

EFL Instructors' Majors and Their Speaking Activity Choices for Informal Oral Assessment

Ahmet Selçuk AKDEMİR¹, Berk İLHAN²

Submitted by 24.09.2018

Accepted by 23.01.2019

Research Paper

Abstract

The purpose of the study is to investigate frequently used speaking tasks in English classes at tertiary level in Turkey and differences in language instructors' speaking activity choices for informal oral assessment with regard to their academic majors. As data collection tool, an electronic questionnaire was sent to 82 participant language instructors from different universities in Turkey in the academic year 2016-2017. The questionnaire included speaking activities that can be used with assessment purpose and the participants were asked to report the frequency of the activities they used. The data which was collected through the electronic questionnaire was analysed by using SPSS 22 software. Kruskal-Wallis test revealed statistically significant differences between participants' academic majors and speaking activities they used for informal oral assessment. Seven oral assessment activities were found to differ in frequency according to academic majors; picture-cued tasks, giving instructions/directions, role-play, discussions/conversations, games, picture-cued storytelling, and retelling story/news event. The differences were compared by mean ranks and medians, and these differences were classified according to the creativity the task required. In the light of the findings, practical and theoretical implications are given with concluding remarks.

Keywords: Speaking, oral assessment, communicative competence, academic major

¹ Firat University, e-mail: aselcukakdemir@gmail.com

² Firat University, e-mail: berkilhan5@gmail.com

Introduction

On many occasions when the quality of language teaching is judged, much of the criticism is directed at practices and outcomes of teaching speaking skill. Speaking is considered as “the skill upon which a person is judged at face value.” (McDonough, 1993). McDonough’s statement claims that speaking skill is the display case of the language knowledge. That is why the skill is one of the most essential performance criteria for students to present their language abilities in language classrooms. Therefore, teaching, practicing and assessing speaking is the major goal in many language classes. Teachers practice the skill and make an informal assessment consciously or subconsciously all the time. By doing so, they grasp a heuristic impression about their students’ speaking skill. The informal assessment is given in different forms such as unplanned or incidental comments and responses as a feedback to students’ performance. Also, a simple question-answer exercise can be a form of the informal assessment. For instance, when students respond to a question, teachers assess their pronunciation, grammar, syntax and lexis informally and subconsciously. The expressions from the teacher such as ‘Perfect!’, ‘Well done!’, ‘Can you repeat again, please!’ are feedbacks in an informal assessment; however, scores on students’ response to the question are the equivalents of these feedbacks in a formal testing. As there are many speaking activity types, which speaking activities to use so as to practice and assess speaking skill is shaped by teachers’ own backgrounds and their constructs about speaking skill. These constructs are mainly shaped both by teachers’ own experiences as students and by teacher education they go through (Roberts, 1998). The informal assessment is always present in language classes and teachers’ preferences for speaking activities for assessment change.

There are a variety of activities to practice and assess speaking skill. English courses in many contexts are taught by using course books and many teachers simply follow the activities present in them rather than planning and creating their own activities. Even if they

follow a course book, there may be some activities they favour or others they avoid teaching in classes. In primary, secondary and high school levels, teachers have some channels to share their preferences and practices with their colleagues such as teacher's room, frequent meetings and Ministry of Education Guidelines which are handed out to the teachers at the beginning of every educational year with the aim of providing a synergy in all government schools. These guidelines can also be found on the web page of Ministry of Education (<http://mufredat.meb.gov.tr/Default.aspx>). However, at university level, it is not always the case partly due to the autonomous nature of each university in Turkey. Each university has its own syllabi, materials and instructors and educates learners at tertiary level accordingly. Furthermore, English instructors that work at tertiary level in Turkish universities are graduates of five major departments, such as English Language Teaching (ELT), English Language and Literature (ELL), American Culture and Literature (ACL), Linguistics (LNG) and Translating and Interpreting Studies (TIS). On these grounds, it can be argued that different educational backgrounds they have from these five majors might have an effect on their practices and preferences about how to practice and assess speaking skill.

Though there are several studies on speaking assessment in various contexts (Christianson, Hoskins & Watanabe, 2009; Davison, Leung, Hill & Sabet, 2009; Ebadi & Asakereh, 2017), there is still a need to investigate speaking assessment at tertiary level in terms of instructors' majors (Güllüoğlu, 2004; Höl, 2010; Öz, 2014). Therefore, this descriptive study seeks to answer following questions by taking instructors' academic majors as independent variable and their speaking activity preferences as dependent one;

1. What type of speaking tasks for informal oral assessment are frequently used at tertiary level in Turkey?
2. Do instructors' choices for speaking activities differ according to their academic majors?

