

Tests of Arabic Speaking Skill for Non-Arabic Speakers

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Abstract

This study aimed at identifying the role of tests of Arabic speaking in developing the Arabic speaking skill for non-native speakers among a sample of university students. The study was conducted on a sample of 20 male and female students distributed into groups. The quasi-experimental approach was used with the design known as the one-group method with two pre- and post-tests. This study also used three measurement tools: the first was a pre- and post-test to measure the experimental and control sample, a statistical test to determine the extent to which the control sample preferred the study using the tests of Arabic speaking strategy, and a final tool to determine the effect of Arabic speaking tests on non-native speakers. The study data was processed, and the study reached several results, the most prominent of which are that there are statistically significant differences ($0.05 \geq \alpha$) in the development and improvement of speaking skills among non-native speakers attributed to Arabic speaking tests strategy when compared with the regular programs. It was discovered that non-native speakers benefited greatly using the Arabic speaking tests strategy and their speaking skills developed significantly, as they had a great motivation towards learning and developing their phrases and vocabulary clearly. The study concludes that non-native speakers could acquire proficiency in Arabic language using the tests of Arabic speaking strategy.

Keywords: Tests of Arabic Speaking, Non-Native Speakers, Proficiency, Arabic Speaking Strategy

Introduction

Testing is one of the most important elements of the educational system because it works to determine the location of the educational process in light of its results. Tests may be designed primarily as a tool to enhance the learning process and move the learner forward, or as a

means to evaluate the learner's linguistic performance. There is a strong connection between language learning and language testing, but sometimes this relationship is lost for one reason or another. Speaking skill is one of the Arabic language skills that focus on communicative situations. In some of its situations, we realize what the speaker means without understanding his language, with the help of signs and other things outside the language. Testing speech becomes students' communicative situations. This article will stand out on Arabic language tests, especially speaking skills. An interview is a type of interview that the student is called upon to measure his oral performance, and cares about perfect pronunciation, producing the right sounds, and conveying the right ideas.

Problem of the Study

The problem of the study is crystallized by examining tests of Arabic speaking skill for non-Arabic speakers, including its content and standards.

Importance of the Study

Study Methodology: The researcher took the descriptive and analytical approach by describing and analyzing the content and criteria for Arabic speaking skill tests for non-native speakers.

Literature Review

1. Dahbi, Husnahu (2023) A descriptive analytical study of conversation skill tests for non-Arabic speakers in Morocco and Germany, *Non-Arabic Speakers Magazine*, Volume 6, Issue 18.
2. Abshar Bushra Othman Al-Sheikh (2023) Tests of speaking skill and the extent to which they reflect the levels of students speaking a language other than Arabic, *Journal of Educational and Social Sciences*, first issue, second volume.
3. Yassin, Mohamed Majdy (2019) "Designing a test to determine the level of speaking skill for learners of Arabic speaking other languages in light of linguistic proficiency" Master's thesis, Cairo University.

The Concept of the Skill of Speaking Arabic to Non-Arabic Speakers

Section One: Definition of Speaking Skill

Speech, which is known as conversation or oral construction; It is one of the language skills by which ideas, beliefs, opinions, information, and requests are transmitted to others through the medium of sound. It involves language, voice, ideas and performance, which is the process of producing sounds that make up speech according to the Arabic language system (Ta'imah, 1978).

Section Two: Elements of Speaking

- a. Having a motive for speaking while appreciating the importance of this motive. If it is misjudged, speaking becomes worthless.
- b. Thinking: It should be automatic, fast, and unnoticed. Its primary task should be to assess the situation, connect meanings, and test their suitability to the situation.
- c. Formulating sentences and phrases that convey ideas. It is linked to thinking, as the stage of linguistic formulation and thinking cannot be separated.
- d. Vocal performance: the vocal system must be sound, and the outlets must perform their work (Al-Naqa and Younis, 1999).

