

## **CHAPTER: ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 General Background**

If there is something more to make us feel proud as human beings, that is no doubt our unique property 'language'. It is so because only the human beings can cross the mystery of linguistic frontier. We can claim that language is a dominant factor to uplift the present world a step ahead in the path of modernization and civilization. By the help of language we are able to share ideas, feelings, joys, sorrows and almost everything with everyone at anytime. The language demarcates us from the rest of the world. We can endlessly multiply the ideas to ink about the language and its importance at present era. However, to sum up about language we can present some definitions of language given by different scholars as follows:

Waren, (1981, p.38) mentions "It is the universal medium for conveying the common facts and feelings of everyday life and philosophers searching after truth and all that lies between". Likewise, Devitt, (1999, p.1) defines language as "A quick and painless way of passing on the discoveries of one generation to the next. To borrow words of Richard et al. (1999, p.196), "Language is the system of human communication which consists of the structured arrangement of sound (or their written representation) into larger units e.g. morphemes, words, sentences, literalness." According to Crystal (2003, p.255), language is a "French term introduced by Ferdinand de Saussure to refer to the human biological faculty of speech."

The above definitions guide us to think that language is a significant property of the entire human beings. It is the most valuable single possession of the human race. Everyone in every walk of life is concerned with language in a practical way for we make use of it in virtually everything we do. It is the medium by which we can all be in touch to each other to exist in this world.

### **1.1.1 English and Its Importance in Nepal**

The conceptualization of language teaching has a long, fascinating, but, rather tortuous history. It is one of the most challenging and artistic phenomena. So, the trend of teaching language has been a growing issue. If we glance the present linguistic era almost no nook and corner of the world is being untouched by the English language. Obviously, people are learning the English language for absolutely different purposes and needs but one fact is that the number of its learners is huge so is case with Nepal, too. Hundreds of languages are in existence in this huge world. However, number of speakers, development of language, their fame etc varies to each other. Particularly, the English language has been a language with growing popularity. Generally, no language is more superior, prestigious and valuable from the communicative perspective; however, because of various reasons the number of the people teaching and learning English has been increased rapidly. It is almost impossible to challenge the present world in the absence of knowledge of the English language.

In the context of Nepal as well, English is considerably in course of growing popularity. Basically, its impact is remarkably noticeable in academic as well as other subsequent fields e.g. tourism, industries, commerce and trade. So, learning English has a vital role to plunge into the depth of the knowledge and to explore the technologies. And, for the non-native speakers of English, the most widely practiced method to learn it is through teaching the English language. Consequently, thousands of private English medium schools and teaching English language institutes have been established to compensate the thirst of English in our country.

If we turn the pages of history regarding the initiation of the English language in Nepal, it takes no more time. Whenever, we talk about the arrival of English in Nepal, we have to remember the first Rana prime minister of Nepal, Jung Bahadur Rana. When he visited Britain in 1910 B.S. he was immensely influenced by the splendid progress made by the British people over there. He considered that the root cause of such a progress was the

English language. So he inspired all his family members to learn English and for that he established Durbar School in the same year, which was opened for public after 32 years i.e. in 1942 B.S. Thus, Durbar School is the pioneer to spread English throughout the nation. Tri-Chandra College, along with its establishment in 1975 B.S, gave English the status of compulsory subject. Later, NESP (2028 B.S.) introduced English from the primary level i.e. grade four. Now, it is the compulsory subject up to Bachelor level and optional subject at school and university level.

From the above-mentioned description, we can easily predict that English has been a fascinating subject from the past time in Nepal. At present also it has its prestigious presence in our country. Different efforts have been made for the betterment of teaching and learning this language.

### **1.1.2 Language Teaching and Testing**

Language teaching and testing are inseparable like the two sides of a coin. The presence of one directly implies the presence of another as well. Testing in a broad sense has always been an inherent part of teaching. Assessment of learning is as old as education itself. From the time when teaching began, the teacher has always been keen to know the extent to which his teaching has been effective in making the learner understand what has been taught. Unless, the teacher is sure about the achievement of the students after his/her teaching he may not accomplish his responsibility efficiently.

Teaching language is always directed by certain objectives. That is to say, if a teacher teaches something, it means s/he wants his learners gain something. So, to determine whether the objectives of teaching are achieved, testing should be administered. If the students' result is satisfactory, it reflects the success of teaching otherwise there is no meaning of teaching. No matter how talented, experienced and proficient the teacher is, successful teaching is a challenging phenomenon. Teaching in the absence of testing is like a journey without a destination. Testing always provides direction and provides feedback to both the teachers and learners. It informs the language teachers that what difficulties their pupils are facing. It also confirms the reforms to be implied in course of

teachers' pedagogical voyage. Consequently, there is a sound co-ordination between the teachers' instruction and the learners' learning. Davies (1990) accepts that language testing as the central activity for language teaching, he further argues that for language testing, applied linguistics is the appropriate discipline to fit in. The role of language testing in applied linguistics is paramount. According to Richards et al. (1985, p.291), teaching and testing are interrelated disciplines. Test is the procedure, for measuring ability, knowledge or performance.

Thus, there is a vital role of testing in language teaching and learning process in the sense that testing is a part of language teaching and it has a lot to do with language education. Testing reveals that whether the teaching is effective or not. It controls the teachers to follow the pedagogical route with previously determined objectives.

It informs the ability of the students and amount of their learning. Moreover, it is the central key to unlock the success of language teaching and learning.

### **1.1.3 Language Testing: Theoretical Perspective**

Testing is defined variously in various situations. It is because the way it is perceived differently in various situations. But in a general sense it can be designed as the examination or trial of the qualities of a person or thing. Language testing, on the other hand, is a cover term to refer to any means of checking what students can do and they cannot do with language.

Testing is one of the most commonly used method or procedure to examine, judge and decide about one's performance in the given language. In case of language learning, it is very important to find out the students' performance, it is not only limited to language but it can be used in other aspects and field. Language testing is an academic testing. The origin of modern language testing is not so distant. Despite testing being so nicely interwoven in teaching ever since teaching began, it was only after the world war second, the idea of language testing appeared as a distinct activity.

According to Wardhaugh (1986), several factors have been contributory to the development of interest in systematized language testing after the war. Basically, the wartime crisis of language in the foreign countries led the United States to initiate language programmes which needed evaluation for their effectiveness. The need for the American Military in connection with ongoing war, to make them able to understand English in a short span of time put pressure on them to look for quick but effective ways to learn a foreign language. The efforts made under such circumstances resulted in the development of different approaches to language teaching and consequently language testing. So, it is remarkable that language testing is an independent discipline; the notion of what is to be tested in language is still under criticism and is changing throughout the times.

Initially, it was in focus that language can be taught through its grammar and translation and thus, the part to be tested in language is the grammar, which we mark as the pre-discrete, structuralism approach of language testing. Later, it was criticized on the ground that it was traditional and conventional and that language is not merely a collection of set of rules of grammar. It is in fact, something beyond the firm statistical grammar i.e. the contexts and its facets.

