

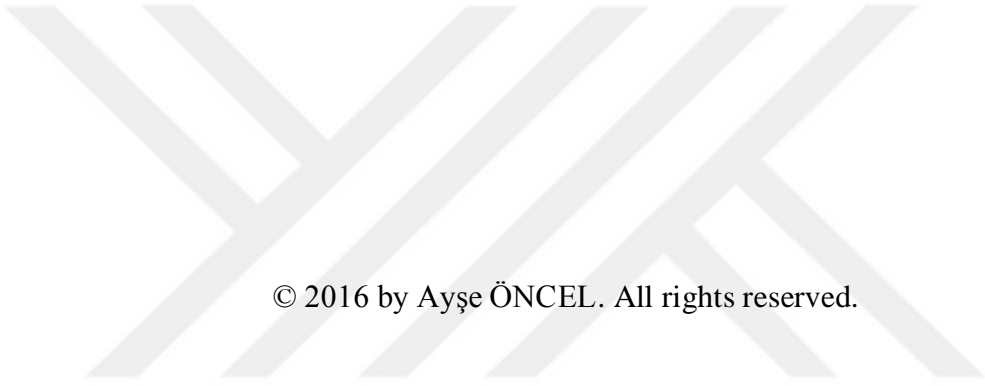
T.C.
SÜLEYMAN DEMİREL UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

**LEARNER PREFERENCES FOR INDIVIDUAL AND PAIRED SPEAKING
TESTS IN A MULTICULTURAL EFL CONTEXT**

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MASTER'S THESIS
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CERTIFICATE OF COMMITTEE APPROVAL

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	i
ABSTRACT	iv
ÖZET	vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	viii
LIST OF TABLES	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	x
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xi
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. Statement of the Problem	1
1.2. Purpose of the Study	2
1.3. Significance of the Study.....	3
1.4. Assumptions	5
1.5. Limitations.....	5
2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RELATED STUDIES	7
2.1. Speaking Skill	7
2.2. Assessing Speaking.....	8
2.3. Individual and Paired Oral Testing	13
2.3.1. Individual oral testing.....	13
2.3.1.1. Research results and assertions in favor of the OPI and individual oral test	14
2.3.1.2. Research results and assertions against the OPI and individual oral test	15
2.3.2. Paired oral testing	18
2.3.2.1. Research results and assertions in favor of paired oral test	19
2.3.2.2. Research results and assertions against paired oral test	21
2.4. Learner Preferences for Paired and Individual Oral Tests	24
2.5. Being A Learner in a Multicultural Environment	26
3. METHODOLOGY	28
3.1. Research Design.....	28
3.2. Participants	28
3.3. Data Collection Process.....	30
3.4. Data Collection Tools	33
3.4.1. Individual and paired speaking tests.....	33
3.4.2. Interview	35

3.5. Data Analysis	37
4. RESULTS	38
4.1. Speaking Test Type Favored More by Test Takers	38
4.2. The Reasons for Students' Preferences for Paired and Individual Tests.....	39
4.2.1. Why paired speaking test is preferred	39
4.2.1.1. A non-intimidating test environment.....	40
4.2.1.2. Partner as a source of comfort	41
4.2.1.3. Test items	45
4.2.2. Why individual speaking test is not preferred	46
4.2.2.1. Teacher as a source of test anxiety	47
4.2.2.2. Test items and test specifications	49
4.2.3. Why individual speaking test is preferred.....	51
4.2.3.1. Teacher as a source of comfort	52
4.2.3.2. Talking to a teacher is motivating	53
4.2.3.3. Test items and test specifications	54
4.2.4. Why paired speaking test is not preferred	55
4.2.4.1. Partner as a source of test anxiety.....	56
4.2.4.2. Test items and test specifications	58
4.3. Differences in Foreign and Turkish Students' Oral Test Type Preferences	59
4.3.1. The number of Turkish and foreign students favoring paired and individual oral tests.....	59
4.3.2. The reasons stated by only foreign students for their oral test type preferences ...	60
4.3.3. The reasons stated by only Turkish students for their oral test type preferences ..	63
5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	65
5.1. Which Oral Test Type-Individual or Paired-is Favored More by Test-Takers?.....	65
5.2. What Are the Reasons for Learners' Preferences for Paired And Individual Oral Tests?	67
5.3. Are Foreign And Turkish Students' Speaking Test Type Preferences Different? ...	71
5.4. Conclusion.....	73
REFERENCES	75
APPENDICES.....	80
Appendix A. Individual Speaking Test Questions with Follow-up Questions	81
Appendix B. Paired Speaking Test Opinion Questions (Part 2 and 3)	82
Appendix C. Semi-Structured Interview Questions.....	83