Section Three: Means of Developing Speaking Skills

a. Allowing the language learner to express himself completely, freely and accustoming him to boldness.

b. Providing the language learner with the necessary knowledge and providing him with the means of reading it.

Developing the style of dialogue; this is done by raising issues, and accustoming the learner not to surrender to everything that is said to him, but rather to discuss and analyze (Sidqi et al., 2021).

c. Avoid indoctrination and recitation by making what has been learned the focus of the educational process, and constantly involving it in discussion.

d. Work on planning the speaking process and avoid improvisation, which is closer to hasty reactions.

e. Accustoming the learner to feel confident and comfortable while talking, and respecting the opinions of others (Al-Ash, 2020).

What are the Tests for Arabic Speaking Skills for non-Arabic Speakers?

The First Section: Definition of the Arabic Speaking Skill Test for Non-Arabic Speakers

Testing is one of the various means of evaluation that works to measure the level of student achievement, identify the extent to which the curriculum achieves its set goals, reveal its strengths and weaknesses, and the extent of progress achieved by the educational process. The process of measurement and evaluation represents the fourth pillar of the process. Educational tests in any educational program, and tests, both traditional and modern, represent the most important measurement tools used in these educational programs. Linguistic tests have developed with the development of the view on linguistics across different times up to the present day, like other sciences (Abdul Bari, 2010).

Tests are defined by a number of experts in the field of education, the most important of which are: "A method of measuring individuals and their knowledge in a specific field, and that is an organized procedure for measuring a sample of individuals' behavior. This definition puts us on the components of the test, which are that the test is a method, means, procedures, and elements that constitute a tool of a kind, and that the test is conducted for the purpose of measurement, as its most important component is students or individuals, meaning that the test is concerned with those who are the subject of the test and the extent of its suitability for them. Rushdi To'imah defines the test as "a set of questions that students are asked to respond to with the aim of measuring their level in a specific language skill, showing their progress in it, and comparing them with their colleagues" (Sabeer, 2017).

The definition is that the test is considered a tool to compare the student with other students only, and "this contradicts the principles of modern tests that are based on comparing the student with himself to enhance his confidence". Also, the test was not designed to measure a specific level, but rather to measure all levels of individuals. The test is defined as an organized method for measuring the level of individuals. In a specific field, relying on the rules of measurement of consistency, validity, and objectivity, taking into account individual differences among individuals in order to direct and guide them and solve their problems. It is also a situation in which the student is asked about the amount of information related to a topic (Ramadan, 2017).

The speaking skill is tested in ways that include the student reading aloud and having the ability to distinguish between audio and visual vocabulary, expressing orally, and acting with audio symbols.

What concerns us with these tests is to focus on speaking skill tests for learners of non-Arabic speakers. Proficiency tests and tests measuring linguistic ability are designed to determine the extent of an individual's ability, in light of his previous accumulated experiences, to perform tasks that he is asked to perform. In this, they are the opposite of achievement tests, as they look forward. That is, the student's competence in performing tasks required of him in the future. The content of this type of test does not depend on any specific course or study program for teaching the language because it is primarily concerned with measuring what the student currently has in view of what is asked of him. It is a standardized test that measures the proficiency of Arabic language among non-native speakers. It is designed in accordance with internationally accepted scientific standards and foundations in the field of measurement and evaluation (Ahmed, 1998).

Evaluation is to determine the extent of our success in achieving the goals that we seek to achieve, so that it helps us identify problems, diagnose conditions, and identify obstacles and impediments with the aim of improving the educational process and raising its level. The main goal of evaluation is to improve the educational process and enable it to achieve its goals. Evaluation is an organized process that aims to know the strengths and weaknesses of the examinee, teaching methods, methods, and activities in achieving educational goals (Younis and Al-Sheikh, 2003).