The notion of discrete point language testing came into existence, focusing that language is not merely grammar but a conjugation of other elements or aspects like: phonology, lexicon, grammar and syntax in a mechanistic way. So, language test should test all these aspects of language. Later, against this notion came the approach of integrating testing. Oller (1988), the proponent of this notion, argues that language elements interact with each other for meaning and, if language is broken into pieces, the crucial properties of language are lost. It focuses that integrative tests attempt to assess a learner's capacity to use many bits of language all to the same time, rather than bit-by-bit and once at a time.

There also came the concept of communicative language testing which focuses that language test should test one's communicative proficiency of competence. Yet, it is criticized for the reason that a test cannot create a real life situation in a language

classroom and test. However, we can simply desire to the point that, language testing is a complicated subject as language bears both the characteristics of the social and cultural contexts of its origin, whereas, testing is something quite statistical. So, a test to be a true language test, it should possess both the properties and characteristics like practicality, validity, reliability etc. and the particular situation and time in which the language is used. Heaton, (1988, p. 7) says, “Successful communication is situation which simulates real life and is the best test of mastery of a language”.

Yet, the matter of what is to be tested is still as an issue undealt with. Now, connecting it with test of speaking, we again have the dilemma on what to test in testing speaking, since, speaking is rather sensitive dependent skill with lots of complications. And, it is not even wise to leave, or abolish the fundamental feature of the language which cannot be ignored. And, reading and writing are its imperfect imitation. Besides, nothing can be used for its alternatives.

#### **1.1.4 Speaking Skill: An Introduction**

Speaking is a primary productive skill. The other skills are listening, writing and reading. Speaking proficiency is a major part of language learning. In fact, language teaching and learning without this skill is not only incomplete but also impossible. Speaking is a very complex psychological process in association with the involvement of different organs of speech. It is not just a matter of uttering numerous words and phrases but to use them properly in an appropriate situation in an acceptable way. Since language is primarily for communication, to develop the speaking skill of the learners is foremost important thing. Learning to speak in a foreign language seems obviously the most important skill because those who can communicate in that language are obviously referred to as the speaker of that language. Indeed there is no meaning of cognitive linguistic knowledge unless the learners are able to apply it in their practical life. For example, if a learner gets mastery over the grammar and all linguistic rules of the English language theoretically but s/he cannot make use of it to express his idea in practical speech, there is no significance of his knowledge. Therefore, in general building speaking skill means being proficient to

communicate in the spoken form of particular language. In this sense also speaking skill deserves a major place in language learning process. Thus sharpening the learners' speaking skill is very essential. While writing a piece of information we can think, re-think, edit, re-edit, and ask help from others. But it is not applicable while speaking. It is like a bullet which cannot be back once it is fired. When we speak in a wrong way the message is automatically interpreted wrongly by the listener but there is no chance of erasing and correcting it. This view asserts the complexity of the act of speaking. It also demands a considerable effort to be spent to develop the speaking skill of the language learners.

In the view of Khaniya, (2005, p.133): Speaking is a very complex activity in the sense that it is difficult to describe how utterances are processed and how they once out while speaking. Speaking takes place in a situation where the speaker is under pressure to produce his utterances without having much time to organize what and how he wants to say.

Similarly, to borrow the ideas of Bygate (1991, p.240): Speaking is a skill which deserves attention every bit as much as skills, in both first and second languages. Our learners often need to be able to speak with confidence in order to carry out many of their basic transactions. It is the skill by which they are most frequently judged, and through which they may make or lose friends. It is the vehicle par excellence of social solidarity, of social ranking, of professional advancement and of business. Perhaps, then the teaching of speaking merits more thought.

Speaking is really very essential skill of language. Therefore, developing this skill in the students is an option less task for language teaching and learning process. In the case of

second language learning the ultimate target is to communicate in the foreign language. In order to do so, we should focus our attention towards the speaking skill of the learners.

### **1.1.5 Elements of Speaking Skill**

In a plain ordinary way, elements of speaking refer to the skill or process involved in speech. To teach speaking skill it is necessary to have clear understanding of the processes involved in speech. Through speech, man expresses his emotions, communicates his intentions, reacts to other person and situations, and influences other human being.

The teaching of the speaking skill involves two levels of the activity. They are forging instrument and practice in its use. According to Rivers, (1968 p.162), “The forging of the instrument requires much practice in the arbitrary association of the new language; lexical items, morphological and syntactical patterns and sentence types”. And they suggest the following elements of the speaking skill:

- a) Knowledge of grammar and vocabulary of language: this skill involves the knowledge of morphology, syntax, semantics and lexicon.
- b) Knowledge of rules of speaking: the aspects of rules of speaking involve:
  - Knowing how to use and begin different types of speech events.
  - Knowing which address forms should be used with different people and different situations
  - Knowing how to use different types of speech acts such as: requests, apologies, thanks, commands etc.
- c) Knowledge of appropriate use of language: the knowledge of the appropriate of language is inevitable to the speaking skill of language. According to the situations we can use the language.



d) Knowledge of pronunciation: pronunciation involves sounds, stress, intonation, rhythm, accent, etc. Similarly, same word can convey different meanings, if it is pronounced differently or shifting stress from one syllabus to next.

So far as the skill is concerned; it is the ability to do something expertly and well. Among the four skills, speaking is one of the most significant skills. In the acquisition of new language, it is a productive skill. There is a popular saying “practice makes the man perfect”. Speaking is a skill, which improves with practice. Regular practice makes our speech fluent and accurate. Speaking is the most inseparable ingredient to communicate our thoughts and ideology. So we should practice to make the speech fluent.

### **1.1.6 Speaking Test**

Testing speaking generally means to measure the communicative ability of the learners. But it is not so easy to evaluate one’s communicative proficiency because speaking is a complex psychological process. In the idea of Heaton (1988), the testing of speaking has to do with the ability to interact. Speaking is not merely a monolithic ability making monologues. It is mainly based on successful interactions. Testing speaking ability offers plenty of scope for meeting the criteria for communicative testing, mainly the tasks developed within this paradigm should be purposive, interesting and motivating, with a positive wash back effect on teaching that precedes the test; interaction should be a key feature; there should be a degree of inter-subjectivity among participants; the output should be to a certain extent unpredictable; a realistic context should be provided and processing should be done in real time. Perhaps more than in any other skill there is the possibility of building into a test a number of the dynamic characteristics of actual communication. So, to test a language, one’s speaking skill should be tested.

According to Heaton (1988, p.88): Testing the ability to speak is the most important aspect of language test. However, at all stages beyond the elementary levels of mimicry and repetition, it is an extremely difficult skill to test, as it is far too

complex a skill to permit any reliable analysis to be made for the purpose of objective testing.

Speaking comprises of sound units and the connected speech. So, testing of speaking should not test merely one's fluency but also the other aspects of speech, e.g. phones, pronunciation, suprasegmental features and others. So, testing of speaking in English seems and rather best way to test all the aspects and skill of a language, in a covering but a short way. While testing speaking we can check one's grammaticality, suprasegmental features, appropriateness and pronunciation. Moreover, language is speech not writing so speaking should be tested. Testing of speaking thus, is of vital importance and is a sort of genuine one.

