step 2 for an Analytic Rubric ([Power Point slides] by Karkehabadi, Sharon (2013). Northern Virginia Community College. Retrieved from [https://www.nvcc.edu/assessment/\\_docs/FTW5.usingrubricsmeasurestuperf-spr13.pdf](https://www.nvcc.edu/assessment/_docs/FTW5.usingrubricsmeasurestuperf-spr13.pdf)*

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### TEACHERS' SURVEY AT THE LANGUAGE CENTER AT UNIVERSIDAD TECNICA DE MACHALA

Dear teachers,

The present survey searches to know what types of assessment tools you are using to achieve the speaking skill in the students. The survey has 10 questions that have to be answered marking yes or no questions and answering questions. Your answers are valuable for this study.

Thank you beforehand for your frankness and cooperation.

Level: ....

#### **Section 1: Background information**

##### **1. I am a**

Female

Male

##### **2. How old are you?**

23-30 years old

31-35 years old

36-40 years old

41-45 years old

Above 45 years old

##### **3. How many years have you been teaching in the Language Center?**

Less than 1 year

1-2 years

2-5 years

More than 5 years



**4. How many students do you have in your current course classroom?**

.....

**Section 2: Speaking assessment**

**5. Do you include speaking assessment in your classroom?**

Yes

No

**6. If you say “No”, What is the reason you do not assess learners’ speaking competence in the classroom?**

a. Time constraint

b. Reliability issue (inappropriateness in high stakes test situation)

c. Learners’ insufficient proficiency

d. Annoyed about designing test battery including defining scoring criteria

e. Others:

.....  
 .....

**7. The real purpose of assessment**

Please indicate in effect for what purpose you employ classroom speaking assessment, and approximately how much time you typically spend on them in your curriculum.

	Time spent (hrs)
Assessment of students for class placement	
Pre-topic planning	
Ongoing programming (lesson planning)	

Ongoing student assessment (e.g. marking, feedback)	
Final evaluation of topic/unit of work	
Others:	

**8. Please indicate the ideal purpose of classroom speaking assessment and the importance. (most important = 5, somewhat important = 4, neutral = 3, less important= 2, and least important = 1)**

<b>The ideal purpose of classroom speaking assessment</b>	<b>Importance</b>
To give learners feedback on progress	1 2 3 4 5
To give teachers feedback on learners' progress	1 2 3 4 5
To diagnose strengths and weaknesses and set further learning objectives	1 2 3 4 5
To indicate levels of general speaking proficiency	1 2 3 4 5
To indicate the students' achievement of course objectives	1 2 3 4 5
Others: .....	1 2 3 4 5

**9. Methods of assessment: Please indicate 1) which of the following methods you use in your course; and 2) how many times you use it (or them) during the course.**

<b>Methods of assessment</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
observation of students in typical speaking activities during regular classes	
marking of specific test tasks	
peer assessment	
self-assessment	
Others: .....	

This is for those who choose the second option, “**marking of specific test tasks**”. Test tasks: please write **brief descriptions** of up to 4 test tasks/activities which you are using for your classroom assessment of speaking and tick the **student grouping** you use.

(e.g. Role play: memorize the short dialogue given in the textbook and demonstrate in a pair.)

a. Student grouping:

Individual     Pair     Small group     Whole class

b. Student grouping:

Individual     Pair     Small group     Whole class

c. Student grouping:

Individual     Pair     Small group     Whole class

d. Student grouping:

Individual     Pair     Small group     Whole class

**10. Please indicate the format of feedback that you use.**

- a. Only a score of marking
- b. Criterion description plus score of marking
- c. Oral feedback given
- d. Written feedback given
- e. Rubric
- f. Others:

.....

Source: Adapted from Lee, S. (2010). *Current practice of classroom speaking assessment in secondary schools in South Korea*. (Master's dissertation). The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia.

**APPENDIX B**

**INTERVIEW OF THE FIRST LEVEL TEACHERS AT THE LANGUAGE  
CENTER AT UNIVERSIDAD TECNICA DE MACHALA**

Dear teachers,

The present interview seeks to know the vision of the teachers of First level regarding assessment tools used to assess speaking skill and establish points of view to improve this skill.