Literature Review

Theoretical background

Informal assessment means, for students, using all types of speaking activities conducted in classes to provide feedback on students' learning and development, and for teachers, providing feedback on the effectiveness of instruction. Louma (2004) reports that "our personality, our self-image, our knowledge of the world and our ability to reason and express our thoughts are all reflected in our spoken performance in a foreign language" (p. IX). One of the problems in teaching, practicing and assessing speaking skill is considering it as a knowledge which can be assessed by traditional forms of assessment. Social dimension of the speaking skill is not considered in many situations. According to Valette (1977), oral communication is the goal of speaking, so it can be regarded as a social skill. The social skill requires a listener, a speaker and interaction. The following activities are provided in Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL) as real life speaking situations; transactions, casual conversation, informal discussion, formal discussion, debate, interview, negotiation, co-planning and goal-oriented cooperation (Council of Europe, 2001). The intention of teaching speaking is to equip learners with competences for situations that are probable in real life. The following seven features of the authentic communication are suggested by Morrow (1977):

- "Authentic communication is interaction- based,
- It is unpredictable in both form and message,
- It varies according to sociolinguistic discourse context,
- It is carried out under performance limitations such as fatigue.
- It always has a purpose (chatting, informing etc.)
- It is authentic as opposed to textbook contrived language,

- It is judged to be successful or unsuccessful according to outcomes of interaction.” (cited in Rivera, 1984; p.39)

These communication features belong to authentic communication outside the class. A complete authentic environment might be hard to achieve in a classroom atmosphere. For that reason, Brown (2001) lists some points to consider while planning speaking tasks in classes. These are:

- “Let the students know the purposes of the speaking activities they do in class,
- Use techniques that cover the spectrum of learner needs,
- Encourage the use of authentic language in meaningful contexts,
- Provide appropriate feedback and correction,
- Capitalize on the natural link between speaking and listening,
- Give students opportunities to initiate oral communication,
- Encourage development of speaking strategies,
- Monitor the learners while they are speaking.” (ibid. p. 275)

According to Louma (2004), speaking tasks are activities used for learners to achieve a goal, by having a role in a setting. Teachers can judge their students in line with outcomes of the interaction. These tasks are an imitation of the speaking situations in life. Nunan (1992) defines communicative task as;

“... a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form... Minimally, a task will consist of some input data and one or more related activities and procedures...” (cited in Louma, 2004, pp. 30-31)

Brown (2004) further suggests speaking tasks for practice and informal assessment. According to his compilation of all the task types that are used to replicate authentic communication, he classifies these task types under five categories; imitative, intensive, responsive, interactive and extensive speaking tasks. He categorizes these speaking tasks

according to students' answers' being limited or having various alternatives, in other words, the creativity and cognitive demand the tasks require. The speaking activities in each category are given below, respectively from the tasks that require limited answers to the ones that require creativity and cognitive demand:

“Imitative speaking task; repetition and drills

Intensive speaking tasks; directed response tasks, read-aloud tasks, sentence / dialogue completion tasks and oral questionnaires, picture-cued tasks, translation (Limited stretch of discourse)

Responsive speaking tasks; question and answer, giving instructions and directions, paraphrasing

Interactive speaking tasks; interview, role-play, discussions and conversations, games

Extensive speaking tasks; oral presentations, picture-cued story-telling, retelling a story or news event, translation of extended prose.” (Brown, 2004, p.142).

Related studies on speaking assessment

There are several studies in the relevant literature on speaking assessment. Following studies have revolved around both teachers' and students' perception and practices of oral assessment. Hosseini and Azarnoosh (2014) made a comprehensive investigation of 47 participants working at undergraduate degree at different universities. The purpose of the study was to look at Iranian EFL instructors' oral assessment practices at tertiary level. The findings of the descriptive study revealed that instructors aimed to provide feedback to students, to plan their instruction, to motivate students to learn and to make their students work harder by making an oral assessment. The study did not examine what type of speaking tasks were used by instructors and whether there were differences in speaking activity choice among instructors. Oz (2014) investigated Turkish teachers' preferences of common assessment methods in their classes. Their preferences were examined with the question of whether there were differences among teachers in relation to their experience, gender and public or private school contexts. Data collected from 120 English teachers revealed that