According to Bygate (1997), speaking involves two kinds of demands on the speaker; i.e. processing conditions and test can take place at two levels: Sound Discrimination and Comprehension of connected speech. Testing sound discrimination can include the followings:

- Testing individual sound discrimination
- Stress
- Intonation

Testing these elements of speaking can be done by using objective test. The comprehension of connected speech takes the form of oral communication or interaction. The demand of tests of testing sound discrimination and comprehension of connected speech one of the different kinds. To define it in an elaborated way, there are mainly three components of speaking skill as:

1. Linguistic (or pronunciation) component
2. Communicative component
3. Social component

Linguistic or pronunciation component refers to the skill of how to say a word in isolation or in connected speech. And, this component, as mentioned earlier, includes: sounds, stress and intonation. So it is quite clear that, in the test of speaking, if it is a written test, it will test one's linguistic performance in term of testing his ability of producing sound in isolation or in connected speech. Likewise, Harmer, (2001) argues that connected speech, expressive devices, lexis and grammar and negotiation language should be focused while testing speaking.

Khaniya (2005, p.135) mentions: From a testing point of view, the major issue

in communication or interaction is how to set tasks that serve the purpose.

Weighting is another problem in testing speaking. In testing, decision are needed about what constitutes effective performance and how is realized in test criteria.

In the same way Bygate (1994), argues that we often make judgments about a person's cultural or educational background on the basis of the quality of their spoken language. At the same time, speaking skill is often neglected in the classroom of and second language. Sometimes, teachers themselves may lack confidence in speaking in the target language or because it is not tested in final examination. However, the importance of speaking cannot be underestimated as our students often need to be able to speak with confident in order to carry out many of their most basic transaction.

On the other hand Heaton, (1988, p. 88) says: Questions relating to the criteria

for measuring the speaking skills and to the weighting given to such components as correct pronunciation remain largely unanswered. It is possible for people to produce practically all the correct sounds but still be unable to communicate their ideas appropriately and effectively. On the other hand, people can make numerous errors in both phonology and syntax and yet succeed in communication often

depends as much on the listener as on the speaker; a particular listener may have better ability to decode the foreign speaker's message or may share a common nexus of ideas with him or her, thereby making communication simpler.

From the above details we can derive the conclusion that if the test of speaking manages to test the language in terms of a sound in particular and also in connected speech along with other intended aspects to be tested, then, we can call it a valid and a reliable test, which every test should inherit for maintaining the standard.

### **1.1.7 Qualities of a Good Test**

A test is intended to determine the performance of the learners in language learning. Davies, (1968) has mentioned that the good test is an obedient servant since it follows and apes the teaching: the test should have positive backwash. To have positive and useful backwash, we have to consider the following qualities of a good test.

#### **a) Reliability**

A fundamental criterion against which any language test has to be judged is its reliability. A test is supposed to be reliable if it is consistent and stable, and, hence predictable and accurate. Moser and Kalton as cited in Kumar (1996, p.156) say, "The greater the degree of consistency and stability in an instrument the greater is its reliability. Therefore, a scale or test is reliable to the extent that repeat measurements made by it under constant conditions will give the same result." There are three aspects of reliability: the circumstances in which the test is taken, the way in which it is marked and the uniformity of the assessment it makes. Only a reliable test can scale the students' actual ability. Testing in the absence of reliability is meaningless. Thus, a good test should possess reliability as one of its major qualities.

#### **b) Validity**

Validity as a quality of a good test refers to the extent to which the test measures what it is intended to measure and nothing else. In other words, validity is the degree to which the test actually measures what it is supposed to measure. Theoretically, a test is said to be valid if it measures accurately what it is intended to measure. But in practice, no test can be absolutely valid or invalid. Therefore, validity is the relative term and can be defined as the degree of accuracy of a test. There are different types of validity like content validity, face validity, construct validity and criterion- related validity.

### **c) Practicality**

The main question of practicality is administrative. There should be well planning about materials, time, learners, arrangements and preparations. A test must be well organized in advance. Tests should be as economical as possible in terms of time and cost.

The above qualities are a few qualities of a test. Apart from these qualities, speaking test has its own qualities, which are described below.

### **1.1.8 Qualities of a Good Speaking Test**

Speaking is the primary productive skill. It is a very complex activity in the sense that it is difficult to describe how utterances are processed and how they come out while speaking. In testing speaking we have to test how the speakers speak and how they come out making an oral interaction consistent, relevant and meaningful. We should test whether the speaker has fluency, accuracy and appropriacy or not, while he or she is involved in the interaction. At that time we have to take care of time also. How much time he or she takes to produce an utterance it also should be tested. It should test a great deal of compromise, selection of vocabulary, and construction of utterance, tuning, turn taking and turn giving etc. speaking test is mainly based on the successful interaction and it involves the production and comprehension also. Weir (1990) argues that the most important thing in testing speaking is to determine explicitly what activities of the person to be tested are supposed to perform. Once these activities are set, another important task is to design test tasks that require test to perform the activities in a dynamic and flexible

manner. Likewise, the situation where the speaker interacts with the others is also important for testing because testing speaking does not take place in isolation. Speaking ability of the learners to interact varies from the situation to situation. A minor change in the situation may lead him to appear different in the way he produces utterances. So that communication requires not only the linguistic knowledge but also the ability to use the language appropriately in social context. Thus, it should choose the appropriate norms to certain situation.

While we are testing speaking, we can't separate it from listening too. In normal speech situation, the two skills are interdependent. It is impossible to hold any meaningful conversation without understanding what is being said and without making oneself understood at the same time. So, it should, therefore, be understood that while testing speaking in a way listening also should be tested. From the testing point of view speaking test should generate information from a speaker that can be representative sample based on specified content. The relationship between the test item and the course of objectives should be apparent. The test task should be relevant to the language activities that are activities are expected to be exercised under the given course content.

The quality of a good speaking test depends on the materials which are used for the test that enhance the positive influence on the students' performance. Mostly the audio or video recordings are used for speaking test. According to Hughes (2003), the techniques which are required to elicit information are: interview, interaction and response to the materials.

Allison, (1999) informs that the activities to be included in a test of speaking are discussion, conversation with the learner, oral presentation, learner-learner discussion or decision making role-play, interview (both controlled and free), learner-learner description and reaction ( e.g. describe\ draw pictures, map etc) from filling, making appropriate response question and answer, reading blank dialogues, using a picture (story) giving instruction,\ description, explanation retelling story from written stimulus,

reading aloud, translation, interpretation, sentence completion, collection, transformation, repetition, interpretation, sentence completion, correction, transformation, repetition, etc.