ABSTRACT

LEARNER PREFERENCES FOR INDIVIDUAL AND PAIRED SPEAKING TESTS IN A MULTICULTURAL EFL CONTEXT

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The present study prioritizes what English language learners in a multicultural learning environment think about two main speaking test types, namely individual and paired speaking tests. Therefore, the study aims to investigate the type of oral test-individual and paired-that learners in an international EFL setting in Turkey are in favor of and the underlying reasons for their oral test type preferences. The study also aims to reveal the differences between Turkish and international learners' speaking test type preferences. The study's participant group consists of 22 EFL learners, specifically 10 international and 12 Turkish students studying in the School of Foreign Languages at a private university in Turkey. For the purpose of the study, the participants were first given an individual and paired test. Following the tests, a semi-structured interview was conducted with each participant with the aim of revealing their speaking test type preferences and the reasons behind their preferences. The findings of the interviews were content analyzed and, based on the content analysis, emerging patterns and topics were categorized. The results of the study demonstrate that the paired speaking test is more preferred, although the individual oral test also has some supporters. Moreover, the findings reveal several reasons why paired and individual speaking tests are favored, in addition to presenting why the test types are not favored, as well. Finally, the results show both quantitative and qualitative differences between Turkish and international learners' speaking test type preferences. While the paired test is preferred by the majority of Turkish participants, the number of foreign learners who opt for individual or paired oral tests are equal. Moreover, while some justifications for oral test type

preferences were given only by the Turkish learners, other justifications were stated only by the international learners. This reveals the qualitative differences between both groups of learners. As a conclusion of the study, it was asserted that learner preferences for individual and paired speaking tests differ due to learner differences.

Keywords: Speaking Test, Individual Oral Test, Paired Oral Test, Oral Assessment, Qualitative Data Analysis.



ÖZET

İNGİLİZCENİN YABANCI DİL OLARAK ÖĞRETİLDİĞİ ÇOK KÜLTÜRLÜ BİR ORTAMDAKİ ÖĞRENCİLERİN EŞLİ VE BİREBİR KONUŞMA SINAV TERCİHLERİ

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Bu çalışma çok kültürlü bir öğrenme ortamındaki öğrencilerin birebir ve eşli olmak üzere iki ana konuşma sınavı çeşidiyle ilgili düşüncelerini ön planda tutmaktadır. Bu yüzden, bu araştırma Türkiye’de İngilizcenin yabancı dil olarak öğretildiği uluslararası bir ortamdaki Türk ve yabancı öğrencilerin eşli ve birebir konuşma sınavından hangisini tercih ettiklerini ve tercihlerinin altında yatan sebepleri araştırmayı amaçlamıştır. Bu çalışma aynı zamanda yabancı ve Türk öğrencilerin konuşma sınavı tercihleri arasındaki farkları bulmaya da çalışmaktadır. Çalışmadaki katılımcı grup 10’u yabancı ve 12’si Türk olmak üzere Türkiye’deki özel bir üniversitenin Yabancı Diller Okulunda İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen toplamda 22 öğrenciden oluşmaktadır. Çalışmanın amacı doğrultusunda, katılımcılara birebir ve eşli konuşma sınavları uygulanmıştır. Testlerin ardından, katılımcıların konuşma test tercihleri ve tercihlerinin altında yatan sebepleri ortaya çıkarmak amacıyla her bir katılımcıyla yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Görüşmelerden elde edilen veriler içerik analiz modeli kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. İçerik analizine göre tekrar eden konular kategorize edilmiştir. Sonuçlar göstermektedir ki birebir konuşma testini de tercih edenler olmasına rağmen ikili konuşma testi öğrenciler tarafından daha çok tercih edilmektedir. Ayrıca, sonuçlar öğrencilerin ikili ve birebir konuşma sınavlarını neden tercih ettiklerinin yanı sıra bu testleri niye tercih etmediklerinin de birtakım sebeplerini ortaya çıkarmıştır. Son olarak, araştırma sonuçları Türk ve yabancı öğrencilerin