rather than new formative methods of assessment such as portfolios, group work, performance assessment, Turkish teachers relied on conventional methods of assessment such as paper-pencil tests, multiple-choice, fill in the blanks etc. Oz's research has revealed that there were differences among language teachers in their speaking teaching practices; however, it did not use academic major as a variable. The difference between Oz's research and the present study is that the participants in this study are instructors who work at tertiary level and differences, and if there is any, will be compared according to the academic majors they graduated from. Kellermeier (2010) studied the gaps between theory and practice in teaching and assessing speaking skill in 68 foreign language classrooms in Florida. The findings of the research were published as a doctoral dissertation for University of Central Florida. The participants of the research were 175 foreign language teachers who worked in Florida middle and high schools and they taught Spanish, French and German as foreign languages. The results revealed that there was an interaction between teachers' level of education and experience. More experienced teachers tended to spare much more time on oral assessment practices. However, teachers' educational background was not taken into consideration. Therefore, this study aimed to contribute to the field by taking educational background as a variable. Chuang (2009) conducted a mixed method research in order to explore how English instructors in Taiwan evaluated their students' oral skills, and what kind of assessment activities they used and deterrence for not doing speaking assessment. This study was carried out at tertiary level with English instructors. The results provided confirmatory evidence that teachers were inclined to use conventional methods of assessing such as paper-pencil or multiple-choice tests. The instruction was given mostly for reading and grammar skills. Teachers gave the reasons for neglecting oral assessment as time needed to do appropriate activities, large size of student population, students' feelings about oral assessment and teachers' lack of confidence. Cheng, Rogers and Hu (2004) conducted a comparative analysis

of assessment practices in different contexts. The research was very large scaled in that 461 questionnaires were sent to three different countries and cities; Canada, Hong Kong and Beijing. The findings asserted that when the context of assessing and instructors change, assessment processes also change. The study showed that the aims of assessment could change from one country to another because of instructors' educational backgrounds, and their views. These differences in teachers' views on the effective ways of teaching and assessing speaking skill require more research on the favoured and neglected speaking tasks to be used for assessment purpose. Cheng's study was different from the present study in that it focused on all four skill areas. Gulluoglu (2004) questioned the place of speaking in English instruction at Gazi University preparation classes in her master thesis. The research focused on how much time was allocated for speaking activities and assessment. The findings showed that although not much importance was given to speaking in classes, when students took speaking test, they stated their needs to learn speaking in a positive way. The testers also had some positive views on testing speaking. This study was conducted to examine the feelings of students and instructors after testing took place. However, it did not focus on type of speaking activities that instructors use.

The results provide confirmatory evidence that teachers and instructors do not prefer to assess speaking due to large class sizes with many students, time needed to prepare and administer speaking tests and lack of education and training on assessment (Chuang, 2009). In the studies mentioned above, oral assessment was considered as testing rather than informal assessment. The abovementioned problems can be faced when testing speaking; however, informal oral assessment is more flexible in that there is no backwash effect as there is no grading (Brown, 2004). Even a simple speaking activity can be a form of informal oral assessment, and positive or negative expressions are used as the equivalents of scores in formal assessment.

To investigate oral assessment practices, the current research focuses on the type of speaking activities that are conducted in class. In this study, informal assessment was considered as “using all type of speaking activities conducted in classes to provide feedback to students for their learning and development, and for teacher, providing feedback on the effectiveness of instruction” (Brown, 2004, p.125). The term testing is not used in this research as testing evokes the feeling of tests that are done at the end of a term to exit a program. However, assessment is different. Every speaking activity that is conducted in class can be used as a form of assessment. Based on the researchers’ review of literature, no other studies have investigated the issue by focusing on the difference of teachers’ academic majors; in other words, the assumption in this study is that the department instructors studied at universities might affect their choices in assessing speaking.

Methodology

Design

The research design in the study is descriptive. As Seliger and Shohamy (1989) state “descriptive research involves a collection of techniques used to specify, delineate or describe naturally occurring phenomena without experimental manipulation” (p. 24). In descriptive research, data can be collected from the data of other studies or by the researcher himself. Its main difference from qualitative studies is that it begins with preconceived hypotheses and a narrow scope of investigation. Descriptive research can be a baseline for further controlled studies or a description of the phenomena themselves.

The researchers’ review of literature has revealed that there are not many studies in Turkey which describe the practices of oral assessment at universities with regard to speaking

tasks used. Therefore, descriptive design was determined to describe naturally occurring phenomenon.

