

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 General Background

1.1.1 Language

We simply say that language is a means of communication but it is a very complicated task to give a more plausible definition of it. Of course, language is the most highly developed and most frequently used means of communication that human being possesses. It consists the vocal noises made by human beings. Vocal sounds such as sneezing, coughing, snoring etc. can communicate some meanings but they cannot be considered as language because these sounds are not deliberately used for the purpose of communication. These are involuntary sounds. Thus, 'language as the voluntary vocal system of human communications' can be considered as the more adequate definition. So, the term language refers only to the voluntary vocal sounds which speakers use deliberately for the purpose of communication.

Language is the means of communication through which we can share our ideas, information, messages, thoughts, emotions and feelings of everyday life. It is the distinctive property of man kind because of which human beings seem to be extraordinary and superior to all the species specific to mankind i.e. only human beings can have the capability to speak language and their mind is genetically equipped with it.

Hornby (2005:862) defines language as the 'system of communication in speech and writing that is used by people of particular country or area'.

To Block and Trager (1942:5); defined A language as "a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group co-operators."

Language is primarily pragmatic phenomenon, a systematic, phonic instrument for the communicative purpose.

Richard et al., (1999:196) defines language as "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."

Waren (1981:38) states "It is the universal medium a like for conveying the common facts and feelings of everyday life and philosophers searching after truth and all that lies between"

According to Crystal (2003:255) language is a "French term introduced by Ferdinand de Saussure to refer to the human biological faculty of speech. It is distinguished in his approach from langue, the language system of a speech community". There are many languages in the world. Although no language can be thought to be superior or inferior to other languages in terms of communicative value. Some languages play more dominant role in a particular situation.

In this era of globalization, learning the languages of the world is in wide practice. And, it's true that, to adopt the contemporary culture and to get adjusted in such a global multicultural, multilingual environment. We have to learn that language, which is said to be the best way of adaptation and acculturation of the given society. Moreover, without language this world will change numb.

1.1.2 English Language

This section focuses on the English Language. Since, it has become one of the common mediums of communication used by almost all the people in the world having different linguistic and social background. In the

present context, it has extended world wide in such a drastic way and in a vagabond form that there is no way out to avoid using it. 'English' as a 'linguafranca' for all the people worldwide. And most people find themselves to be socially adjusted in the multilingual environmental by learning English. Moreover, my focus is in English which occupies a genuine global status.

Moreover, The British Council and The American Center have started lunching and focusing on the English language teaching programmes in many countries of the world. Besides, most of the countries now launch the English language either as a compulsory subject or as elective one. This shows the position or the status that the English language occupies in this era.

In the Nepalese context as well, English is undoubtedly of crucial importance for modernization process. Basically its impact is remarkably noticeable in academic as well as other subsequent field e.g. tourism industries, commerce and trade also. So, learning English has vital role to plunge into the depth of the knowledge and to explore the technologies. And, so for the non-native speakers of English, the most widely practised method to learn it, is through teaching the English language.

English language teaching in Nepal does not have a long history .If we are to trace the history of teaching English in Nepal, the credit of its initiation goes to Jung Bahadur Rana, the first Rana Prime Minister of Nepal, after he returned from Britain in 1910 B.S. But in the very beginning, it was just confirmed within their families, later, only after 32 years i.e. in 1942 B.S. Durbar School was opened for the public, which also contributed to open English language teaching nationwide. 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 university level.

1.1.3 Language Universal and Language Skills

Talking about the common features which all the languages share, Chomsky calls these common features as "Language Universal."

One thing is rather remarkable that all the languages of the world including English share the same common features of the language i.e. the same language skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing except in the cases when a language does not have own script, and it is with low variety. Moreover, 'speaking and listening' are the primary and basic language skills, which exist in almost all languages no matter whether they possess script or not. But, being competent merely in four skills cannot be referred to as having mastery or good command over a language. In fact, one should be rather competent in the language aspects as well as language skills.

1.1.4 Teaching and Testing

The purpose of testing is to assess the level of proficiency or language competence of the students that they gain command on it to make involve both learning through teaching and self-learning .Depending upon the purpose of testing and nature of language skills to be tested, testing device fall under several classifications. As for example, comprehension, grammar, and vocabularies are tested through objective and subjective tests whereas testing and speaking can be tested through oral test. Composition can be tested through written test and so on respectively.

'Teaching and testing are interrelated disciplines. Test is the procedure, for measuring ability, knowledge or performance' Richard et al. (1985:291).

A test thus measures whether the learners are being taught effectively or not, how much materials they are taught and how much the students have learned. Test is directly concerned with teaching. Test is a measuring device, which we can use when we want to compare an individual with other individuals who belong to the some group.

A test is thus a measuring scale used to assess the proficiency of the students of their learning. Language test always leads to meaningful decision and is thus a tool of evaluation.

Teaching and testing cannot be separated. Teaching and learning is judged with the help of a test. Lado's reflection on this regard would be worth mentioning- "The same basic understanding of the facts of language learning applies to language testing what the system of the students have to learn constitute the corpus of what we have to test. Since, the student has to learn language; it is language that we must test", (1961:20). Teaching and testing have a common goal i.e. to achieve the proficiency of the learners. Whether they have learnt the materials they have been taught or not. The teaching and learning becomes fruitful when the learners attain the set objectives. Heaton (1988.5) says, "Both teaching and testing are so closely connected that it is virtually impossible to work either field without primarily concerned with the other. Test may be designed to motivate the students and to assess their performance of the taught materials".

Testing is used after conducting teaching and it is used to test whether the objectives are achieved or not by the students. It is widely accepted that

testing offers useful inputs to the teacher to be aware of the effect of his teaching and also some insight on whether he should continue the way he teaches or change it in order to make his teaching more effective. Even the teacher who does not have adequate knowledge about the theoretical and practical aspects of testing make use of testing for making their teaching effective. Even if the teacher may not have systematic knowledge about the effect of his teaching and testing, he has to improve his performance by gaining insights through examinations queries and classroom or evaluates academic achievement of his students depends upon his understanding of the what and how to test the language .

Khaniya (2005:3) says" better understanding of testing technique will lead the teachers to perform effectively in the teaching. Teaching and testing are regarded as integral part of education".