konuşma testi tercihlerinde hem nicel hem de nitel farklılıklar olduğunu göstermektedir. İkili test Türk öğrencilerin büyük çoğunluğu tarafından tercih edilirken, ikili ve bireysel konuşma testlerini tercih eden yabancı öğrenci sayıları eşittir. Ayrıca, konuşma test tercihleri için ifade edilen sebeplerden bazıları yalnızca Türk öğrenciler tarafından ifade edilirken bazıları da sadece yabancı öğrenciler tarafından ifade edilmiştir ve bu durum da yabancı ve Türk öğrencilerin tercihleri arasındaki niteliksel farklılıkları ortaya koymaktadır. Çalışmanın sonunda öğrencilerin ikili ve bireysel konuşma test tercih farklılıklarının öğrencilerin bireysel farklılıklarından dolayı kaynaklandığı ileri sürülmüştür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Konuşma Sınavı, Bireysel Konuşma Sınavı, Eşli Konuşma Sınavı, Konuşma Becerisinin Değerlendirilmesi, Nitel Veri Analizi.

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LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Randomly paired pairs by origin and gender	
Table 2. Speaking test type preferences of the participants	
Table 3. The reasons why paired test is favored	
Table 4. The reasons why individual speaking test is not favored.....	
Table 5. The reasons why individual speaking test is favored.....	
Table 6. The reasons why paired test is not favored.....	
Table 7. Turkish and foreign students' speaking test type preferences	



LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Learner-interviewer/assessor	
Figure 2. Learner-interlocutor	
Figure 3. Learner-learner	
Figure 4. Learner-group	
Figure 5. The activity cycle of assessing speaking	



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACTFL	American Council on Teaching Foreign Languages
AIU	Antalya International University
CAE	Certificate in Advanced English
CPE	Certificate of Proficiency in English
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
ETS	Educational Testing Service
FCE	First Certificate in English
FSI	Foreign Service Institute
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
IRF	Initiation-Response-Follow-up
KET	Key English Test
OPI	Oral Proficiency Interview
PET	Preliminary English Test
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
UCLES	University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate

1. INTRODUCTION

The statement of the problem, purpose and significance of the study, the assumptions as well as the limitations are included in this chapter for the purpose of giving a general idea about the structure of the thesis.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Being able to speak in a foreign language is a key indicator of being capable of using a foreign language. As Ur (1996) points out “of all the four skills, speaking seems intuitively the most important: people who know a language are referred to as speakers of that language” (p. 120). For that reason, being able to communicate with other people is the goal of many language learners. However, speaking in a foreign language is pretty demanding due to several factors such as knowledge of the vocabulary, grammar and sound system of the language, being able to comprehend what other people are talking about and so on (Luoma, 2004). Similarly, the assessment of speaking reliably is also very difficult because of several features of speech such as pronunciation, fluency, accuracy, interactional competence, etc., along with some other factors like “the language level, gender, and the status of the interlocutor, his or her familiarity to the candidate and the personal characteristics of the interlocutor and candidate” (Luoma, 2004, p. x). Furthermore, Luoma (2004) maintains that “the nature of the interaction, the sorts of tasks presented to the candidate, the questions asked, and the opportunities provided to show his or her ability to speak in a foreign language” will all influence the performance of the candidate (p. x).