Participants

Participants of the study were 82 English language instructors from different universities in Turkey. They were chosen randomly and with tenets of convenience sampling. Convenience sampling method is choosing sample from “the participants who are simply available to the researcher by virtue of their accessibility” (Bryman, 2012, p.201). All of the participants were instructors at Turkish state universities. An electronic questionnaire was sent to the participants’ email addresses. Their email addresses were obtained from the websites of their universities. As some of the university websites do not contain information for communication, convenience sampling method was determined to be chosen as sampling method. The distribution of participants in terms of their academic majors is given in Table 1.

Table 1

The Distribution of Participants According to Their Academic Majors

	Participants’ Academic Majors	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 English Language and Literature	31	37.8	37.8	37.8
	2 English Language Teaching	42	51.2	51.2	89.0
	3 Linguistics	2	2.4	2.4	91.5
	4 American Culture and Literature	2	2.4	2.4	93.9
	5 Translation and Interpreting Studies	5	6.1	6.1	100.0
	Total	82	100.0	100.0	

As seen in Table 1, participants were from 5 different academic majors. 31 (37.8%) were from English Language and Literature, 42 (51.2%) were from English Language Teaching, 2 (2.4%) were from Linguistics, 2 (2.4%) were from American Culture and Literature and 5 (6.1%) were from Translation and Interpreting Studies departments.

Data Collection

In descriptive research, tests, surveys, questionnaires, self-reports, interviews and observations are key data collection methods (Seliger & Shohamy, 1990). In the present study, a questionnaire which consists of two parts was used to collect data. As Nunan (1992) states, “attitudes, opinions, characteristics of a group can be investigated with a questionnaire.” (p. 57)

The questionnaire in the study consists of two parts. First part aims to gather demographic information about participants. In the second part, 17 different oral assessment and practice activities (i.e. repetition & drills, directed response, picture-cued speaking tasks, question & answer etc.) which were taken from Brown’s (2004) book ‘*Language Assessment*’ were listed and participants were asked to report the frequency of the activities they use for informal oral assessment purpose. The activities were taken from Brown’s book because it is one of the most comprehensive and well-known books on language assessment. The 17 oral assessment and speaking activities were the ones that could be found in every English course book and the researchers have conducted a literature review so as to ensure no other speaking activity is missed. Brown has stated in the book that “...doing all 17 activities may not be flexible; therefore, speaking activity choice should be done by considering the context of the teaching” (p.212). That is the reason why the researchers have decided to conduct the study to see the differences among instructors in accordance with their majors.

In May of 2016, a questionnaire was sent to 20 instructors who work at Firat University as a pilot study. The university was chosen due to its accessibility because both researches worked there. Some necessary changes such as re-writing the name of speaking activity were done on the statements to avoid misunderstandings and ambiguity. The electronic questionnaire was sent to instructors in October, 2016. After a month, the process of data analysis started.

Data Analysis

The data was analysed with Kruskal-Wallis test which is non-parametric alternative of one-way ANOVA. Analysis was administered in SPSS 22. In Kruskal- Wallis technique, there should be one categorical independent variable with more than three dependent categories. The independent variable in this paper is academic major of instructors. The dependent and continuous variable is the scale used in the second part of the questionnaire and it seeks to reveal the speaking activities teachers favour.

As parametric techniques make assumptions about normally distributed population sample and as data in this paper do not fulfil the requirements of normally distributed sample, the technique used in this method is non-parametric. Pallant (2010) states that "...if the population sample is small, rather than getting incorrect analyses by conducting parametric techniques it is better to conduct non-parametric ones even if they have some disadvantages over the other" (p.213). There should be two basic assumptions while conducting non-parametric technique. One is collecting data from independent samples and this is fulfilled in the study and the other is independent observations. The latter one is accomplished by sending a questionnaire electronically to independent samples working at different universities. Kalayci (2016) also states that "...non-parametric tests are less sensitive than their parametric alternatives; therefore, in some occasions, they are inadequate to find the differences between groups." (p.85). In order to apply parametric tests into a study, data must be normally distributed, homogeneity in variances should be provided and many other conditions in each different test should be ensured. If the assumptions are not appropriate for parametric techniques due to a small amount of data or participants, non-parametric tests are more manageable rather than facing a dead end by applying parametric techniques.

Findings

In this section, findings will be presented in two steps to seek answers to the research questions. In the first step, the speaking tasks that are used frequently by language instructors for assessment and practice purposes will be presented to answer the RQ1. In the second step, the analysis of differences among language instructors in their use of these speaking tasks and their academic majors will be presented in detail to answer RQ2.