In conclusion, teaching and testing are interrelated with each other. One is impossible without the other. Testing is conducted during or after teaching. If teachers do not test the students, the performance of the students cannot be known. So teachers give tests to students. Without testing, the teachers are not able to know their teaching whether it is good or not.

1.1.5 Language Testing: Theoretical Perspective

Testing is defined variously in various situations. It is because the way it is perceived differently in different situations. But in a general sense it can be defined 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's 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.

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's 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.

So, 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. John 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.

Later 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 can't 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.

"Successful communication is situation which simulates real life, is the best test of mastery of a language", Heaten, (1988:7)

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.

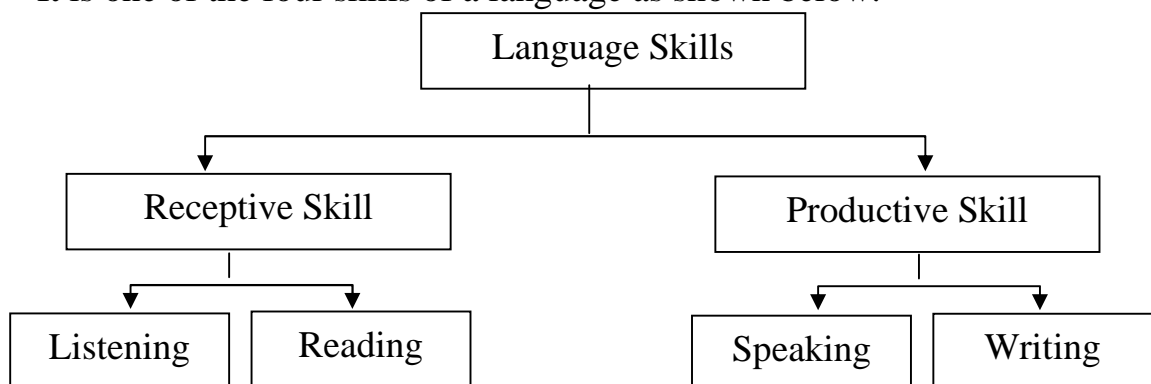
1.1.6 What Speaking Skill is?

Speaking is the first human activity which has been practised by human beings since memorable times. Speaking is a thinking process of cognitive type and conveying message in its own right. It demands conscious intellectual behavior. Through speech, human beings can communicate their feelings, share ideas and convince other human beings. It also helps to transmit their culture from generation to generation.

Speaking is a very sensitive process. A piece of writing can be corrected once or twice but in a speech once gone it will not correct . If one misunderstands the other's information, his whole understanding in the subject matter will be affected.

Speaking in general is one of the primary productive skill of a language.

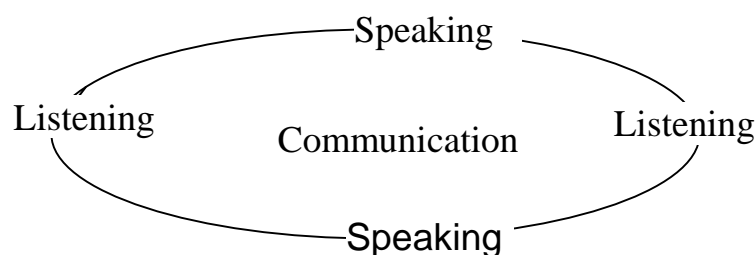
It is one of the four skills of a language as shown below:



It can also be called a biological mode of communication, involving organs of speech to produce the sounds constituting language.

"Speaking 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. 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."(Khaniya 2005; 133)

Moreover, to point out technically, speaking is so much intertwined with listening that it is too much difficult for these to be produced and received separately and independently. It rather forms a cycle as shown:–



Listening and speaking go together. At least two participants are involved in communication. Thus, one knows a language means he or she can listen and understand it and speak it.

Leech and Svartvik (1975:3) showing the difference between speaking and writing, say "in speech we often use words and which add little information but tell us something of the speaker's attitude of his audience and what he is saying. We all also often hesitate of fill in gaps with hesitation, filters like 'er'/'and um/um/ while we think of what next to say. We fail to complete a sentence, lose track of our sentence and mix one grammatical construction with another. All these features normally

occur in speaking the grammar of spoken English is less complex and less strictly constructed. It is rather difficult to divide a conversation into separate sentences and the connection between one clause to another are less clear because the speaker relies more on the hearers' understanding of the context and his ability to interrupt. If he fails to understand a speaker's view on any subjects, features of intonation tell us a great deal in getting across the message. To a large extent, speaking is related with informal language which is known as the language of private conversation of personal letters etc. Speaking is the first type of language that a native speaking child becomes familiar with. As it is easier to understand than written form of communication, it is often used now a day in public communication of popular kind for e.g. advertisement and popular newspaper mainly employ a colloquial informal style. Speech uses phrasal and prepositional verbs: as its vocabulary" (1975: 3). So that speaking is very important for this 21st century in human daily life.

1.1.6.1 Abilities involved in speaking

The speaking skill forms the real aims of English as the second language. Correct speech involves:-

- a knowledge of words, phrases and idioms.
- a knowledge of grammar
- fluency i.e. the spontaneous application of knowledge.
- an ability to articulate the source of English
- an ability to pronounce words, not merely in isolation but as modified by context.

1.1.6.2 Elements of speaking skill:

'Elements of speaking skill' refers 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. "The forging of the instrument requires much practice in the arbitrary, association of the new language; lexical items, morphological and syntactical patterns, sentence types". (Rivers 1968:162) The elements of the speaking skill are as follows:

- i) Knowledge of grammar and vocabulary of language: this skill involves the knowledge of morphology, syntax, semantics and lexicon.
- ii) 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, and
 - Knowing how to use different types of speech acts such as: requests, apologies, thanks, commands etc.
- III) Knowledge of appropriate use of language - the knowledge of the appropriate use of language is inevitable to the speaking skill of language. According to the situation we can use the language.
- iv) 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 a most inseparable ingredient to communicate our thoughts and ideology. So we should practice to make the speech fluent.

1.1.7 Speaking Test

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.

So, to test a language, one's speaking skill should be tested. "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" Heaton (1988:88).

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.

Since, 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, (1987) speaking involves two kinds of demands on the speaker; i.e. processing conditions & reciprocity condition. From an instructional point of view, speaking 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're mainly 3 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 terms of testing his ability of producing sound in isolation or in connected speech.

Harmer (2001) argues that connected speech, expressive devices, lexis and grammar, and negotiation language should be focused while testing speaking.