The above statements of Luoma (2004) remind us of different speaking test types such as paired and individual oral tests. In an individual oral test format, test takers are assessed one at a time and mostly in an interview format, while in a paired oral test format, two candidates are assessed at a time as they interact with each other based on some pre-set questions. It is not easy to conclude that one of these test types is superior to the other based on the research studies that have revealed the advantages and disadvantages of both. For instance, Alderson and Banerjee (2002) and van Lier (1989) state that the individual oral interview test lacks interaction and the communicative patterns of language as the design of the individual test, which is held between an

examiner and examinee, leads to very limited or no opportunities for conversational interaction. Related to the paired test format, Együd and Glover (2001) state that pairing provides learners with a better chance of showing their best speaking performance and helps them produce better English than the individual oral test format. On the other hand, Foot (1999) points out several possible problems related to the use of paired format of oral tests.

As for the studies based on learner preferences for paired and individual oral test formats, there are not many studies in English Language Teaching (ELT) literature both in Turkey and in other countries. Furthermore, the studies on learner preferences for paired and individual speaking test formats yield contradictory results, which makes it hard to distinguish one of them as the favored test type by the majority of the test takers. For instance, according to the studies carried out by Együd and Glover (2001) and Taylor (2003), test takers show a preference for the paired oral test format. On the other hand, the studies conducted by Kanga (2012) and Marochi (as cited in Kanga, 2012) reveal that test takers are in favor of individual oral test formats.

Due to the reasons stated above, the present study aims to determine the type of oral proficiency test - individual or paired - learners are in favor of, the underlying reasons behind their preferences in an international English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context in Turkey, and whether or not there are any differences between foreign and Turkish students in terms of their speaking test type preferences.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to investigate language learners' preferences for paired and individual oral proficiency tests as well as the reasons for learners' preferences in a multicultural EFL context where the assessment of speaking plays an important part in learners' overall success and proficiency test scores. Furthermore, the study aims to reveal if there are any differences between Turkish and international students' speaking test type preferences. Considering the aims stated above, this study intends to answer the following research questions:

1. Which oral test type-individual or paired-is favored more by test takers?

2. What are the reasons for learners' preferences for paired and individual oral tests?
3. Are foreign and Turkish students' speaking test type preferences different?

1.3. Significance of the Study

Testing speaking skills has come into widespread use in many institutions over the past few decades, though it has a long history in foreign language teaching (Spolsky, 2001). As for the learners of English as a Second Language (ESL) and EFL, oral exams are usually the most challenging part of English proficiency exams. Being tested individually or in pairs, EFL learners might have varying preferences and opinions about different oral test types. As a result of learners' feelings during speaking tests, they tend to prefer one type of test over the other(s), and there may be various reasons behind this. In addition, it can be argued that the test type preferences of learners might have an influence on their test scores and performances, which indicates the necessity of investigating the preferences of learners. With regard to giving importance to what learners' preferences are for an oral test, Norton (2005) states "following Együd and Glover (2001), it would seem worthwhile to find out student preferences for paired and individual interviews in speaking tests" (p. 295). Although a decade has passed since Norton's statement, only a few studies have been carried out so far. As the center of the learning-teaching process, students should be taken to the heart of the studies on pair and individual oral tests by investigating their preferences and reasons for their preferences, which is one of the main aims of this study.

Moreover, the present study is expected to yield significant results for the institution Antalya International University (AIU), where oral assessment has an important role in the evaluation process. As students are required to take the English Proficiency Test at the end of the academic year and the speaking assessment makes up fifteen percent of their proficiency score, the speaking scores learners get have an important impact on their achievements on the English Proficiency Test. Moreover, learners at AIU take a speaking test 8 times throughout an academic year excluding the proficiency test, which increases the importance of the present study. As the speaking test format at AIU School of Foreign Languages includes only the individual format, the findings of the present study have the potential to shape the format and task types of the future oral assessment format adopted by AIU, which will contribute to the face validity of the

speaking tests administered at AIU. According to Underhill (1987), if a test is considered a good and reasonable one that learners are happy with, it is a test which has face validity. In addition, Underhill (1987) asserts that asking the opinions of learners who have to take a test is the optimum way of researching the face validity of the test. Therefore, this study aims to yield valuable results by revealing student preferences for paired and individual oral test types and increasing the face validity of oral tests in AIU.