Question 1; What type of speaking tasks for informal oral assessment are frequently used at tertiary level in Turkey?

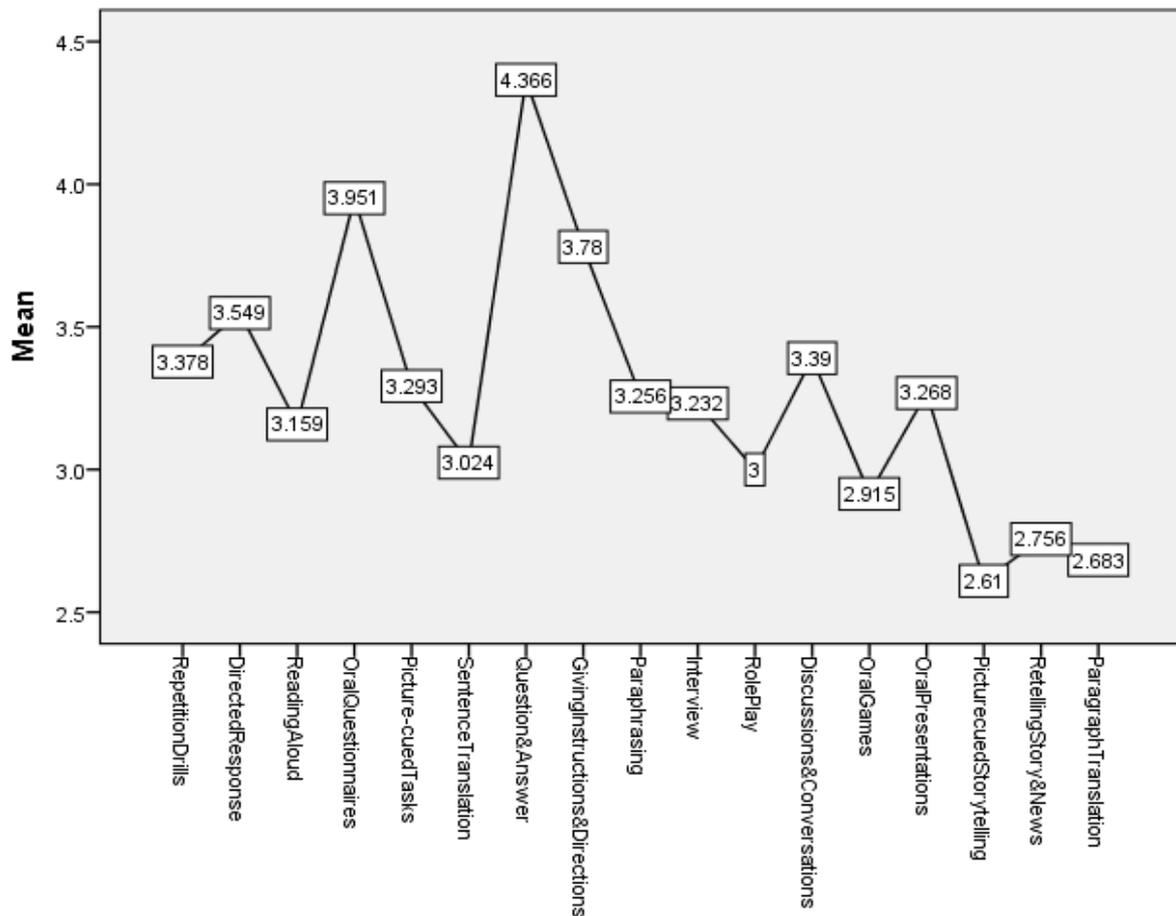


Figure 1. Means comparison of oral assessment activities

The participants chose one from 'never' to 'always' according to the frequency of the use of these activities in their classes. Hence, the total point was 5, which equals to 'always' in SPSS programme. It can be understood from the line in Figure 1 that regardless of their academic majors, language instructors use 'question and answer' activities most in their classes (with a mean score of 4.366). Picture-cued story telling is used least frequently with a mean score of 2.61. Use of oral questionnaires and sentence dialogues is frequent with a mean score 3.951. Both question and answer, and dialogue completion type of activities require students to give short responses. Interview has a mean score of 3.232 and it can be inferred that it is sometimes performed in classes and for assessment purposes. Retelling a story or news and paragraph translation are other least frequently used activities. All other activity types have mean scores between 3 and 3.5. It means that all participants answered somewhere between sometimes and usually regardless of their academic majors. This finding gives a basic descriptive data on the participants' use of speaking tasks regardless of their majors.