"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, decisions are needed about what constitutes effective performance and how is realized in test criteria". Khaniya, (2005:135).

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 confidence in order to carry out many of their most basic transactions (Bygate 1994).

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 expressing themselves fairly clearly. Furthermore, success 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. Two native speakers will not always, therefore, experience the same degree of difficulty in understanding the foreign speaker (Heaten, 1988:88).

So, however, 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.

1.1.8 Qualities of Good Test

A test is supposed to measure the performance of the learners in language learning. Davies (1968:5) has said 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

The reliability of a test is its consistency with which a test measures the same thing all the time. 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.

B. Validity

The validity of a test is the extent to which the test measures what it is intended to measure. There are mainly two vital types; content and face validity.

- i. **Content validity** is concerned with, the subject matter what goes into the test. The content of a test should be decided by considering the purpose of the assessment and then drawn up as a list known as content specification, which ensures that the test reflects all the areas to be assessed in suitable proportions.
- ii. **Face validity** is concerned with what teachers and students think of the test. Does it appear to them a reasonable way of assessing the students think of the test? Does it appear them a reasonable way of assessing the students, or does it seem difficult or unrealistic?

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.

These are the qualities of a test. Apart from these qualities, speaking test has its own qualities, which are described below:

1.1.9 Quality of 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's 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.

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 learner 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 expected to be exercised under the given course content.

One of the major factors of speaking test quality depends on the materials which are used for the test that enhanced 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: interview, interaction and response to the materials. The activities to be included in a test of speaking are discussion, conversation with the learner, oral presentation, learner-learner discussion or decision making (pair group) 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, correction, transformation, repetition, etc. (Allison,1999). Turn taking, signaling for a turn, allowing others to take a turn are also taken into account while testing speaking in an interacting situation (Khaniya, 2005).

While testing speaking, the test should be able to test the following skills of the speaker. According to Bygate (1987), Hughes (2003);

Informational Skills

Candidates should be able to:

- Provide personal, non-personal, and required information
- Describe sequence of events
- Give instructions and explanation

- Make comparisons
- 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)

International Skills

- Express one's purpose and recognize others'
- 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

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 adopted holistic and analytical approach. While scoring the speaking test it can be examined in terms of accent, grammar, vocabulary, fluency and accuracy.

1.1.10 Testing Speaking in the SLC Examination

In 1934, 'The board of the SLC Examination of Nepal' was formed under the direction of Ministry of Education. His Majesty's Government, started to hold the SLC Examination in Nepal. Since then only, the SLC examination is conducted throughout the whole kingdom.

And, the NESP 2028 has prescribed English as a compulsory subject introducing it from Grade 4. The course of English, as per this plan was in action till 2057 B.S. The other years (2058), marked the especial change in English assessment system in SLC with the inclusion of the test of listening and speaking. So, the test of listening and speaking has not a much longer history.

So, testing speaking in English has come into existence in Nepal, with its inclusion in SLC examination from 2058 B.S., with 20% of coverage. Before this, testing of speaking was included in English test paper. So as to point listening and speaking both skills were used to be tested in theoretically not practically, “where the stress falls in the given words or sentences” this type of question used to be asked and the students had to

write answer in the script paper which was not valid and reliable at all because language is speech not writing.

SLC is important of all the examinations with its work to get a career selection of higher studies and many more. It is the examination conducted 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. 20 out of 100 marks is for oral test in which 8 marks for listening and 12 for speaking in English. In the test of speaking and 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 English background and those with a null English background have to take the same test. And, this study is important as it aims at finding out the relevance, validity, and authenticity of the testing materials used for speaking test in the SLC and thus is quite unique as well.

1.1.11 Theoretical Foundation of the Terms

The main objective of this research is to determine the quality of the spoken test of SLC examination in terms of content, context, materials and process. So, the researcher attempts to introduce these four terms and mention their importance in spoken test one by one in detail.

a. 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 grammatical items (e.g. Article, noun, pronoun, etc) as content whereas communicative syllabus will have functions (e.g. Greeting, making

requests etc.) as the contents. While selecting and grading the content, different aspects should be taken into considerations 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.

Ur. Penny, (1992:208) 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.” 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 text.
- Dictionary work.
- Review of previously learnt materials.
- Some entertaining or fun activities.

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

Famous pragmatist Dewey, (1913:82) says “content selection entirely on the basis of students’ interest is inevitably to result in indulgence and spoiling”.

In the same way, Khaniya, (2003) says that the contents should be carefully selected, developed and organized.

So, it is clear that content is important for a test. The test cannot 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.

b. Context

Language is always used in reference to a particular context or situation and hence the full meaning of language unit is known only when this situation is known. In fact, language relies as much on situations as on other linguistic devices for signaling meaning. This role of situations can be readily appreciated from the fact that there can be such a thing an eloquent silence when people familiar without the actual use of speech, commenting upon the part played by the situation in conveying meaning.

Fries, (1945:72) say “The only true and core meaning of words are the situations in which they are used. A word consists of a sound or a combination of sounds that has become conventionalized in a culture or linguistic community that is used in certain situations and that stimulates certain response in the hearer belonging to the same community.

Once the link between the situation and expression has been forged, the child practices the expression whenever the situation arises until it becomes a part of his automatic habit. The important thing, therefore, is

to give sufficient opportunity to the pupils to hear the language being used in meaningful situation and to make them use it in such situations.

Situation itself acts as a stimulus for the student to use language. Situation may be real or contrived (artificial); in real situation students can experience directly at the time of learning. Those they can see, hear or touch; they can use the language items naturally associating them with relevant situations. But in artificial situation every teaching item cannot be linked up directly with the situation. Verbal situation also can be used while teaching and testing. But real and visualized situation are the most effective ones. For selecting situation, the following order of preference should be kept in view

- 1st preference – Actual
- 2nd preference – Recalled and visualized
- 3rd preference – Visualized
- 4th preference - Recalled
- 5th preference – Verbal (Pandey, 1999).

So, it is remarkable that the context whether it is real or artificial or verbal, it is important in testing speaking skill. According to the condition of the test we can use real or artificial context. If the context of the test is appropriate the students can perform well. A situation supports the student confident. Frightening, strict and rude behavior of the test administrators can hamper the students' performance. If the students cannot perform the test cannot test whatever it aims to test.