The second section: The importance of Arabic speaking skill tests for non-Arabic speakers Designing and constructing tests is a science and an art. It requires measurement from professionals, educators, teachers, and researchers to acquire methodological, logical, statistical, and technical skills, understanding the basic concepts and principles of educational measurement. Tests are considered one of the various evaluation methods, and even the most common. They are an effective means if they are well constructed and used (Madkour, 1985). It also indicates the learner's needs, behavior, and thinking. It is one of the important methods used by the teacher to evaluate his students, enhance their growth, and reveal their abilities and aptitudes. Working to develop those abilities and aptitudes also helps us diagnose many educational phenomena, and determine the extent of the success of the methods and means used by the teacher. Therefore, the teacher's work cannot be separated from tests in any way, as tests are an integral part of the teaching process, so the teacher must know how to design and correct his tests, and analyze their results (Abu Gharbiyeh, 2008).

Speaking is a natural response to various life situations. It is a means of communicating with others, a prominent manifestation of personality, and the outcome of multiple skills. It is one of the most widespread linguistic activities in practical, scientific and social life. Most linguistic researchers believe that it represents about 95% of linguistic activity, in addition to or before that, it helps achieve two very important things: (Al-Zayoud and Alyan, 1998).

1 - Self-awareness: speaking makes a person feel that he has an entity, and that he is able to influence others and communicate with them.

2 - Psychological satisfaction, reassurance and internal relief; this is because the flow of conversation is an outlet for the self and its concerns.

Testing is an essential part of the education process, as it plays an important role. The linguistic test is a set of questions that students are asked to respond to with the aim of measuring their level in a specific linguistic skill and showing the extent of their performance in it and comparing them to their colleagues (Taaima, 1989).

Speaking tests aim to know the extent of students' success in teaching, that is, in other words, to measure the students' ability in their speaking skills after the teaching process at its various levels. There is no doubt that there is difficulty in conducting speech tests and in evaluating this skill, as they usually require individual tests, which takes a long time. Al-Kholy added that teachers often neglect tests of listening and speaking skills because listening and speaking skills are neglected in daily classroom activities (Al-Kholy, 2000).

Also, one of the difficulties facing those who want to judge this skill is that it consists of many elements or factors that are worth monitoring, including: pronunciation, intonation, tone, clarity, grammatical correctness, and choice of vocabulary. Effendi's statement does not differ from some linguistic elements in speaking skill, on the linguistic side, which includes: pronunciation, tone, intonation, choice of vocabulary or word, sentence choice, grammatical and morphological structures, and variety, and on the external side, which includes: fluency of speech, understanding the topic, skill or competence, intellectual, courage, activity, and cooperation (Al-Naqa 2003).

Third Segment: Types of tests to Determine the Level of Speaking Skill among non-Arabic Speaking Students

1. **Proficiency tests:** These tests measure the general aspects of the learner as a comprehensive measure of all speaking skills. They are not linked to a specific course or academic content. They are tests that measure a learner's general linguistic achievement and show the extent to which he has benefited from what he has learned in understanding and performing aspects of the language (Al-Osaili, 2002).

2. **Classification tests:** These tests aim to determine the level and distribute them into levels. This test is not limited to testing the learner on specific information. It is a general and comprehensive test of all the information that the learner has acquired. Therefore, the test should include both sides of the language, spoken and written, and these tests are distinguished. They are objective or standardized tests that do not take a long time to correct and classify, and are quick to show results and classify learners.

3. **Diagnostic tests:** These tests aim to help both the teacher and the learner identify the learner's strengths and weaknesses, and the extent of his progress in learning the language. This type of test is of particular importance in searching for the difficulties that the learner suffers from, and identifying their causes, in preparation to treat it with successful scientific means.

4. **Speed tests:** These tests are characterized by complete ease, so that the learner can answer the questions correctly, but within a specific time. The aim of these tests is to measure the extent of speed in performing the test while answering its items correctly. These tests do not measure the aspect, not only does it measure the learners' knowledge, but it also measures their speed in answering questions correctly. These tests are often presented in the form of

objective tests, through filling in the blanks, multiple testing, and true-false tests. These measure the learner's linguistic skill, which must have accuracy and speed (Ta'ima, 1978).