Khaniya, (2005) adds that turn taking, signaling for a turn, allowing others to take a turn are also taken into account while testing speaking in an interacting situation. According to Bygate, (1987) and Hughes, (2003) while testing speaking, the test should be able to test the following skills of the speaker:

### **A) Informational Skills**

Candidates should be able to:

- Provide personal, non-personal, and required information
- Describe sequence of events
- Give instructions and explanation
- Present argument
- Express need, requirements, and performance
- Seek help and permission
- Ask for apology and make excuses
- Express and justify opinions and attitude
- Complain
- Speculate
- Comment, summarize, conclude and make suggestions (what they have said)

### **B) International Skills**

Candidates should be able to:

- Express one's purpose and recognize other's
- Express agreement and disagreement
- Elicit opinions and information

- Modify statements and comments made by other speakers
- Justify or support statements made by other speakers
- Persuade others
- Repair breakdowns in interactions
- Elicit clarification
- Indicate understanding or uncertainty

### **C) Skills in Managing Interaction**

Candidates should be able to:

- Initiate interactions
- Change the topic of an interaction
- Share the responsibility for the development of an interaction
- Take and give turn in an interview
- Come to decision
- End an interview

One of the problems of testing speaking is scoring, though; it has adopted holistic and analytical approach. While scoring the speaking test it can be examined in terms of accent, grammar, vocabulary, fluency and accuracy.

#### **1.1.9 Current Trend of Speaking Test in SLC Examination**

Before talking about the speaking test system, it is wise to present a short historical glimpse of the SLC examination. The history tells us that after the establishment of 'The board of the SLC Examination of Nepal' in 1990 B.S. under the direction of Ministry of Education, the then His Majesty Government, started to conduct the SLC Exam in Nepal. Before it the Nepali students used to rush towards India to attend the SLC exam. After the advent of democracy in Nepal in 2007 B.S. there was a flood of establishing schools,



colleges and many more educational organizations. So to systematize the educational field, many 'Educational Commissions' were formed and recommended different suggestions. Similarly, NESP 2028 prescribed English as a compulsory subject introducing it from grade four. The course of English as per this plan was in action till 2057 B.S. The other year (2058), marked the especial change in English assessment system in SLC with the inclusion of the test of listening and speaking.

SLC exam is regarded as the 'Iron Gate' of the students' future. It is important in the sense that its work determines the further career and higher studies. It is the examination to evaluate the knowledge and skill gained by the students based on 10 years' study. So this examination has become a major landmark in an individual's life in the Nepalese context. If we view the present assessment system in SLC exam about English subject, there is a provision of assigning marks separately for different skills of language. The 25% of the total full mark is considered as the practical, which includes both listening test and speaking test. In the test of speaking the use of materials, content, context and process for testing are rather a matter of deep concern. The students from all over Nepal, those with good and poor English background have to take the same test. The DEOs of concerned regions assign authorized test administrators to test the listening and speaking skill of the examinees. The mark distribution of English subject in the SLC exam is shown as bellow:

Language skills	Marks
Listening	10
Speaking	15
Reading comprehension and writing	75

## **Provisions of Speaking Test in the SLC Specification Grid, 2065 about speaking test**

### **A.Speaking Test**

**Full Marks: 15**

#### **Question Types:**

**Time: 15 minutes**

1. Interview\ Conversation
2. Cued situation
3. Story telling
4. Describing pictures, charts, maps and a sequence of events

(Teacher as a\an monitor\interviewer)

#### **B) Materials:**

Pictures, maps, diagrams, etc.

1. Ask any three questions
2. Language Functions of Grade 10 should be measured.

#### **NOTE:**

i) For the students with speech and hearing difficulties, the following type of question can be asked:

- Unseen comprehension passage. -15 marks

ii) For students with visual difficulties

1. Interview (minimum 3 questions )
2. Verbal response on a given situation. (E.g. what would you do if you won a lottery of Rs. 50,000? Tell four things that you are not allowed to do in the exam hall, etc.)  
- 4 marks

3. Speak on a given topic.

(E.g. My family, my favourite food, my school, etc) - 8 marks

Wherever possible receptive and productive skills of students with hearing and speech difficulty can be tested using sign language.

### **1.1.10 Objectives of the CDC about the Speaking Test**

Every action is motivated by certain objectives. The process of teaching and learning language is also guided by certain objectives. Considering the speaking skill the CDC has assumed that students should be able to speak fluently and accurately in variety of authentic situation specially, they should be able to:

- speak intelligibly within the structural and lexical levels of the secondary curriculum
- engage effectively informal spoken discourse, with appropriate discourse devices e.g. pauses, tags, questions, hedges etc)
- communicate appropriately in a variety of formal and informal situation.
- engage in group point of view effectively.
- narrate a sequence of event.
- describe an object or a process.
- convey simple messages effectively.
- produce and respond to different question types (e.g. Closed, open, alternatives)
- express a range of emotions using the appropriate phonological features.

(Secondary English Curriculum, CDC 2057.)

### **1.1.11 Elaboration of Parameter of Research**

The major objective of this research is to present the comparative study regarding the difficulty level, appropriacy, content, and validity of the spoken test materials of SLC examination. So, the researcher attempts to introduce these terms and mention their importance in spoken test one by one in detail.

#### **a) Appropriacy**

Generally, appropriacy refers to the extent to which something is suitable or acceptable. In this study also appropriacy means the suitability of the different spoken test materials used in the SLC exam. The researcher tries to find out that the materials match the level of the concerned learners. Moreover, appropriacy is the extent to which the materials touch the goals of the spoken test fixed by the CDC. There is no meaning of any materials if they do not address the objectives. They should match the level or standard of the learners as supposed to be.

#### **b) Content**

Content refers to the teaching items, which are selected and graded to achieve the goals and objectives set in the curriculum. The contents will vary according to the syllabus types: a grammatical syllabus will have focus on grammatical items (e.g. article, noun, pronoun, etc.) as content whereas communicative syllabus will have focus on functions (e.g. greeting, making request etc.) as the contents. While selecting and grading the content, different aspects should be taken into consideration like sound system, grammar, function, culture, environment, social background, religion, skills, level, age, pre-knowledge, and experience but while grading the items certain maxim of teaching should be considered.

Describing content Ur (1992, p.208) says, “Home culture content is acceptable, not only because my students may need of discussion that are familiar, interesting and motivating”. She further says, “I am interested in their ideas and experience and want to show them.” She suggests the following contents to be selected:

- Pronunciation practice
- Introduction of new vocabulary and practice
- Grammar explanations and practice
- Recording for listening practice
- Listening and writing communicative tasks
- Mixed- skill communicative tasks
- Short and long reading texts
- Dictionary work
- Review of previously learnt materials
- Some entertaining or fun activities

Nicholls and Nicholy (1998, p.37) say, “In teaching one must teach something to someone, the someone being pupil and the something the content might be described as the knowledge, skills, attitude and values to be learned”.

Therefore, it is clear that content is important for a test. The test cannot be administered without content because no one can deliver the speech in a vacuum. No desirable test can be developed without specific content. If the students cannot speak, we cannot test their speaking skill also. The content should be appropriate, familiar and opinion oriented as far as possible. The content which we give to the students should be carefully selected and developed. Especially, they should be social, cultural and educational. Likewise, the test materials also should not be beyond the territory of the content of the test.