Materials

The materials include any thing, 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 basic needs for any educational programme and they are the ones that contain the contents of subjects of teaching.

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 students' 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 S.L.C. English. In case of the oral test of SLC also the materials should be used. Eight (8)

marks out of 20 is 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. 12 out of 20 marks are determined for speaking test. 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.

c. Process

"Process is a series of things that are done in order to achieve a particular result" (OALD:2006).

Process is the way of doing or performing something. Any activity how it is going on is also a process. Process is doing something to reach the result. So for every work or activity it comes automatically. All the activities come serially, one after another in the process.

While doing something, how we do it like; how to start, how to run and how to complete it that is also the process. Process always shows the way of performing something, which is very important to complete it.

It is very important in teaching and testing also. Teaching is also a process itself in which the teacher does planned activities in the whole period of time. He/ she should do all the activities as systematic as

possible. He does any activity to clear the subject matter that is decided in his lesson. When the teacher enters the class, he involves himself and the students in it that is also a process.

Like teaching, testing is also a process. In testing also, all the activities should be done serially. For testing listening, speaking, reading and writing different activities should be done. Separate activities should be done for each skill. Listening and speaking skills come under the oral test. In this test the test, administrators should follow the proper way of evaluation.

In case of listening test, what the test administrators do to assess students skill is process. Normally, if they use audio aid; they play the cassette player then they give the question format to fill the answers. This is the way of testing listening. The way of testing speaking also affects the students' performance. Whatever activities a tester does in testing on the spot also refers to the process which has an important role in the test. Whether and how he shows the charts and pictures also plays a significant role in the test. He can involve the students in role-play, discussion and group work. All these activities assess the students' performance.

So it is clear that the performance of the students depends upon the process. If the way of giving a test is right, the students can answer confidently and spontaneously. Thus, the test administrators should administrate the test in a proper way to test whatever the test should be tested.

So that, these terms content, context material and process are the most important factors to show the quality of spoken test in case of SLC examination.

1.2 Review of the Related Literature

Several researches have been carried out on speaking test. Some of them have focused on the speaking skills whereas some of them have focused on the qualities and techniques of testing speaking skills.

Oli , (2003) carried out a research entitled 'The proficiency in the speaking skill of the 9th Grade. From the public schools and has presented the argument that the students from the urban area are comparatively good at speaking than those of rural areas.

Similarly, Subedi , (2006) in his study has presented the argument that the receptive skill, listening has been paid a little attention in testing and it has further focused on the fact that the students from public schools are rather weak in this skill in comparison to those from English (private) school background.

Similarly, Khaniya, (2005) in his work, 'Examination for Enhanced Learning' has highlighted on the argument that speaking and its teaching deserves considerable attention.

Giri (1995) carried out a research study on "People's attitude towards the existing SLC examination in Nepal." The researcher tried 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.

Kansakar (1977) emphasizes on teaching all the language skills while teaching language There should be interrelationship between language

skills and balanced approach to teaching should be adopted. It means while teaching speaking, listening, reading skill and writing skills should be taught.

Timilsina, (2000) carried out a research entitled on the effectiveness of recorded materials over conventional technique in teaching listening comprehension to the 10th graders of a public school. After teaching twenty lessons, he administrated a test on both experimental and control groups. He found that the control group, for which the live voice of a teacher (conventional technique) was used, has gained better achievement than the experimental group for which the recorded materials were used.

Singh, (2000) carried out a comparative study between the students of grade eight of public and private sectors on the achievement of listening comprehension. In this study he found that students of private schools have better performance than those of public schools.

Though, these studies manage to focus on testing of primary skills i.e. listening and speaking and their situation, yet no study has been carried out to find out the effectiveness and quality of the speaking test for SLC examinations. So my study is different and unique from others.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are as:

- a) to determine the quality of the speaking test used in the SLC examination in terms of content, process, context and materials.
- b) to present some suggestions for its standardization and relevance.
- c) to present some pedagogical implications.

1.4 Significance of the Study

- a. No such research work has been carried out to find out the quality of speaking test in SLC exam.
- b. This study will be significant for the perspective researchers on the study of speaking test, teachers, test setters, course designers, textbook writers and recorders.
- c. This study will shed light on the areas of improvement of the test or materials for the test.
- d. This study will assist the testers and the teachers to sort out the solutions for the problems aroused in teaching and testing.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

The researcher applied the following methodology to carryout this study:

2.1 Sources of Data

For this study, the data were collected through both primary and secondary sources.

2.1.1 Primary Source of Data

The primary sources of data for the study were the students of grade 10 who were taking part in the speaking test of the SLC Examination, the administrator assigned by the DEO to conduct the speaking test, and the DEO themselves.

2.1.2 Secondary Source of Data

The secondary sources of data were the various books, journals, magazines, thesis, reports, articles, websites etc, for this study.

2.2 Sample Population & Sampling Procedure.

The population of this study consisted of 60 students taking part in the SLC speaking test from different schools of Kaski, Kathmandu and Kavre districts. Out of these, 30 were chosen randomly from the government schools and 30 from private boarding schools. The researcher randomly selected the test administrator from each center, similarly, teachers of boarding (English) and government schools were also consulted. The DEOs selected from same three districts from which the students and the test administrators were selected.

2.3 Tools for Data Collection

The researcher used three sets of questionnaires; one for the test administrator, one for the respective DEOs and the other for students taking part in the test. The questionnaires were of closed as well as open ended type. (See in the appendices-A, B, C). They were prepared on the basis of content, context, material and process applied for testing speaking.

2.4 Process of Data Collection.

The researcher followed the following procedures for the collection of data:

1. First of all, the researcher consulted with the principals and invigilators of the schools for the proposed study.
2. She selected 15 students (from each school) using random sampling procedure and distributed the set of questionnaire.
3. She asked the students to fill in the questionnaire on the spot where they were taking part in speaking test.
4. After this, she asked questions to the administrator of speaking test as well as the teachers to fill in the given questionnaire.
5. She collected cassettes and question papers of speaking test from the respective DEOs.
6. She made analysis of the test materials, process, content and the context used in the process of giving the speaking test on the spot for the data.
7. She prepared the frame work to analyze the information which was taken from the spot.

2.5 Limitations of the Study

As it is not a research on large scale, this study would, however, have the following limitations.