Thank you beforehand for your frankness and cooperation.

Date: .....

Level: .....

1. What is your language teaching approach?

.....  
.....

2. What are your assessment methods?

.....  
.....

3. What is the language element focused on the assessment?

.....  
.....

4. How do you perceive the function of classroom-speaking assessment?

.....  
.....

5. Do you perceive any positive effects of classroom-speaking assessment on teaching and learning?

.....  
.....

6. If you have any difficulty in conducting classroom-speaking assessment, what are they?

.....  
.....

7. What are the most useful sources of feedback about your performance for you? Can you give an example? Why those?

.....  
.....

a. What are the most useful sources of feedback in your class?

.....  
.....

b. What about self-assessment? Do you do it? Is it useful? Why or why not?

.....  
.....

8. What is assessment for? What does it involve?

.....  
.....

9. What do you think are the best tools to assess speaking skill?

.....  
.....

10. Have you used rubrics to assess speaking skill? Which ones? How many times have you used it/them in this level?

.....  
.....

Source: Adapted from Lee, S. (2010). *Current practice of classroom speaking assessment in secondary schools in South Korea*. (Master's dissertation). The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia.

## APPENDIX C

### SURVEY FOR STUDENTS AT THE LANGUAGE CENTER AT UNIVERSIDAD TECNICA DE MACHALA

Dear students,

The present survey searches to know the attitudes of students of first level towards oral communication in the English classroom. The survey has 8 questions that must be answered **marking with an X** on the option of your preference. Your answers are valuable for this study.

Thank you for your collaboration.

Sex: M (....) F (....)

Level: (.....)

Age: (.....)

#### Questionnaire in English

**1. Do you think English is fun?**

Not fun at all                       quite fun                       Very fun

**2. Are you good at English?**

Not good at all                       quite good  Very good

**3. What do you think is the most important skill of English?**

Reading                       Speaking                       Writing                       Listening

**4. What do you think about speaking English in the lessons?**

Do not like it at all     Do not like it     Like it     Like it a lot

**5. How active are you orally when you communicate in...**

**a) ... your class?**

Not so active     Quite active     Active     Very active



**b) ... small groups?**

Not so active  Quite active  Active  Very active

**c) ...pairs?**

Not so active  quite active  Active  Very active

**5. What factors does affect your activity when you practice oral Communication in English?**

**a) What students do in group?**

Does not affect me at all  affects me  Affects me a lot

**b) If the topic is interesting**

Does not affect me at all  affects me  Affects me a lot

**c) If the teacher is present**

Does not affect me at all  affects me  Affects me a lot

**d) If I feel confident in the classroom**

Does not affect me at all  affects me  Affects me a lot

**e) If the teacher assesses me**

Does not affect me at all  affects me  Affects me a lot

**f) If I do not know all the words in English**

Does not affect me at all  affects me  Affects me a lot

**g) The size of the group, if we talk in the whole class, half the class or smaller groups**

Does not affect me at all  affects me  Affects me a lot

**6. How often do you practice oral communication in the English lessons?**

Not so often  Quite often  Often  Very often

Source: Adapted from Törnqvist, A. (2008). Oral communication in the English language classroom: A study of the attitudes of some English teachers and 9th grade pupils in Sweden towards oral communication in the English classroom.  
<http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:132912/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

## APPENDIX D

### ENCUESTA A LOS ESTUDIANTES DE PRIMER NIVEL DEL CENTRO DE IDIOMAS DE LA UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA DE MACHALA

Queridos estudiantes,

El presente trabajo busca conocer las aptitudes de los estudiantes del primer nivel hacia la comunicación oral en la clase de Inglés. La encuesta tiene ocho preguntas que deben ser respondidas **marcando con una X** en la opción de su preferencia. Sus respuestas son valiosas para esta investigación.

Gracias por su colaboración.

Sexo: Masculino (....) Femenino (....) Nivel: (.....) Edad: (.....)