### **c) Equivalence**

Equivalence means the degree to which any two things reflect or show the similar value, meaning or importance. If two objects are equivalent they should considerably have same importance or value. In this study this term is related with the equivalence of the materials used as different ‘SETS’ of questions administered to different students. In

other words, the CDC designs different types of spoken test and they are categorized as 'SET A', 'SET B' ...etc. Students can get any one set as their portion. But there is not any guarantee regarding their equality in term of their level of difficulty. They may not be equally difficult. Thus, in this study equivalence is the comparison of the materials regarding their level of difficulty. If the different sets of questions are not relatively of equal difficulty, there is space to doubt the validity and reliability of the whole speaking test. Some examinees get easier topics to explain whereas difficult for the rest. If this is the case, there is also place for biasness. Thus, the different materials should be considerably of equal equivalence.

#### **d) Materials**

The materials include anything, programme or machine that can be used to help the teacher present or explain his\her lesson better. They are designed to help the teacher, save the time and effort and to arouse interest on the part of the students. Teaching materials are those, which have the content of teaching. Such as curriculum, course of study, textbooks and other supplementary materials like songs, rhymes and games.

These materials are the facilitators in teaching. They ease the task of teaching, make it live and efficient. Language learning can be dull especially if the learners do not feel a real need to catch and enjoy. We can make it so by frequently changing the activity by bringing diversity in materials. Also real difficulties in language teaching lie not in vocabulary and grammar but in the creation of a steadily expanding awareness of the generalized content.

Materials are important in teaching as well as testing also. For testing the language, materials should be present there. In case of skills, i.e. listening and speaking. The presentations of materials are compulsory. For testing listening skill, we can use a cassette player, and audio- visual materials. But for speaking, we can specially use visual materials. Materials are used to test the students' responses addressed to whatever they listen to and see. In spoken test, we can ask the students to describe the topic. To narrate the events according to the picture, hold group discussion and perform role by combining

these activities along with materials, we can test the student's speaking skills. We can test their accuracy, appropriateness and fluency also by the help of materials.

Materials are important for the speaking test of the SLC English. In case of oral test of SLC also the materials should be used. Ten (10) marks out of twenty five (25) are allocated to listening test. This is done with the help of recorded materials like cassette player, CD etc and the questions for the given format. Different kinds of materials are used in these tests, which help to make the test standard. Picture, charts and real objects can be used for this test. The performance of the students depends upon the materials, which are used in the test. Materials can be simple, moderate and complex. Any kinds of materials can be used for it but they should be appropriate and standard for the level of the students. If the materials are very simple, we cannot measure the students' ability. Again if they are very complex they cannot speak and we cannot evaluate their ability and the test also cannot test whatever it should be tested. Thus the materials should be appropriate for the students' level and standard.

## **1.2 Review of the Related Literature**

Considerable number of researches has been carried out in different skills of language. Among them various researches belong to the speaking skill. Very few researches have been carried concerning the speaking test system and speaking test materials used in the SLC examination in Nepal.

Concerning to SLC examination, Giri (1995) carried a research study entitled 'People's Attitude towards the Existing SLC Examination in Nepal' with an attempt to study four areas of SLC examination system i.e. its appropriateness, practicability, privatization and credibility. The population of the study consisted of six groups of people administrators, headmasters, teachers, students and guardians from **Kathmandu** and **Morang** districts. He found that 44.37 percent people had good attitude towards the SLC examination of Nepal while 55.63 percentage people were not satisfied with it. As regarding SLC examination Adhikary (2004) carried a study entitled 'Use of Multiple Sets of Question Paper in the SLC Examination' with the objectives to examine the use of multiple sets of

question paper in the SLC English exam in term of nature of sampling, difficulty level, length and rubric. She had her study with the thirty seven students from **Kathmandu** district who were selected purposively. In her study she found the questions did not have same difficulty level. But the length of the questions was almost same.

Regarding speaking skill, Basyal (2007) had the thesis entitled ‘Communicative Proficiency of the Grade Nine Students: ‘A Case of Kathmandu District’. The study had main objective to determine the communicative proficiency of private and public school students at grade nine. She carried her study with eighty students from **Kathmandu** district. In her study she came to the conclusion that students from the private schools had better communicative ability than the students from government aided schools. She found the boys of rural area having better communicative ability than those of the girls. But in urban area the case was just opposite that is the girls were better than the boys in their communicative ability.

Similarly, Neupane (2007) had a study entitled ‘Analysis of Classroom Discourse: A Case of Grade VIII’. The main objective of his study was to analyze and compare classroom discourse of the public and private schools. His study was limited to twelve students from **Morang** district studying in grade eight. His study concluded that the classroom discourse was generally dominated by the teachers in both types of schools but the domination was a bit flexible in public schools in comparison to the private ones. Students’ interaction was quite rare in the public schools but not so in private schools.

Regarding the communicative proficiency, Shahi (2007) had carried out a study ‘A Comparative Study on the Communicative Proficiency of B.A. and B.Ed. First Year Students’ with the main objective to determine and compare the communicative proficiency of Bachelor level students. His study was limited to one hundred students who were randomly selected. In this study he has concluded that the communicative ability of the B.A, and B.Ed. first year students was not satisfactory according to their level. Similarly, he found the B.Ed. students’ communicative ability better than B.A. first



year students. The students were found better in receptive and written abilities of language function than in oral abilities of language function.

Likewise, considering the speaking ability, Poudel (2007) carried out a thesis entitled 'A Study on the Proficiency of Grade 12 Students in the Speaking Skill' with the attempt to find out the proficiency of grade twelve students in speaking skill in term of pronunciation, accuracy, fluency and vocabulary. His study was limited with forty students studying in grade twelve in four higher secondary schools of **Kailali** district. His study concluded that the students' proficiency in pronunciation was found to be average. The students were conscious in pronunciation and their pronunciation was comprehensible though was far from the native accent. Similarly, the grammatical accuracy was poor in comparison to pronunciation.

Regarding the speaking skill, Dahal (2008) had carried out a study entitled 'Communication Strategies Used by the Secondary Level English Teachers and Students' to find out the types of communication strategies used by the secondary level students and teachers. In his study he comes to the findings that sixteen communication strategies were used by the teachers and students. Common strategies used by the teachers and students were like guessing, simplification, use of mother tongue, code switching, and explanation etc. teachers were found to have used repetition strategy for poor students.

In relation to communicative proficiency, Devkota (2010) carried out a study entitled 'Communicative Abilities of Proficiency Level Students in English' in order to determine the communicative ability of PCL students and to compare the ability of the students. His study found that communicative ability of the education and humanities 2<sup>nd</sup> year students was 52.02% and 41.85% respectively. This was not considered to be satisfactory according to their level and expectations of the researcher. According to his study the communicative proficiency of the female student was found better than those of their male counterparts.

The above studies clarify that various studies have been carried out concerning to the speaking skill and communicative skills. But no single research has been carried out on

the overall analysis of the speaking test materials used in the SLC examination in term of their difficulty level, reliability, validity and appropriacy. Therefore, the present research is an untouched area of study.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The study had the following objectives:

- a) To find out the difficulty level of the speaking test materials used in the SLC examination.
- b) To compare the speaking test materials of the S.L.C exam used as different ‘sets’, regarding their content appropriacy, equivalence and validity.

### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

Speaking is considered to be the primary skill of language. So, there should be more focus paid on it. Language learning is open to criticisms if the learners have no speaking proficiency. To determine the learners’ speaking ability, reliable and effective materials should be used. In the context of Nepal real researches are rarely carried with regard the speaking test materials which can raise a serious question to the effectiveness of whole speaking test system.

Very few researches have been carried so far concerning to the spoken test and materials used in the SLC examination. Therefore, this present study may help to the concerned language teachers, test administrators, curriculum designers and researchers for developing materials to test speaking skill with further improvements and to come up with new ideas or alternatives.

## **CHAPTER: TWO**

### **METHODOLOGY**

I adopted the following methodology to fulfill the objectives of the study.

#### **2.1 Sources of Data**

I made the use of both the primary and the secondary sources of data as follows:

### **2.1.1 Primary Sources of Data**

The students of grade-10 who are going to take part in the speaking test of SLC exam and the test administrators who were assigned by the DEO to conduct the speaking test in the past SLC were the primary sources of data.

### **2.1.2 Secondary Sources of Data**

For the secondary sources of data different books, question collection of the SLC exam, journals, theses, websites etc. were used. Some of them were Lado (1961), Rivers (1968), Bygate (1987), Oller (1988), etc.

## **2.2 Sample Population**

Forty students studying in grade 10 from Bhaktapur district and ten English language teachers who had the experience of speaking test administrators in SLC examination were selected for the study population. The students were selected from both the government aided and private schools. Twenty students were selected from the government aided schools and the equal number of students was selected from the private schools.

## **2.3 Sampling Procedures**

The tenth grade students and the English language teachers from different schools of Bhaktapur district were selected non- randomly. Twenty students were from the government aided schools and the equal number of students was selected from the private schools.

## **2.4 Tools for Data Collection**

I made use of the selected test items and different questionnaires related to the test items for both the test administrators and students as the chief tools of data collection. The questionnaires were closed as well as open ended type. Likewise, the audio recorder also was used to record the students' responses to the speaking test.

## **2.5 Process of Data Collection**

For the collection of the data I adopted the following procedures:

- ) First of all, I contacted the principals or the head of the selected schools for seeking permission.
- ) The study population was sampled and the informants were selected. Then I administered the speaking test to the selected students. For the test he used the previously selected test items. The testing procedures and evaluating methods were determined by the SLC grid and the CDC.
- ) To find out the difficulty level of the test items I established four levels like easy, very easy, difficult and very difficult on the basis of the students' obtained marks in the particular set of test item. The set of question in which the students obtained bellow 4, out of 15, was considered to be very difficult test item. Similarly, the test item was considered to be difficult if their obtained mark was 4 to bellow 8. But, it was regarded as easy and very easy if their obtained mark was 8 to bellow 12 and 12 or above 12 marks respectively. The students were awarded with the marks on the basis of their fluency, grammar, word selection (diction), etc.
- ) All the students of each school faced two sets of test items in a day. Once the speaking test was over the students' responses were also collected on the same day after a considerable interval of time. The questionnaires to accumulate the students' responses were associated with the test items they faced earlier.

## **2.6 Limitations of the Study**

The study would not extend its horizon beyond the following limitations:

- a) The population of the study was limited to five schools and 40 students studying in grade 10 of Bhaktapur district.
- b) The study made the use of selected speaking test materials used in the SLC examination of 2066 B.S.

c) The study was confined within the responses of the selected teachers\test administrators.

## **CHAPTER: THREE**

### **ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA**

This chapter presents a detailed analysis and interpretation of the collected data in course of the researcher's field work.

The data were collected through both the questionnaires and spoken test administered with the students of grade ten who are going to face the SLC examination in near future. Moreover, the English subject teachers also involved in the study through questionnaires. The obtained data are tabulated for analysis and interpretation. The data are illustrated through different ways like pie-chart, bar graph and descriptive analysis.

This part of study has been divided into three sections:

1. Analysis of the students' score
2. Analysis of the students' responses
3. Analysis of the teachers' responses

#### **3.1 Analysis of the Students' Scores**

This section deals with the score obtained through the spoken test administered to the students. As mentioned earlier there were altogether 40 students and each of them faced four different sets of spoken test items individually. Each set of spoken test had full mark of fifteen. While analyzing the students' score, they obtained 454 marks altogether in set A, out of 600. That is to say they achieved 75.66 percent in set A in average. The highest individual score in set A was 14 and the lowest was 4. Similarly, the same students scored altogether 494 out of 600 in set B with the average percentage of 82.33. The highest score in the set B was 14 and the lowest was 7. While analyzing the score of the students in set C, it was found that they secured 479 out of 600. Their average percentage was 79.83. They received 467 in set D which is 77.83 percent. The average score of students in different sets of question can be shown in the following pie- chart:

This pie-chart reflects the average obtained marks (in percentage) of the whole students in different sets of question.

This description of students' score indicates that the students obtained different marks in different sets of question. If the materials representing different sets of question had equal difficulty level and equivalent content, the students' performance should be considerably similar. But there was difference of minimum 2% to maximum 6.67% while comparing the score of the students in different sets of questions. Thus, after the analysis of the students' marks we can come to the conclusion that the set B was the easiest one. The remaining three sets of questions seem to have relatively of equal difficulty level.

After the analysis of the students' score we can derive the conclusion that the materials did not have equal difficulty level. Since the materials were not equally difficult, they were not equivalent as well.

### **3.2 Analysis of the Students' Responses**

This section deals with the students' responses regarding the content, difficulty, appropriacy etc of the spoken test materials which the researcher collected through the questionnaires as presented in the appendix. There were altogether ten questions representing different areas like content, appropriacy, difficulty level and equivalence. Among them question number 1, 3 and 4 were related with content of the test. Similarly,

question number 2 and 7 represented the difficulty level, whereas question number 5, 6, 9 and 10 were related with the appropriacy of the test.

### **i) Content**

As specified earlier, content in this study is the totality of the items included by the test materials to achieve the specified goals and objectives. Thus, content is something about which in the test the students speak about. Testing speaking skill depends upon the wisely selected and graded contents. Only the suitable contents can help to scale the students' speaking proficiency. Therefore, it deserves a great importance in the speaking test.

### **j) Students' Responses About the Content**

In order to analyse the content, the students' responses were collected by the help of the questionnaires. The students' responses concerning to the content are explained under this topic. While analysing the students' responses regarding the question no. 1, all the forty students liked the speaking test. From analysis of the students' responses it was found that the respondents have positive attitudes towards the current speaking test. All the forty students liked speaking test. With regard to question no. 3, the topics of the test faced by them were about national personality, everyday activities, imaginary, plan and policy and people and their job.

In question no. 4 of set A, 22 students out of 40, found both the question number 2 and three equally easy, 10 of them regarded question no. 2 easier than the question number 3 and remaining 8 found question no. 3 easier than question no. 2. In set B, 24 students considered both the question no. 2 and 3 equally easy, 6 students found question no. 2 easier than no.3 whereas 10 students found question no 3 easier than 2. In set C, 19 students found no. 2 and 3 to be equally easy, 11of them found the question no. 2 easier than no. 3. In set D, 20 students regarded both the no. 2 and 3 equally easy, but 15 of them found question no. 2 easier than no. 3 and the remaining 5 found the question no. 3 easier than 2. Similarly, in question number 6, they considered the assigned time i.e. 15 minutes to face one set of question sufficient. There was not any difficulty for them to



tackle all the problems within the specified time. The content as responded by the students was not of equally difficult content.