- a. The population of the study was limited to 60 SLC students and the selected districts only.
- b. The study was concerned only with the evaluation of the quality of the speaking test.
- c. The research was limited to the responses of the selected teachers/test administrators as well as DEOs.

CHAPTER: THREE

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

3.1 Analysis and Interpretation of Data

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

The data were collected through questionnaires from the SLC students who took part in the spoken test, test administrators and DEOs through questionnaires were also involved in the study. The researcher also had interview with the test administrators, DEOS and 10 students. The responses of the informants were marked accurately and systematically as far as possible.

The data obtained by the researcher from the informants are tabulated for analysis and interpretation. The data are illustrated though different ways like pie chart, bar-gram and descriptive analysis.

This part of the study has been divided into four sections.

a. Analysis of the Students' Responses

This section deals with the raw data of the study that is the analysis of the students' answer -sheets through the questionnaires.

b. Analysis of the Test Administrators' Responses

This section deals with the information given by the test-administrators through questionnaires. Apart from the questionnaires, the researcher interviewed with the informants. In this section the researcher discusses and analyses the information and responses obtained from different districts' administrators.

c. Analysis of the DEOs' Responses

This section deals with the information based on the responses obtained through the questionnaires. The responses provided by the DEOs from different districts are analyzed comparatively. Their personal views in course of casual conversation with them are also incorporated in this section.

d. Researcher's Own Observation

This section deals with all the available information that the researcher obtained through questionnaires and interviews. In addition, this section focused on the observation based on the spot activities during the speaking test.

3.1.1 Analysis of the Students' Responses

As the researcher mentioned earlier this section analyses the speaking test according to the information provided by the informants, the SLC students through the questionnaires given to them.

The total number of sample students was 60. Among them 30 students from private boarding schools and the same number from government school were chosen. Those students were selected randomly from 3 different districts i.e. Kavre, Kathmandu and Kaski.

All together there were 27 questions, among them 22,23,25,26 and 27 were open and opinion oriented and rests of the other were categorized into 4 titles such as: contents, context materials and process. These 4 factors are very important for testing speaking skill. The quality of speaking test can be tested on the basis of these 4 factors. These factors should be presented in appropriate way while testing speaking skill. The

performance of the students depends upon how these factors are managed.

Let's see the categorization of questions in the following table.

Q.N.	Content	Context	Material	Process	Remark
1	√				
2	√				
3	√				
4	√				
5	√				
6	√				
7		√			
8				√	
9			√		
10				√	
11		√		√	
12		√			
13		√			
14		√		√	
15				√	
16				√	
17			√		
18			√		
19			√		
20					Listening Test
21					Listening Test

3.1.1a Content

Content refers to the items which are selected and graded to achieve the goals and objective. So, it is an important for speaking test. Without content student cannot speak. It means that students are not able to decide what to speak. In the SLC speaking test what types of content were used and how the students felt about them were analyzed under this section.

In question no.1, 54 students out of 60 liked the speaking test. It is 90% of the total no. though 10% students did not like it. When the researcher asked questions to some students, they expressed that in course of teaching inside the classroom students' involvement was negligent. It also shows that while teaching language the teacher should focus equally on all the aspects and skills of language.

In the case of question no. 2, 65% of the students were well familiar to the topic given to them but 35% were unfamiliar. The research showed that all of the 35% of unfamiliar students were from government schools especially from rural area. According to them, they could not understand the topic because of language problem. They never used the English language at school not even in the English period.

In question 3, the researchers gave 4 topics about the content. . The responses showed that 45% of the students got the topic of every day activities, 10% got the scientific and technical topics, 20% got the plans and policies and the rest i.e. 25% got the imaginary topics. These responses showed that the test covered all the areas. The questions, which were asked, were different from students to students and varied in terms of difficulty. According to the students, some topics were difficult to

understand especially the students from government schools felt them more difficult to understand and to describe.

In response to question no. 4, 60% students could answer the question objectively. About 34% could not answer. It showed that the students felt the content difficult or they could not understand the language of the teacher. Some students' responded that the subject matter was so difficult and unfamiliar so they could not answer well.

As far as the response to question no. 5 is concerned, 75% of the students felt confident to the questions but 25% students felt nervous to respond. The students who were nervous gave the reason that they had a new teacher (10%) different subject matter (15%) and lack of practice (10%). Because of these reasons they could not do well.

Question no. 6 reveals that 15% students got closed types of question, 50% got open and rest of them i.e. 35% got the alternatives. Though the test used various type of questions, the closed type questions could not measure the student's spoken quality because the they could not give their opinions and they could not speak long enough to show their speaking ability.

3.1.1b. Context

The context of the test refers to the environment in which the test is administered. In the case of speaking test of SLC, context plays a vital role to rest the performance of the students. The questions given to the students by the researcher about context and responses obtained from the analyzed as follows:

Question no. 7 shows that 70% students got the friendly environment and rest 30% got tensed and unfriendly behavior from the rest administrators.

Those students who got the friendly behavior from the administrators could perform better because they did not hesitate to speak.

In the case of question no. 12 and 13, 60% students got the artificial situation for speaking but 40% did not. The response of those students who got these situations also varied when they were asked about the appropriateness of the situation. Question no. 13 deals with the appropriateness. In that question their response was 74% student got the appropriate situation and rest of 26% could not get such type of situation to speak, when the researcher asked the students who were responsible for not providing an appropriate situation, their response was that it was the behavior of the teachers when they were speaking. According to them those situations was also complex and vague.

So, the students who did not get the situation to speak, could not perform well on the one hand and on the other who did not get appropriate situation also could not perform well. Thus, the required the objectives of the test were not fulfilled.

In case of question 11 and 14, 50% students got chance in discussion and the rest did not get such a chance. Similarly, only 15% students got a chance in role play and 85% did not.

According to them the students who got the chance in discussion and role play could perform better than this counterparts. They got the friendly and proper environment from the test administrators.

3.1.1c Process

Process is a series of things that are done in order to achieve a particular result. It is the way in which something is kept moving towards a desired

direction. In case of spoken test, it plays a vital role. How the test administrators test the students spoken ability is the process here.

Regarding the process, the researcher provided six questions to the students who took part in the SLC speaking test. The response she got from those questions is analyzed as follow:-

In question no. 8, 75% students understood the language of the test administrators but the rest (15%) could not. The language of the administrators also affected the students performance depending upon their language whether it is simple or complex. The students responded that the language of the administrators was vague and complex. Especially those students who were from government schools could not understand their language so much.