5. **Knowledge or strength tests:** They are defined as those tests in which the learner is given sufficient time to perform them, but they contain very difficult items, which only a small number of learners are able to answer with complete correct answers, because these tests come in the form of essay tests or directly or indirectly tests collection.

Rules for Tests of Arabic Speaking Skill for Non-Arabic Speakers

The first section: Specifications of the ideal test for speaking skill

Rasheed To'ima points out that there are two types of specifications: basic specifications that must be met in every test, regardless of its subject. And there are secondary ones that relate to each test separately. This study will focus on the basic specifications of a good test, which are (Al-Sheikh, 1988).

1. **Validity:** This means that the test measures what it is intended to measure. On this basis, a grammar test that is filled with difficult words that require the student to understand them first is not considered an honest test because it measures vocabulary knowledge in addition to grammatical rules.

2. **Reliability:** This means that the test gives the same results for the same group of individuals if it is applied in the same circumstances, and after a short distance.

3. **Objectivity:** This means that the personality of the grader does not influence the status or assessment of students' marks in the test.

4. The process means that the test does not require a great effort from the teacher, whether in setting it, applying it, or correcting it.

5. Discrimination: This means that the test can highlight the differences between students. The absence of any of these features means that there is a defect, that the test being applied does not achieve what it was designed for, and that applying it in the way it is means a waste of time, money, and effort (Taimah, 1989).

Section Two: Criteria that must be taken into Consideration when Developing a Test of Arabic Speaking Skill for non-Arabic Speakers

a. The levels of linguistic proficiency for speaking skill, from beginner to advanced level, should include an accurate standard for speaking skill. For example, when describing the standard for linguistic proficiency for speaking skill at the beginner level, it should not be limited to describing student's ability to pronounce the phrase (what is your name), but rather it should be that the proficiency standard describes the student's ability to speak correctly; So that the focus is not on describing a specific skill, and neglecting another skill (Gomes et al., 2007).

b. Standards range from simple to complex linguistic performance. For example, the ability to understand main ideas comes as a criterion for linguistic performance at a lower level than the ability to understand functional direct connected speech.

c. The standards should present the strengths and weaknesses of the language learner, and provide justifications for that as much as possible. Meaning that the standards describe what the student can perform linguistically, and what the student cannot - or finds difficult - to perform; For example, in the reading skill standards at the first intermediate level, the student may recognize verb structures in affirmative and negative cases, but remain confused in the use of relative possessive pronouns and verb conjugations according to number and gender. This may be explained by the effect of the structure overlap of his national language with the Arabic language.

d. It is necessary to know that linguistic proficiency tests for speaking skill measure several different linguistic skills related to speaking, including: pronunciation, vocabulary, structures, spelling, handwriting, understanding speech, and summarizing ideas.

e. Comprehensiveness of speaking skill tests Speaking skill tests are based on language tests in their basic structure, and include tests of linguistic sounds, tests of linguistic vocabulary, and tests of linguistic structures.

f. Its aim is to measure the learner's cumulative experience that can qualify him to carry out future tasks in the field he wants (Al Habibi, 2012).

g. The learner has minimum linguistic knowledge of the speaking skill that makes him able to take such tests.

h. Taking into account the elements associated with language learning; Such as culture, social and cognitive processes: standards and tests for linguistic proficiency should not focus on describing linguistic performance related to lexical knowledge, knowledge of sounds and linguistic rules.

Not only that, but it must address everything related to the communicative function of language, the role of cultural aspect, proficiency in the learner's national language, and its impact on foreign language learning (Haridi 2007).

i. Determine the relationship between the use of certain linguistic expressions or associations and the level of proficiency expressed by this use. This means determining the level of proficiency that expresses the learner's use of sayings and expressions in the Arabic language, and determining the level of proficiency that expresses the use of connectives in the Arabic language, or what is known as discourse markers in English language studies (Ming Wei, 2011).