Question 2; Is there a relationship between instructors' academic majors and their speaking activity choices?

In order to investigate whether there is a relationship between instructors' academic majors and their speaking assessment practices, Kruskal-Wallis test was used for each speaking activity. Mean and median scores of each speaking task shown in Kruskal-Wallis tests helped the researchers see any differences among instructors. Only those activities showing difference have been presented in tables.

Table 2

Kruskal-Wallis Test for Oral Activities and Academic Major

	Act1	Act2	Act3	Act4	Act5	Act6	Act7
Chi-Square	3.412	4.775	4.856	3.957	9.633	7.419	5.245
df	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Asymp. Sig.	.491	.311	.302	.412	.047	.115	.263
	Act8	Act9	Act10	Act11	Act12	Act13	Act14
Chi-Square	8.438	6.451	.807	15.077	10.715	11.474	2.445
df	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Asymp. Sig.	.077	.168	.937	.005	.030	.022	.655
				Act15	Act16		Act17
Chi-Square				16.997	11.210		5.309
Df				4	4		4
Asymp. Sig.				.002	.024		.257

As shown in Table 2, Kruskal- Wallis test revealed that there is a statistically significant difference in instructors' speaking activity preferences in some activity types and their majors. It can be understood from Table 2 that there are seven oral assessment activities (Picture Cued Tasks, Giving instructions and directions, Role-play, Discussions and conversations, Games, Picture-cued storytelling, Retelling a story or news event) which differ in their frequencies in accordance with participants' academic majors; while there are ten activities (Repetition and drills, Directed response, Reading aloud, Sentence-dialogue completion, Oral translation at sentence level, Question and answer, Paraphrasing, Interview, Oral presentation, Translation at paragraph level) showing no difference in terms of participants' academic majors. The activities that have significant differences alpha value $p < .05$ are; Act5 (Picture-cued tasks), Act8 (Giving instructions and directions), Act11 (Role-play), Act12 (Discussions and conversations), Act13 (Games), Act15 (Picture-cued story telling), Act16 (Retelling a story or news event).

Mean ranks and median values for the differences of each speaking task are demonstrated in the following tables.

Picture-cued Tasks (Act5)

Table 3

Mean Ranks-Medians of Picture-Cued Speaking Tasks

	Major	N	Mean Rank	Median
Act 5	1 English Language and Literature	31	35.81	3.00
	2 English Language Teaching	42	48.54	4.00
	3 Linguistics	2	40.25	3.00
	4 American Culture and Literature	2	30.25	2.50
	5 Translation and Interpreting Studies	5	22.70	2.00
	Total		82	

Table 3 shows that mean ranks of English Language Teaching and Translation and Interpreting Studies differed most in participants' use of picture-cued tasks.

As Kruskal-Wallis Test in Table 2 revealed a statistically significant difference in frequencies of using picture-cued tasks for oral assessment across five different academic majors (ELL; $n = 31$, ELT; $n = 42$, LNG; $n = 2$, ACL; $n = 2$, TIS; $n = 5$), $\chi^2(4, n = 82) = 9.63$, $p = .047$), Table 3 shows the mean and median values for the majors of the participants who preferred picture-cued tasks for oral assessment. ELT academic major recorded a higher median score ($Md = 4$) than the other academic majors. Participants with ELL and LNG academic major used picture-cued tasks with same frequency. ($Md = 3$) whereas participants with ACL ($MD = 2.50$) and TIS ($MD = 2$) academic major used picture-cued tasks the least frequently.

Giving Instructions and Directions (Act 8)

Table 4

Mean Ranks-Medians of Giving Instructions and Directions Task

	Major	N	Mean Rank	Median
Act8	1 English Language and Literature	31	41.05	4.00
	2 English Language Teaching	42	45.73	4.00
	3 Linguistics	2	14.75	2.50
	4 American Culture and Literature	2	37.00	3.00
	5 Translation and Interpreting Studies	5	21.30	3.00
	Total	82		4.00

As Kruskal-Wallis Test in Table 2 revealed a statistically significant difference in frequencies of using giving instructions and directions tasks for oral assessment across five different academic majors ($\chi^2 (4, n = 82) = 8.43, p = .077$), the mean and median values for majors are given in Table 4. Participants with ELL and ELT academic majors recorded a higher median score ($Md = 4$) than the other academic majors. Instructors with LNG academic major used the activity the least frequently with a median score ($MD = 2.50$) whereas ACL and TIS conducted the task with same frequency with a median score ($Md = 3$).