In respond to question no. 10, 35% students opined that the test administrators repeated the question but the rest of them i.e. 65% recorded that the questions were not repeated; consequently, they could not understand the content and subject matter, as a result they could not perform well.

Responses to questions 11 and 14 show that only 50% students were involved in discussion 15% of the students got the chance of role play. According to them, those who did not get a chance to take part in discussion and role play could not perform well and they were not satisfied with process of that test.

In response to questions 15 and 16, related to time. Which affects the students' performance. 35% students opined that they got the adequate time to answer. Whereas 65% of them did not get enough time. So they could not answer all the questions. According to them, the students who

got open-ended questions and experienced the short of time, could not answer all the questions. This research showed that the test could not measure the quality of spoken test. So the time should be fixed and the questions also should be accurate according to the time. The balance of both is necessary for testing.

3.1.1d. Materials

Materials constitute another important other factor to test the speaking test. While conducting the test, administrators used the materials to make the subject matter clear. The researcher gave 4 questions to the students who had taken part in the spoken test of SLC examination.

Regarding the materials used in the speaking test, 85% students got the pictures and other got the carts. The research showed that the test administrators used pictures more than charts because the former were easy to describe than the latter. And the pictures always motivated the students to speak.

Regarding the materials, no students got the realia. 60% students got teacher's speech, 20% got audio-visuals and 20% got the audio materials. This showed that the test administrators the students believe that realia and audiovisual materials are very useful but they are rarely used.

Regarding the appropriateness of materials, most of them were appropriate according to the students' level. But 25% students felt lack of appropriateness.

It is found that listening and speaking tests were conducted simultaneously to some students. In response to questions 20 and 21 85% students were given listening and speaking skills separately and the rest (15%) were given simultaneously.

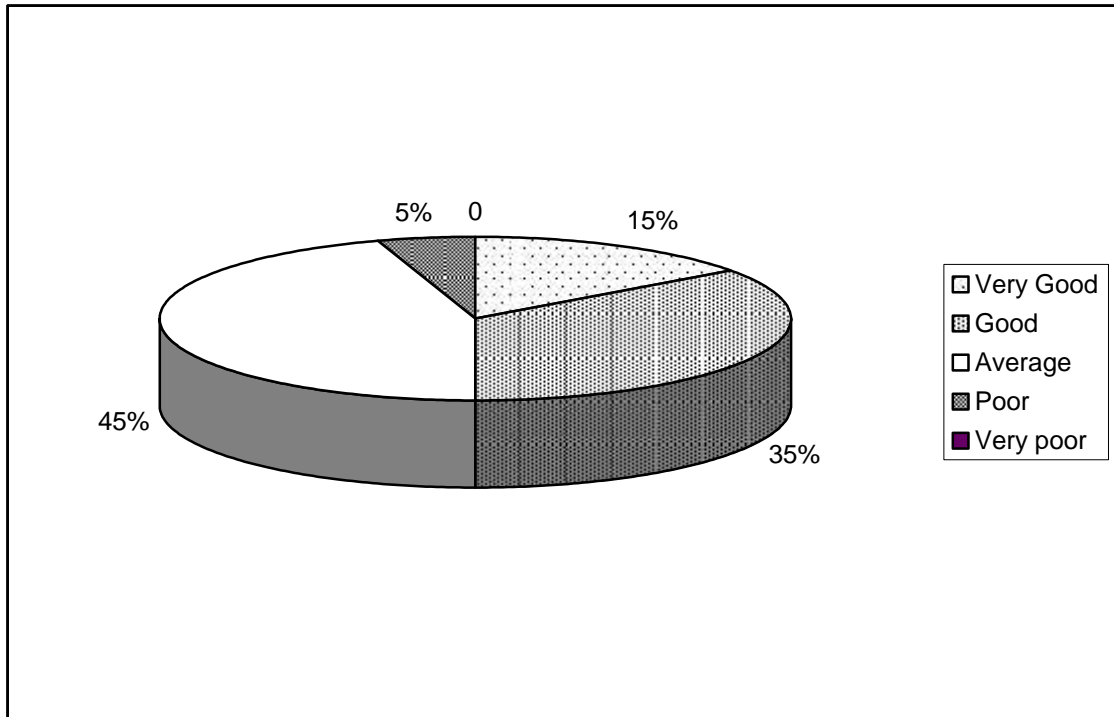
It is found that 70% of students were asked the questions through cassette player and rest of them were asked orally. It showed that the test administrators asked questions through cassette player and their own voices.

According to the students they found the differences between speaking and listening test because, in the listening test they were passive listeners but in speaking they were active speakers. 15% of the students got no differences between the listening and speaking test.

After analyzing the data the researcher found that such type of speaking and listening environments were not available in the government schools. So they could neither understand the questions, nor could answer them well.

In average, while evaluating the students opinions on the speaking test, 15% students found at very good, 35% found it good 45% average, 5% found it poor and 0% found very poor. This data can be illustrated in bar diagram and pie- chart.

Very good – 15%
Good - 35%
Average - 45% (Moderate)
Poor - 5%
Very poor - 0%



Above pie-chart box has showed that the quality of the test according to the students responses.

Regarding the appropriateness of the test, 80% of the students supported it. But rest of all did not support. According to the students who supported the test, the test could develop their confident and also help to face any kind of interview for their higher study and future carrier. But those students who were against it, viewed that the test was appropriate for their level because of the content, context, process and materials.

According to the students, 35% of them found difficulties to respond to the questions and rest of all did not find so. According to them they found the test difficult because of the new environment, behavior of the test administrators as well as materials were not clear and created difficulties. The management of the materials, questions and the situations which they faced were not appropriate for the students.

Twenty percent students suggested the test should be standard; it should be able to make the students active for speaking.

It should test the students' interaction ability. They suggested that students should be involved in discussion and role-play and questions should be asked in the form of dialogue not like monologues. The materials also should be standard as well as modern for testing.

3.1.2 Analysis of the Test Administrators' Responses

As the researcher mentioned earlier, this section analyses the speaking test according to the information provided by the informants responding to the questionnaires. The informants in this section are the test administrators who were involved in the spoken test of SLC examination. The researcher gave questionnaires to the three-test administrator in 3 different districts i.e. Kathmandu, Kavre and Kaski.