Besides, the fact that the participants in the study are not only Turkish students but also learners coming from various parts of the world such as Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Iraq, Egypt, and Mozambique, reflects the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the learning context of the participants and teaching context of the researcher. As learners with diverse cultural backgrounds and origins learn English in the same classrooms at AIU, the present study involved participants coming from different countries in order to contain a representative learner group. This provides the researcher with results that can be applicable for other multicultural learning and teaching environments. Due to the fact that there are many international students who study English language in the same learning environment as Turkish students in a Turkish context, it is considered crucial to investigate whether or not their test type preferences and the reasons for their preferences are different.

It should be noted that on the basis of its participant group, the study is unique in ELT literature in Turkey as it was carried out at an international university with 35 percent of the student population made up of foreign learners.

Furthermore, the findings of the study will contribute to the EFL field in Turkey as the number of studies focusing on learner preferences for individual and paired oral test formats is considerably limited.

Finally, the study will produce useful results not only for the Turkish EFL context but also for the international EFL/ESL context because the participants in the study are from different nationalities though the number of Turkish participants is dominant.

1.4. Assumptions

Though participants are already familiar with individual oral test format, it is assumed that they might have difficulty in the paired test as they experienced it for the first time in the present study. This might influence their oral test type preferences. However, it is assumed that the students answered the interview questions sincerely.

It is also assumed that both paired and individual tests were administered appropriately as the researcher has been working in AIU's testing office for three years, and therefore has the necessary experience in holding standardization sessions before speaking tests and in administering speaking exams.

Additionally, the culturally diverse group of study participants is expected to help yield a good variety of ideas and interesting results during the interview with regard to justifications for their oral test type preferences. With half of the participants coming from different foreign countries, the study results are expected to be enriched by those learners' diverse perspectives.

1.5. Limitations

Using only the paired oral test, individual oral test and interviews as the instruments of the study can be argued as one of the study's limitations, which could have been mitigated by involving questionnaires.

The number of participants was another limitation. As the study is based on a qualitative analysis of the collected data and the researcher had to meet each student three times on different days to collect the data, only a limited number of students were included.

Another limitation present in the study is the fact that the participants experienced the paired oral test format for the first time, but have had individual oral tests several times before. This might have an impact on the preferences of the participants as they might consider either of the tests to be better or worse than they would if they had had an equal number of experiences with both test types.

The language used during the interviews with foreign and Turkish participants is another limitation of the study. While Turkish participants had a chance to answer the interview questions in their mother tongue, foreign participants answered them in English, which did not offer them equal conditions. This results from the fact that Turkish learners have high language anxiety and low confidence in their language competence. On the other hand, foreign learners are quite comfortable with expressing themselves in English although it is their foreign language.



2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RELATED STUDIES

2.1. Speaking Skill

As English has become the medium for communication all over the world, teaching and learning English has become prominent in terms of communicative purposes and responding to local, national, and international demands (Khamkhien, 2010). As speaking is considered to be significant for communication and expressing the speaker's ideas and message, it has been the focus for numerous educationalists (O' Malley & Pierce, 1996).

Speaking has a number of features that makes it distinct from other skills, namely listening, reading and writing. Thornbury (2005) maintains that first of all, speech is produced in real time and is therefore "linear". Words come after words, and phrases come after phrases. Similarly, at the level of utterance, speech production takes place utterance-by-utterance, in response to the word-by-word and utterance-by-utterance productions of our interlocutor, or the person with whom we are communicating. "This contingent nature of speech, whereby each utterance is dependent on a preceding one accounts for its spontaneity" (Thornbury, 2005, p.2).