Section Three: A model of the Standards Measured by the Speaking Test

Class	Beginner level conversational skill
A	Ability to understand simple greetings, phrases and commands and use a few words.
B	Ability to understand common words, simple phrases, and follow commands and requests
C	Ability to handle communication, speak and respond to questions using phrases and express the needs of daily social life
Class	Intermediate level of conversational skill
A	The ability to participate in everyday social conversations and the ability to participate in conversation
B	Ability to communicate in a number of contexts related to everyday life
C	Ability to manage detailed arguments well and the ability to express emotions, make complaints and explain reasons
Class	Advanced level of conversational skill

A	The ability to ask for advice, state advantages and disadvantages, and the ability to provide contradictory information
B	The ability to express opinions, state preferences, identify problems and provide solutions
C	Ability to be fluent with understanding and practical mastery of the language

Speaking Skill Test form

Number	student's name	Elements of speaking skill				
		Pronunciation	Intonation	Choose vocabulary	Transformational structures	Fluency
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						

Fourth Segment: Aspects included in the speaking skill test

The most important conversation skills assessed include:

1. Fluency and flow while speaking: The ability to speak fluently without long pauses or repeating words such as (um)
2. Linguistic accuracy: using grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary correctly.
3. Use appropriate speech links to connect ideas
4. Response and interaction: The ability to understand questions and respond to them in a way that reflects good understanding.
5. Providing appropriate opinions, comments and clarifications.
6. Ability to start and end a conversation in a polite and efficient manner.
7. Use appropriate communication methods (Abu Amsa, 2018).
8. The student's ability to correctly understand the task at hand is evaluated. They must read and understand the questions and instructions carefully.
9. The student's ability to organize and arrange their thoughts in a logical and orderly manner is assessed. They should be able to provide a clear introduction, main body and conclusion in their answer.
10. The student's ability to expand ideas and provide additional details and clear examples to support and illustrate their points is assessed.
11. The student's ability to respond verbally in an appropriate manner is assessed. They should speak clearly and in a natural, intelligible tone of voice.
12. The student's ability to correctly pronounce words and phrases and use the appropriate tone during a conversation is evaluated. They must be able to enunciate clearly and control tone to express different meanings.

13. The student's ability to listen carefully to the other speaker and respond appropriately is assessed. They must demonstrate a good understanding of the message and react appropriately in the conversation (Ali, 2016).

Results

1. The field of teaching Arabic language to speakers of other languages needs a test in the light of which their speaking skill is measured, in order to develop linguistic performance and bring it to the level of proficiency.
2. The necessity of building curricula and designing appropriate contents to teach Arabic language to speakers of other languages at all levels such as beginner, intermediate and advanced level.
3. There must be standards of linguistic proficiency in speaking tests for learners of Arabic as non-native speakers, in addition to their available speaking skills.
4. The need to determine what is necessary to design the test, which will enhance the feeling of satisfaction among foreign learners of Arabic language, and increase their motivation towards learning Arabic language.

Recommendations

Among the most important recommendations are the following:

1. Carrying out various activities that can enhance students' Arabic speaking proficiency.
2. Trying to establish a debate and discussion activity among students.
3. Directing students to use the Internet to develop conversation skills. The Internet can contribute a lot to the development of speech. It has become an ideal means of communication, as it provides the medium in which a person can express his thoughts and negotiate with others, and this in turn makes the Internet particularly useful in acquiring a second language.
4. Encouraging students to listen to Arabic radio and watch Arabic-speaking satellite channels.
5. Determine systematic tests that are internationally accredited, and are not the result of individual efforts.
6. Prepare a detailed test outline.
7. Formulate questions in a way that allows the student to easily know what each question aims to achieve.
8. Allow the student with sufficient time to think about the answer.
9. Judging a student's performance based on the required performance, not on his or her personal traits or teacher's impression about him.

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