As per the responses of the students, majority of them mentioned positive opinions about the contents. Only less number of students found it unusual, inappropriate, having no equivalence, unfamiliar, invalid, as well as were in demand of change of the present materials.

### **) Contents of Different Sets of Question**

For more detailed presentation of the content, I minutely observed and compared the speaking test materials from different point of views. While analysing the contents of all sets of speaking test, I found them to have differences. Generally, each set contained altogether three different types of questions in which the first question in each set was introductory part about the students. In all sets of question the first and second question weighed three and four marks respectively. Likewise, the third question in each set carried full marks of 8. All the sets of question carried same full marks, format, number of total question, and distribution of marks.

While observing the content of set A, the first question was about the self- introduction of the students. In the second question the students were asked to tell rules followed in the hospital, zoo and school. The third question with the weight of 8 marks contained four different sets of picture. The students were instructed to describe the entire picture using past simple and past continuous tense. Likewise, in set B the second question was about the rule of library. The students were supposed to tell any four things allowed to do in the library. And the third question dealt with the people and their jobs.

While analysing the contents of set C and set D, in set C the second question was about leisure activities of people. Here the students had to tell any four things that they do at home during public holidays. In the third question they had to recognize four different personalities of our country and their contributions. Similarly, in set D the second question was about giving reason. Here, the students had to tell any four reasons for why

people like to live in towns. Similarly, the third question was about map of direction. Here the students were supposed to locate and guide people to reach particular place.

While comparing the contents of different sets of question, second question of set A and set B was similar as both of them dealt with rules and regulation. But in set C and set D the question seemed to be more difficult. It can be claimed so in accordance with the performance of the students in the test. The students could tell the rules in better way but most of the students found it difficult to face the second question of set C and set D.

While analysing the third question of all sets, set A and D were more difficult to explain than set B and set C. In set A the students had difficulty for two things one was lack of vocabulary and secondly the lack of knowledge to use past simple and past continuous tense. In set D the students had scarcity of different terms used to show direction or location in the map. They seemed poor for using the terms like junction, roundabout, right turning etc. While comparing the question no. 3 of both the set B and set C they were found similar as both of them contained pictures to be described. In set B the students had to deal with the people and their jobs shown in the four sets of picture. Similarly, in set C the third question contained the picture of four different national personalities of our nation. The students had to recognize them and tell their contributions.

While analysing the content of the test materials, it was found that there was maximum use of pictures, but, less use of bar graph and diagram. The contents did not have equivalence and equal level of difficulty level. The contents could not be more inclusive in terms of the inclusion of maximum number of the objectives of speaking test.

## **ii) Difficulty Level**

To determine the level of difficulty the researcher considered the students' response and their scores as the important criteria. The researcher provided four different levels to express the degree of the difficulty of all sets of question i.e. easy, very easy, difficult and very difficult. The students were suggested to select any one of them immediately after they faced the test.

### ) **Difficulty Level On the Basis of Students' Responses**

While analysing the students' responses regarding the difficulty level, the set A was easy for 34 students, out of 40, for 5 students it was very easy and only one student found it difficult. But no one found this set very difficult. Similarly, while analysing the response of students about the difficulty level of set B, 30 students considered it to be easy, for 9 students it was very easy and for one student it was difficult, but, it was not very difficult for any student. About the difficulty of set C, 30 students found it to be easy, 5 of them found it difficult and the equal number of students found it to be very easy. Likewise, 26 students felt the set D easy, 5 of them found it very easy whereas 9 students found it difficult. The difficulty levels responded by the students in percentage can be shown in the following table:

Sets of question	Easy %	Very easy %	Difficult %	Very difficult %
Set A	85	12.5	2.5	0
Set B	75	22.5	2.5	0
Set C	75	12.5	12.5	0
Set D	65	12.5	22.5	0

### ) **Difficulty Level on the Basis of Students' Score**

In order to find out and compare difficulty level of the different sets of questions I developed the same four levels of difficulty i.e. easy, very easy, difficult and very difficult on the basis of the score obtained by the students in the respective sets of question as shown in the following table:

Level of difficulty	Marks	Percentage
Very difficult	0-4	0%-20%
Difficult	4-8	21%-46.66%
Easy	8-12	46.67%-73.33%
Very easy	12 or above	73.34%-100%

From the above table it is obvious that the whole set of question was categorized as very difficult in which the students got below 4 marks out of 15. And it was regarded as difficult set of question if the students' marks were from 4 to below 8. Similarly, if the students secured from 8 to below 12 marks in any set of question, that was valued as an easy set of question, but, it was considered to be very easy set of question if they obtained 12 or more than 12 marks out of 15.

While analyzing the overall marks obtained by the whole students, the researcher came to know that the test materials did not have the same difficulty level. The students obtained highest mark in set B as their average score in this set was 12.35 out of 15 or 82.33%. Similarly they scored lowest mark in set A. Their average mark in set A was 11.35 or 75.66%. But, the average marks in set C and D were 11.97 and 11.67 respectively or 79.83% and 77.83%. On the basis of the students' obtained marks in the test we can easily say that the set A was most difficult set and set B was the easiest one. The students who got set A obviously could not get as marks as their counterparts who got other sets of question.

One of the interesting facts is that the difficulty levels of the question on the basis of the students' responses and their scores do not reflect similarity.

Generally, it is the assumption that the spoken test materials used in the same academic year for the test of same level of students should have relative degree of similarity as per their difficulty level. But, the different sets of questions cannot be regarded as the equally difficult sets of questions as they are supposed to be. Thus we can come to the conclusion that since the difficulty level of test materials differs from each other, they cannot be considered to be equivalent as well.

### **iii) Appropriacy**

Appropriacy means the degree to which the spoken test materials meet the suitability in accordance with the level of the students. Only the appropriate test materials can yield the exact consequence of evaluation to measure the students' ability. It plays a significant role in test designing and evaluation process. Therefore, more space was given to it while preparing questionnaires for the students. To find out the appropriacy of the materials students' responses and the objectives of CDC were used.

### **) Students' Responses About the Appropriacy**

The questionnaires also attempted to find out the students' ideas about the appropriacy of the materials. There were four different questions to achieve the students' views regarding the appropriacy of the speaking test materials. While analysing the students' responses, in question no. 5, 75 percent of students considered the spoken test materials appropriate for their standard. But remaining 25 percent students regarded that the materials would not match their level.

In response to question no.6, the students found the assigned time i.e. 15minutes sufficient to solve the entire given task. They considered the specified time to be appropriate. In response to question no. 8, the students get chance to practise materials like they were presented in the administered test. In this sense the materials were similar and appropriate like the students practised in their day to day class.