#### Cuestionario

**1. ¿Usted piensa que el inglés es divertido?**

No es divertido del todo  Bastante divertido  Muy divertido

**2. ¿Es usted bueno en inglés?**

No muy bueno  Bastante bueno  Muy bueno

**3. ¿Cuál considera usted que es la destreza más importante del idioma Inglés?**

Lectura  Hablada  Escritura  Audio

**4. ¿Qué es lo que usted piensa acerca de las actividades orales en clases?**

No le gustan del todo  Le gustan

No le gustan  Le gustan mucho

**5. ¿Cuán activo eres oralmente cuando te comunicas en.....**

**a) ... tu clase?**

No muy activo  Bastante activo  Activo  Muy activo

**b)... grupos pequeños?**

No tan activo  Bastante activo  Activo  Muy activo

**c)...parejas?**

No tan activo  Bastante activo  Activo  Muy activo

**5. ¿Qué factores afectan la actividad de ustedes cuando se comunican verbalmente en Inglés?**

**a) Lo que los compañeros hacen en el grupo**

No me afecta del todo  Me afecta  Me afecta mucho

**b) Si el tema es interesante**

No me afecta del todo  Me afecta  Me afecta mucho

**c) Si el profesor está presente**

No me afecta del todo  Me afecta  Me afecta mucho

**d) Si me siento confiado en la clase**

No me afecta del todo  Me afecta  Me afecta mucho

**e) Si el profesor me evalúa**

No me afecta del todo  Me afecta  Me afecta mucho

**f) Si no sabes todas las palabras en inglés**

No me afecta del todo  Me afecta  Me afecta mucho

**g) El tamaño del grupo, si le hablamos a toda la clase, a la mitad de la clase o a pequeños grupos**

No me afecta del todo  Me afecta  Me afecta mucho

**7. ¿Con qué frecuencia usted practica la comunicación oral en las clases?**

No muy a menudo

A menudo

Bastante a menudo

Muy a menudo

Source: Adapted from Törnqvist, A. (2008). Oral communication in the English language classroom: A study of the attitudes of some English teachers and 9th grade pupils in Sweden towards oral communication in the English classroom.  
<http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:132912/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

## APPENDIX E

### UNIVERSIDAD TECNICA DE MACHALA CENTRO DE EDUCACION CONTINUA CENTRO DE IDIOMAS

#### SURVEY ABOUT THE USE OF ANALYTIC RUBRIC

Dear colleagues,

The present survey searches to know your opinions about the application of analytic rubrics in the speaking assessment skill. The survey has 9 questions that must be answered **marking Yes or No.**

Thank you for your collaboration.

- 1) Do you think that the analytic rubric is useful?  
**Yes**       **No**
- 2) Do you consider that the teacher should center on each element of speech?  
**Yes**       **No**
- 3) Do you believe that the professor should assess based on concrete aspects of the language?  
**Yes**       **No**
- 4) Do you think that the analytic rubric improves the students' performance?  
**Yes**       **No**
- 5) Do you consider that the analytic rubric is a reliable tool to establish speaking strengths and weaknesses?  
**Yes**       **No**
- 6) Do you believe that the analytic rubric allows the teachers to describe concrete language elements?  
**Yes**       **No**
- 7) Does the analytic rubric improve the quality of the student language learning?  
**Yes**       **No**
- 8) Do you think that the analytic rubric permits the students to do self-assessment?  
**Yes**       **No**
- 9) Do you consider that this kind of rubric improves the quality of grades avoiding subjectivity?  
**Yes**       **No**
- 10) Do you believe that the analytic rubric can be employed as a guide to provide specific feedback?  
**Yes**       **No**

## APPENDIX F

UNIVERSIDAD TECNICA DE MACHALA  
CENTRO DE EDUCACIÓN CONTINUA  
CENTRO DE IDIOMAS

*Mano*  
*Machala*  
*23-02-2018*  
*OS*

Machala, 23 de febrero del 2018

Ing.  
Javier Bermeo Pacheco  
**DIRECTOR DEL CENTRO DE EDUCACION CONTINUA**

De mi consideración.-

Por medio de la presente yo Micaela Janneth Lupercio Cobaña docente del Centro de Idiomas de la Universidad Técnica de Machala y Verónica Mabel García Luna docente del Colegio de Bachillerato Pasaje solicitamos a usted Sr. Director del Centro de Educación Continua muy comedidamente senos permita realizar la aplicación de encuestas a docentes y estudiantes de Primer nivel, así como la aplicación de las fichas de observación de clases, y aplicación de rubrica a partir del 27 de febrero, estos resultados nos servirán para establecer la propuesta del trabajo de tesis con el tema: "Analytic Rubric to support the existing assessment tools used by teachers to enhance the speaking skill with the first level students in the Language Center at UTMACH".