Role-play (Act 11)

Table 5

Mean Ranks-Medians of Role-Play Task

	Major	N	Mean Rank	Median
Act11	1 English Language and Literature	31	35.18	3.00
	2 English Language Teaching	42	50.39	4.00
	3 Linguistics	2	23.00	2.00
	4 American Culture and Literature	2	15.00	1.50
	5 Translation and Interpreting Studies	5	24.00	2.00
	Total	82		3.00

Table 5 shows that participants with ELT background had more mean ranks than the other academic majors. One of the biggest differences across majors was recorded in this assessment task. Kruskal-Wallis Test revealed a statistically significant difference in frequencies of using role play tasks for oral assessment across five different academic majors ($\chi^2 (4, n = 82) = 15.0, p = .005$). This value constitutes one of the biggest difference regarding the participants' majors. Participants with ELT academic background were recorded to use the activity most frequently with the highest median score ($Md = 4$). Second group, in which participants used the task frequently, is ELL with a median value of 3. Participants with LNG and TIS academic backgrounds had the same median value of 2. Participants with ACL background can be said to use role play tasks the least frequently with a median score of 1.50.

Discussions and Conversations (Act 12)

Table 6

Mean Ranks-Medians of Discussions and Conversations Task

	Major	N	Mean Rank	Median
Act12	1 English Language and Literature	31	38.55	3.00
	2 English Language Teaching	42	47.95	4.00
	3 Linguistics	2	14.00	2.00
	4 American Culture and Literature	2	22.50	2.50
	5 Translation and Interpreting Studies	5	24.20	3.00
	Total	82		3.50

Table 6 indicates that participants with ELT academic background had more mean scores than other departments. The least mean score (14) was in LNG for discussions and conversations task.

Kruskal-Wallis Test revealed a statistically significant difference in frequencies of using discussions and conversation tasks for oral assessment across five different academic majors ($\chi^2 (4, n = 82) = 10.71, p = .030$). Participants with ELT academic background had a

median score of 4 which is more than other majors. Participants with ELL and TIS academic majors had the same median scores ($Md = 3$). They can be said to use discussions and conversations with same frequency. ACL major had a median score of 2.50 and it is between ‘rarely’ and ‘sometimes’ in the questionnaire while participants with LNG academic major preferred discussions and conversations tasks least frequently with the least median score ($Md = 2$).

Games (Act 13)

Table 7

Mean Ranks-Medians of Games Task

	Major	N	Mean Rank	Median
Act13	1 English Language and Literature	31	36.89	3.00
	2 English Language Teaching	42	48.77	4.00
	3 Linguistics	2	27.00	2.00
	4 American Culture and Literature	2	11.00	1.00
	5 Translation and Interpreting Studies	5	27.00	1.00
	Total	82		3.00

Table 7 presents that the major ELT had the highest mean score for games as an assessment activity. ELL came after ELT with a mean score of 36.89. Majors LNG and TIS had the same mean scores; 27. Participants with ACL major did not prefer games to assess or practice speaking with a mean score of 11.

Games as an oral assessment activity had a total medium score of 3. It can be inferred that it was sometimes preferred by instructors. The analysis conducted by using Kruskal-Wallis test indicated a statistically significant difference in frequencies of using game tasks for oral assessment across five different academic majors ($\chi^2 (4, n = 82) = 11.47, p = .022$). ELT major had the highest median score ($Md = 4$) and it was followed by ELL major with a median score of 3. Participants from LNG major had a higher median score ($Md = 2$) than

other two majors, which means a more frequent use of games by the major. The conclusion as participants with ACL and TIS did not prefer games to assess and practice speaking can be made by examining the medians. Both majors had the median score of 1.

Picture-cued Storytelling (Act 15)

Table 8

Mean Ranks-Medians of Picture-cued Storytelling Task

Major	N	Mean Rank	Median
Act15			
1 English Language and Literature	31	35.66	2.00
2 English Language Teaching	42	50.45	3.00
3 Linguistics	2	18.25	1.50
4 American Culture and Literature	2	8.50	1.00
5 Translation and Interpreting Studies	5	25.00	2.00
Total	82		3.00

Table 8 shows that participants with ELT major use picture-cued storytelling most frequently with a mean score of 50.45, and it is one of the activities they use most. Second major which prefers picture cued storytelling is ELL with a mean score of 35.66 and it is followed by TIS with a mean score of 25. This academic major was followed by LNG with a mean score of 18.25 and the major which preferred picture-cued storytelling was ACL with a mean score of 8.50.