In response to question no.9, in set A 31 students out of 40 accepted that the materials could measure their speaking ability, but, 9 of them thought that the materials could not

measure their exact speaking ability. . Likewise, 36, 33 and 35 students thought the materials appropriate to measure their speaking ability respectively in set A, B and C whereas 4, 7 and 5 students in the respective sets found the materials unable to scale their ability. While analysing the responses of students associated with question no. 10, 32 students were in favour of the continuity of the present materials where as 8 of them realized need of changes.

Though most of the students responded the materials to be appropriate for them, the researcher after his own minute analysis realized that the materials have spaces for lacking. The foremost important aspect is the maximum inclusion or address of the predetermined objectives of the CDC by the materials. They can be regarded as the appropriate if they follow the objectives. To, analyse the appropriacy of the materials they should be compared with the goals of CDC. Thus, the goals of CDC are presented below:

Considering the speaking skill, CDC has assumed that students should be able to speak fluently and accurately in variety of authentic situation specially, they should be able to:

- speak intelligibly within the structural and lexical levels of the secondary curriculum
- engage effectively informal spoken discourse, with appropriate discourse devices e.g. pauses, tags, questions, hedges etc)
- communicate appropriately in a variety of formal and informal situation.
- engage in group point of view effectively.
- narrate a sequence of event.
- describe an object or a process.
- convey simple messages effectively.
- produce and respond to different question types (e.g. Closed, open, alternatives)
- express a range of emotions using the appropriate phonological features.

(Secondary English Curriculum, CDC 2057)

## **) Appropriacy in Terms of Objectives of the CDC**

The speaking test materials to be appropriate should address the predetermined objectives. Therefore, I attempted to compare the materials along with the objectives. While analyzing these entire objectives of spoken test set by the CDC, the spoken test materials could partly address them. For example, in set A in question no. 3 the students had to describe the pictures which were related to a sequence of event. While narrating the events according to the picture, they could express a range of emotions like surprise, sorrows; sympathy etc. by using different phonological features which addresses the above mentioned ninth objective. In the same way, while they were supposed to tell different rules and regulations as used in the second question of set A and set B, they addressed the third objectives i.e. to communicate appropriately in a variety of formal and informal situation. But the test materials could not address all of them. In the other hand both the students from private English medium school and government school got the same types of materials. The students from private schooling background found it very easy to deal with the test. But the materials were difficult for the students of government school. Thus the materials could not be appropriate for all students on the basis of their schooling background.

### **3.3 Analysis of the Teachers' Responses**

The teachers who had already experiences as the spoken test administrators in the SLC examination were provided with questionnaires regarding the various issues like validity, reliability, difficulty level, equivalence and appropriacy of the speaking test materials used in the SLC examination.

The test administrators were assigned in different centres in each year. This view was same of the remaining all administrators. According to them the DEO provided them fixed test centres as well as fixed test materials. The materials were picture- stories, charts picture sets, question- sets etc. I found that the same materials were reused for different students due to the insufficient test materials.

The tests were not designed separately for the students from private and government aided schools. The students had to face the same test. According to them, the students from private schools could perform better than the students from government aided schools. But some bright students from government schools could also perform well.

While analysing the responses of the teachers regarding the reliability and validity of the materials, it was found that the materials were not reliable and totally valid. All the test administrators were not satisfied with the content, materials, their equivalence, difficulty level and format provided to them. They were very easy for the private school students but difficult for their government school counterparts. The format of question setting was not balanced with the score and content.

They had the opinion that the picture sets were not enough in number. All the questions and materials should be of the equal standard. All kinds of materials should be provided by the concerned office. Since the private school students secured more marks than the government aided schools. So it is concluded that the test administrator should manage different contents, materials and process for the students of government schools.

The teachers viewed that there should be changes in the present test materials and test system. To bring over all change, the test administrators should be provided with the various training and there should be provision of speaking test system in the exam of all levels. There should be more efforts to maintain the equivalence and appropriacy of the materials as well. There should be pair or group discussion, the students' free presentation as per the pre-determined objectives of the speaking test.

## **CHAPTER: FOUR**



## **FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study was an attempt to analyze the spoken test material, which were used in the SLC examination. The foremost effort of this study implied on the spoken test materials. Only after the intensive study of the spoken test of SLC examination on the basis of their content, difficulty level, appropriacy and equivalence obtained from the test, students' and concerned teachers' response and my own field observation, I have come to derive the following findings:

### **a. Findings**

Findings refer to the major ideas or facts which I derived after the detailed analysis of the collected data in course of my research. The major findings of my study are presented hereunder:

- a. The study concluded that the speaking test materials used in the SLC examination, 2066, did not have similar degree of difficulty and equivalence.
- b. Despite the varieties in the content, they could not totally address the specified objectives of spoken test set by the CDC.
- c. Though most of the students responded the materials to be appropriate but the materials were too easy and inappropriate for the students having private schooling background the teachers also accepted it.
- d. Most of the students of government aided school found the content difficult and felt the language problem.
- e. Regarding the appropriacy of the materials, majority of the students responded the materials to be appropriate, but, the teachers responded the materials inappropriate.
- f. The teachers or test administrators also accepted the scarcity of sufficient materials for speaking test.
- g. The teachers' responses conclude that the materials could not measure the different language functions as per the grid.

h. From the study it was found that there should be more efforts to enhance the appropriacy, quantity, quality and equivalence of the materials.

**b. Recommendations**

This study was an effort to find out the current trend of speaking test in our country in SLC examination. Concerning to the reforms of testing speaking I found several challenges to cope with. Therefore, after the minute study of the responses accumulated from the students and the test administrators, I would like to present the following recommendations:

- a. For the equivalence and appropriacy of the materials the concerned authority should pay more attention.
- b. Since the students from government and private school have different language ability, there should be provisions of different sets of materials for them or they should not be provided with the same sorts of materials.
- c. The test administrators should pay attention to the students' background while conducting the test and asking questions as well as scoring them.
- d. There should be more varieties of contents to address the different language functions and specified objectives of CDC about speaking test.
- e. The test administrators should have been updated and trained with the more effective techniques of conducting speaking test and using the available materials.
- f. The students should get regular practice of similar types of speaking test like used in the SLC examination in their everyday classes. Mostly the students of government aided school should do so as they very often feel difficulty with the content of the speaking test.
- g. the process of testing and the usage of the materials should be appropriate for the level of the students.

- h. The content should be familiar and the question types should be open, closed and alternative.
- i. As per the innovation and application of novelty of teaching learning methods, there should be an attempt to use alternative ways and materials to test the students' speaking ability.
- j. While testing, the emphasis should be given on the structure, accent, clarity; DEOs should provide the language experts and the instructions to the administrators. Sufficient modern materials should be provided as well as the content and the context.
- k. Suggestions and recommendations in the curriculum and grid are not enough; spot observation is equally significant to evaluate the worth of theoretical assumptions.
- l. It is often found that the teachers or test administrators are not using the specified time for speaking test properly. Most of the teachers used rarely 2 or 3 minutes with a student, but, a student's real speaking ability cannot be tested within so short time period. Somehow it seems as the compulsion of the test administrators. There is a huge gap between the number of the test administrators and the students to be tested. To spend whole 15minutes of time with a single student seems impracticable at present context. To compensate this problem, there is an unavoidable need of increasing sufficient number of more experienced test administrators.

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