Este trabajo será de mucho aporte a la institución para el proceso de evaluación de la destreza hablada.

Por la favorable a la presente petición agradecemos de antemano su colaboración.

Atentamente,

  
Lic. Micaela Janneth Lupercio Cobeña

  
Lic. Verónica Mabel García Luna



Presidencia  
de la República  
del Ecuador



Plan Nacional  
de Ciencia, Tecnología,  
Innovación y Saberes



SENESCYT  
Secretaría Nacional de Educación Superior,  
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## DECLARACIÓN Y AUTORIZACIÓN

Nosotros, MICAELA JANNETH LUPERCIO COBEÑA, con C.C: # 0703767749 y VERÓNICA MARBEL GARCÍA LUNA con C.C: # 0704009257, autoras del trabajo de titulación: IMPLEMENTING A GUIDE OF ANALYTIC RUBRICS IN THE ASSESSMENT OF SPEAKING SKILL OF A1 LEVEL STUDENTS AT THE LANGUAGE CENTER AT UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA DE MACHALA (UTMACH), previo a la obtención del título de **Magister en Enseñanza de Inglés como Idioma Extranjero** en la Universidad Católica de Santiago de Guayaquil.

1.- Declaro tener pleno conocimiento de la obligación que tienen las instituciones de educación superior, de conformidad con el Artículo 144 de la Ley Orgánica de Educación Superior, de entregar a la SENESCYT en formato digital una copia del referido trabajo de titulación para que sea integrado al Sistema Nacional de Información de la Educación Superior del Ecuador para su difusión pública respetando los derechos de autor.

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Guayaquil, 19 de diciembre del 2018

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## **REPOSITORIO NACIONAL EN CIENCIA Y TECNOLOGÍA**

### **FICHA DE REGISTRO DE TESIS/TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN**

<b>TEMA Y SUBTEMA:</b>	Implementing a guide of analytic rubrics in the assessment of speaking skill of A1 level students at the Language Center at Universidad Técnica de Machala (UTMACH).		
<b>AUTOR(ES)</b>	Micaela Janneth Lupercio Cobeña , Verónica Marbel García Luna		
<b>REVISOR(ES)/TUTOR(ES)</b>	Vera Asang Rebeca, Alvarado Mejía María de Lourdes / Jarrín Hunter Ximena Marita		
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<b>ÁREAS TEMÁTICAS:</b>	Linguistics, Methodology, Research		
<b>PALABRAS CLAVES/ KEYWORDS:</b>	Speaking skill, assessment tools, analytic rubrics, analysis, guidelines		
<b>RESUMEN/ABSTRACT:</b>	<p>One of the main challenges faced by EFL instructors in higher education is to determine with accuracy the level of improvement attained in the speaking skill of their learners. The present research project has the purpose of consolidating the implementation of effective assessment tools that strengthen the monitoring of how L2 oral productive language skills are developed at the Language Center at Universidad Técnica de Machala (UTMACH). This study was conducted under the premises of action research where quantitative and qualitative methods were applied. To begin, a review of the literature was performed considering the relevance and setbacks of L2 speaking assessment taking into account the elements of oral production. Afterwards, an analysis of how analytic rubrics contribute to find strengths and detect weaknesses in the speaking performance of target students. The research hereunder gathered data by means of surveys on both teachers and students, interview of EFL educators, and class observation reports. The information obtained went through a qualitative-quantitative analysis providing elements of judgment to conclude that in general, oral examinations lacked of analytic rubrics in detriment of the formative assessment. Thereupon, a proposal was prepared to cope with the aforementioned academic issue. It consisted of the elaboration of a booklet with guidelines to implement speaking rubrics efficiently during the English teaching-learning process.</p>		
<b>ADJUNTO PDF:</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SI	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	
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