A statistically significant difference was found in frequencies of using picture-cued storytelling tasks for oral assessment across five different academic majors ($\chi^2(4, n = 82) = 16.99, p = .002$). With a total median score of 3, the task is not frequently used in classes. ELT major uses it most frequently with the highest median score ($Md = 3$); nevertheless, it is equal to sometimes in the questionnaire. ELL and TIS use it most frequently with a mean score of 2 which equals to 'rarely' after ELT. ACL and LNG majors have the lowest median

scores; 1 for the former and 1.50 for the latter. It can be said that picture-cued storytelling was not preferred by these two academic majors as an oral assessment or practice activity.

Retelling a Story or News Event (Act 16)

Table 9

Ranks of Retelling a Story or News Event Task

	Major	N	Mean Rank	Median
Act16	1 English Language and Literature	31	41.50	3.00
	2 English Language Teaching	42	46.38	3.00
	3 Linguistics	2	17.25	1.50
	4 American Culture and Literature	2	8.00	1.00
	5 Translation and Interpreting Studies	5	23.60	1.00
	Total	82		3.00

Table 9 indicates that mean scores of two majors; ELL and ELT are close to each other. It means that they used retelling a story or news event with similar frequency. TIS has a mean score of 23.60 and the major which use the task the least frequently is ACL with a mean score 8.

A statistically significant difference was found in frequencies of using retelling a story or news event tasks for oral assessment across five different academic majors ($\chi^2 (4, n = 82) = 11,21 p = .024$). Participants with academic majors ELL and ELT has the highest median scores ($Md = 3$). They are followed by LNG major ($Md = 1.50$). ACL and TIS have the least median scores ($Md = 1$), which means that the participants with these academic majors do not prefer retelling a story or news event activities with assessment or practice purpose.

The findings showed that there is a relationship between instructors' academic majors and their speaking activity choices. These findings answer RQ2. The analysis of differences according to major revealed that the biggest differences are in three interactive tasks; role-play, discussion and conversation, games and in one extensive speaking task; picture-cued

story telling. Mean ranks and medians have revealed that these three interactive and one extensive task is frequently used by instructors with ELT majors.

Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate frequently used speaking tasks in English classes at tertiary level in Turkey and differences in language instructors' speaking activity choices for informal oral assessment with regard to their academic majors. The findings revealed that frequently used speaking tasks at tertiary level in Turkey are responsive and intensive speaking tasks. These two tasks require a lower cognitive demand, creativity and interaction when compared to interactive and extensive speaking tasks. The findings have revealed that although extensive and interactive tasks are not used frequently, the differences in activity choice with regard to majors have been recorded in these two tasks. It can be concluded that instructors have different preferences for interactive and extensive speaking tasks.

In Turkey, there are five academic majors which educate English teachers for different levels. Particularly at universities, language instructors with different academic backgrounds work together. At universities, these instructors study different curricula as students. For instance, students of ELL academic major study literature and history of the language more than students of ELT department do. In the same way, students of ELT study more methodologies or approaches for teaching English language at universities. As there may be some differences in their background, it was thought that there might also be some differences in practices of oral assessment in classes of instructors with different academic majors. As many instructors work together at the same universities, sometimes there can be some discussions on how to assess a particular skill or how to teach English better. With this descriptive study, it has been possible to find out an answer to the second research question as

there is a statistically significant difference among language instructors in their informal speaking assessment practices and their academic majors.

The study has some implications for instructors who work with colleagues from different majors. Colleagues from the same institution can work together to enhance speaking courses to include various activities. Each instructor may contribute this collaboration by bringing activities mostly related to their majors such as content and language integrated activities. Furthermore, it has implications for teacher trainers in that considering instructors' majors as a factor having effect on their choices and practices is a must.

In future studies for the subject, underlying factors of different assessment practices, apart from academic major, can also be studied. A mixed-method study with qualitative methods of data collection is also needed to countercheck the findings of the study. Moreover, as 82 participants were not normally distributed so as to conduct a parametric data analysis, the researchers had to conduct a non-parametric analysis (Kruskal-Wallis) which is less reliable than parametric one (ANOVA). Further study on the subject with different sampling method in order to find a similar number of participants from each academic major could give more reliable results.

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