The test administrators were assigned in different centers in each year not at the same center. This view was same of the three administrators. According to them DEOs provided them fixed test centers as well as fixed test items and materials.

The materials were cassette players, picture – stories, charts picture sets, question- sets etc for three districts. The researcher found that the same materials were provided in these different districts.

While testing the two skills i.e. listening and speaking they said, they tested one skill at a time. But the researcher found the test administrator at Kavre district tested the two skills simultaneously.

In Kathmandu district, the test administrators tested 30 to 60 students in a day and at least 5 minutes was given to one student. According to Kaski's test administrator, 50 to 55 students were tested a day and the test lasted for 8 minutes for one student and the test administrator from Kavre's responded that 15 to 20 student were tested a day and 15 minutes was

allotted to one student. It showed that the time and the number of students were not fixed in the test.

According to them, while testing, they used the format provided by the DEOs. But the test administrators of Kathmandu district stated that they could use their own formats according to the situation.

They viewed that they tested the language aspects because they were as important as the language skills.

The tests were not designed separately for the students from government and private 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 the test administrator of Kathmandu bright students from government schools could also perform well.

According to them, the score was over 9 out of 12. It was more than 75%. They said that some of the students got 100% also, who performed well.

All the test administrators were not satisfied with the content, materials 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 also not balanced with the score and content.

Efforts should be made for standardized the test. They viewed 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.

The score which they recorded in the mark-slips showed that the students got more than 75% marks. Some of the students got 12 out of 12 which was 100%. Those students who were from private schools got higher marks than the government aided schools. So it is concluded that the test administrator should manage different contents contexts, materials and process for the students of government schools.

3.1.3 Analysis of the DEOs' Responses

This section analyses the speaking test according to the information provided by the DEOs of three (3) districts, Kathmandu, Kavre and Kaski.

The researcher gave them a set of questionnaire each to the DEOs of 3 different districts. There were 12 questions in the questionnaire. Those questions were opinion oriented. The responses obtained from them are analyzed here:

The DEOs, informed that they assigned the test experts who could be the school teacher or language experts from outside. But the DEOs themselves had to arrange them. They had to fix the test centers as well as experts. According to them they changed the test experts each year in the test centers.

The test centers should manage all the things needed there. The DEOs provided them a cassette player, cassettes and man power only. They have no modern instrument for the test up to now. The rural areas having no electricity, the DEOs provided the alternatives source like dry cell, batteries and individual manpower for the test. Poor transportation did not affect it because the school teachers themselves functions as experts.

According to them, the question formats were already fixed by them. But in case of unavoidable conditions the test experts also could make the questions and format themselves but the DEOs gave them instruction about it. According to them, the patterns of test vary every year. The same test is not used each year. But they can use alternatives of question sets for the test.

There were no such types of reading materials which the test experts read out. Only the text book could be used, if necessary. They suggested that it would be better if CDC could provide some scripts for it.

The recorded materials were provided by the CDC were for listening test. The tests recommended by the CDC are informative types. According to them, for speaking test, the CDC gave them orientation classes and charts, pictures etc. through the DEOs.

It should be considered whether the targeted areas of testing listening and speaking according to the objectives of the English course are fulfilled or not. For the speaking test informative skills and interactive skills should be measured property.

According to them special marking criteria with scientific scoring sheet along with adequate instructions were given to monitors (experts) for testing speaking and listening. The test experts followed them but they could not use their own scheme.

3.1.4 Researcher's Own Observation

This section deals with the information apart from the questionnaires and interview, the researcher herself got on the spot in course of observation and casual discussions. In this section the researcher compares the spoken test with the objectives which are prescribed by CDC and the information

obtained from the field. She also analyzed the specification grid of spoken test with the help of the field report. What follows now in the analysis of the specification grid and the field observation report.

3.1.4 Analysis of the Objectives of the CDC

Students should be able to speak fluently and accurately in a variety of authentic situations. Specially, they should be able to:

- speak intelligibly within the structural and lexical levels of the secondary curriculum
- engage effectively in informal spoken discourse, using appropriate discourse devices (e.g. pauses, tags, questions, hedges etc)
- communicate appropriately in a variety of formal and informal situations.
- engage in group point of view effectively.
- narrate a sequence of events.
- 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.)

In case of spoken test, which the researcher observed and on the spot interview found that it could not assess the ability mentioned in the curriculum. It means that the test which she observed could not fulfill the objectives prescribed by the CDC.

It is through the observation, the researcher found that the test administrators were not the native speakers. In the rural areas, the

teachers who taught Nepali, Social Studies etc. administered the test. Such teacher also lacked fluency and accuracy. She also found that the test administrators who were the teachers of other subjects did not have proper training and knowledge about the test. They just fulfilled the formality. The test itself was not appropriate to test the structural and lexical levels of the secondary curriculum. Adequate knowledge of the secondary curriculum is needed for it. If they do not have the knowledge of the know the structural and lexical levels of the secondary level curriculum, it is sure that they can never assess the students' performance.

She found that the test administrators just asked the questions randomly without systematic planning and preparation through informal spoken discourse. They were not even aware of the pauses, tags and hedges. Students did not get the chance to communicate appropriately in a variety of formal and informal situation. The data collected from the students reveal that they did not get the appropriate situation. During their interview also they stated that they were not asked the questions related to the formal and informal situations. Some of the students got the chance of group discussion but many of them could not get the chance to express their opinion nor could they put forward their point or view effectively.

They got the chance to explain the pictures and the charts but they did not get the chance to narrate sequences of events as well as the real objective or a process.

The test just tested the students answers based on unsystematic and random questions as to they did not get the chance to make the questions and respond to that, The test also could test the students' expressions with

appropriate phonological features. To test these features the test administrators need to be skilled and well versed in English.

The researcher's observations and interview reveal that the spoken test which was administered to SLC students has become only a formality. The test should test whatever it intends to test. Without following the objectives of the speaking skill, the test remains an incomplete work. The researcher concludes that the concerned authority should pay proper attention to these shortcomings.

3.1.4 Analysis of the Specification Grid

The analysis of the SLC English specification grid is evaluated by the researcher with the help of information which she got on the spot. According to SLC English specification grid, 2006 the time is fixed for 15 minutes for each student but in reality there was no specific time followed. Giving time fully depended on the hand of test administrators.

Actually the questions which were to be faced by the students should be of following four types. The first is either an interview or a conversation; the second is a cued situation, the third story telling and finally about describing picture, charts, a sequence of events (Teachers as a monitor / an interviewer). But the researcher found that among these four types, only conversation is generally used. Cued situation, story telling and the last type were rarely used in the test.

In the grid the materials like pictures maps, diagrams, etc. are mentioned but only pictures were in practice rather than maps and diagrams. Moreover, there is a rule to ask only two questions in the grid but the test administrators asked unnecessary extra questions as s/he liked.

The grid 2006 has proposed to measure 16 language functions of grade 10 but the test hardly measured 4 or 5 language functions.

3.1.5 Holistic Analysis

Through the cursory overview of the researcher, the contents were very much related to the level of the students and course of study. But the question sets were not properly planned. The researcher found that the question patterns varied in terms of the students. Many test administrators were using the content arbitrarily. According to the students who appeared in speaking test in Kathmandu valley were asked questions like whether he/she had girl/boy friend or not. That was very irrelevant from the examination point of view. It was again found that the students who had got visual materials the list very easy to respond but who got abstract questions could not perform well. So, it showed that the contents used in the test were varying and inappropriate.

Regarding context, some test administrators were creating the friendly environment so that students were excited to speak. But in some test centers, it was found that the students were quite nervous because of the behavior of test administrator, abstract types of questions and the new environment.

In case of materials most of the test administrators were using only pictures as visual materials and some of them were using realia such as books, newspaper, articles etc. Audio and video-visual materials were rarely used for speaking test. Group-work, project-work, and role-playing types of materials were not used.

The process in the spoken test was generally conventional. The students were called one by one and given the task. Only few of the students were

able to understand the instruction of the test administrators. Due to lack of test administrators' skills and competency the marking system was also subjective and arbitrary.

Thus, we can say that the spoken test is taken as an easy tool by the teachers as well as the students. It was found that neither the students nor the test administrators were mentally prepared for the test. They just seemed to be fulfilling the formality and they and not take it seriously.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was an attempt to find out the quality of spoken test, which was used in the SLC examination. Listening and speaking tests come oral tests. This study focused on speaking test. Only after the intensive study of the spoken test of SLC examination on the basis of content, context, materials and process and the response and information obtained from the students of SLC, the test administrators, DEOs and the researcher's own field observation, she has come to derive the following findings:

4.1 Findings

- a. The study concluded that the SLC speaking test 2063 was not of high quality in terms of contents, contexts, materials and process.
- b. To begin with DEOs of different districts, all the DEOs basically responded that due to the lack of proper instructions from the CDC they could not provide appropriate contents, contexts, materials and processes. They had no choice other than to provide traditional materials.
- c. Lack of sufficient materials for speaking test was also an obstacle in the proper testing. They also accepted that they had not paid attention whether the follow up activities were done or not.
- d. They also responded that due to the lack of trained and competent test administrators, unsystematically planned question, inappropriate management of time the test could not fulfill the objectives, prescribed by the CDC.
- e. The test failed to measure the 16 language functions, which are referred to in the grid of 2006. In such a situation, the student from private schools could perform better because they were acquainted

with the language skills in their classroom better than the students of the government aided school.

- f. As far as the test administrators responses are concerned with the content, context, materials and process, they also responded that the test was not challenging for the students from the private school.
- g. According to the DEOs and test administrators, the test system in the spoken test was not appropriate. It could not address all aspects of language as well as the contents, contexts, materials and processes properly.
- h. The students from different private and government aided schools opined that they felt the language problem to understand the content. The students of private school felt easy to answer the questions asked in the test better than the students of government aided school.
- g. The students complained about the content, context, materials and process, as well. The over all finding of the spoken test so the test was not appropriate for all the students in terms of the content, context, materials and processes. However, the student from private schools could do better only because of the proper language practice in the classroom.

4.2 Recommendations

- a. Considering all the responses available from the students, test administrators and DEOs, I would like to recommend that standard but simple language should be used so that students can understand the content and instruction.

- b. The test administrators should pay attention to the students background while conducting the test and asking questions as well as scoring them.
- c. The content should be familiar and the question types should be open, closed and alternative.
- d. The appropriate context should be provided to all the students to perform well in the test.
- e. The process of testing and the usage of the materials should be appropriate for the level of the students.
- f. The test administrators and DEOs should pay the proper attention to the prescribed curriculum of speaking while conducting the test.
- g. 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.
- h. Suggestions and recommendations in the curriculum and grid are not enough; spot observation is equally significant to evaluate the worth of theoretical assumptions.
- i. The students of the government aided schools should also get the opportunity to develop the language skills in classroom so that they can face any sort of situations during their test.

4.3 Pedagogical Implications

- As English is an international language everyone should have the sound knowledge of listening and speaking to communicate effectively in the present context.

- Listening and speaking are interrelated language skills, which go side by side. Without learning these two skills the learners cannot develop the ability of reading and writing. These two primary language skills always help in learning reading and writing.
- As language is a means of communication and a vehicle of transmitting message, feeling and emotions through aural-oral medium, it helps to build on capabilities of speaking of the learners to enhance and strengthen the knowledge they require.
- Teaching and testing are interrelated; testing is the integral part of teaching. In the absence of testing teaching cannot be success for the improvement of teaching, testing should be administered. To show the good quality of the test, testing also should be done properly.
- With the help of the speaking test and its result the teacher knows the pronunciation, fluency, accuracy and appropriate level of students. Therefore he/she can use suitable technique, method and approach for the students of secondary level.
- These are the sampling students from where the teacher gets their proficiency level and their interest so that according to their proficiency level and interest he/she can select the materials to enhance their learning.
- With the help of students' result the teacher knows which part of the speaking test should be emphasized or students feel easy to improve their pronunciation and fluency.

Conclusion

In this study, the researcher tried to determine the quality of spoken test in terms of content, context, materials and process. For this study, the researcher provided 3 sets of questionnaires for the students, DEOs and the test administrators and she herself involved for the observation on the spot to get information. From the information which she got, it was found that the test which is administered for the SLC examination was not appropriate in case of content, context, process and materials. Such types of test cannot test the student's performance as well as their capacity of skills language. First of all, the test should be appropriate to test the students' capacity ability and level of the language. The used content, context, materials process should be appropriate for the level of the students.

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