Relating to speaking's spontaneous, unpredictable and interactive nature, Taylor (2003) states that "spoken language production tends to be based in social interaction, to be purposeful and goal-oriented within a context; and while it is capable of being routine and predictable, it also has the capacity for relative creativity and unpredictability" (p.2).

Based on a communicative perspective, Canale and Swain (1980) state that there are four competencies underlying speaking ability, namely grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. Grammatical competence involves "knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics (basic sounds of letters and syllables, pronunciation of words, intonation and stress)" (Scarcella & Oxford, 1992, p. 141). Discourse competence includes "relationships beyond the sentence level, rules of cohesion and coherence, holding communication together in a meaningful way" (Coombe, C., et al., 2007, p. 113). Sociolinguistic

competence is concerned with “applying knowledge of what is expected socially and culturally by users of the target language” (Coombe, C., et al., 2007, p. 113). Shumin (2002) puts forward that understanding the sociolinguistic side of language aids language learners in knowing how to ask questions during communication, what remarks are appropriate, and how to react nonverbally based on the purpose of the task. Lastly, strategic competence involves “the way learners manipulate language in order to meet communicative goals” (Brown, H.D., 1994, p.228), the ability to know when to take the floor, how to keep a conversation going, how to end the conversation, and how to clear up communication breakdowns as well as comprehension problems (Coombe, C., et al., 2007).

2.2. Assessing Speaking

According to Underhill (1987), an oral test is “a repeatable procedure in which a learner speaks, and is assessed on the basis of what he says” (p.7). Based on this definition, Underhill (1987) defines four different possibilities in order to show who the learner speaks to in a speaking test. Underhill (1987) demonstrates those possible speaking models as follows:

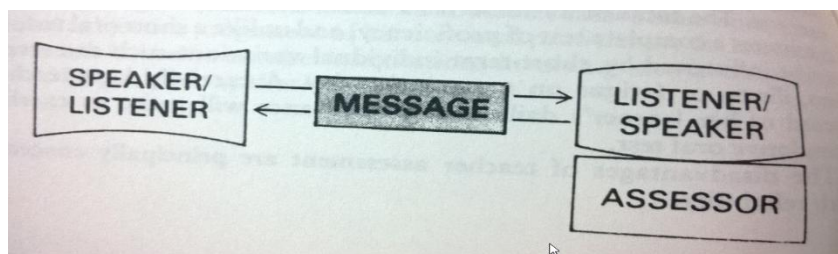


Figure 1. Learner-interviewer/assessor (Underhill, 1987)

In this model shown as Figure 1, the learner speaks to an interviewer who is at the same time the assessor. Though it is the most common and practical way, it is demanding for the assessor in terms of both assessing the learners’ speaking skill effectively and interacting with the learner for the purpose of encouraging the learner to speak.

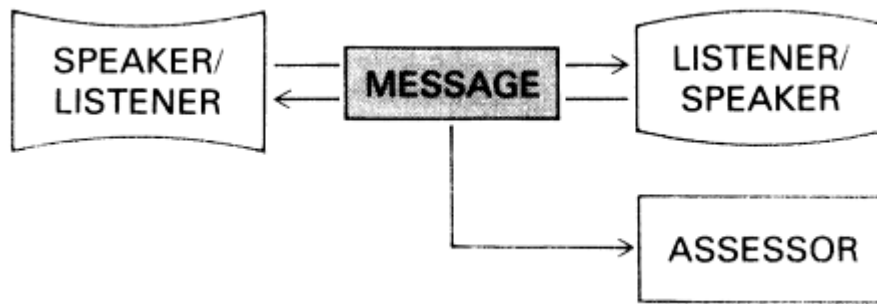


Figure 2. Learner-interlocutor (Underhill, 1987)

There are two people, namely an assessor and an interlocutor who are responsible for administering the speaking test as it is shown in Figure 2. This type is more advantageous for the interlocutor compared to the first type because the interlocutor can focus on communication with the learner while the assessor concentrates on simply assessing the learner. As the learner has to perform in front of two people, some learners tend to feel more stressed during this type of interaction model.

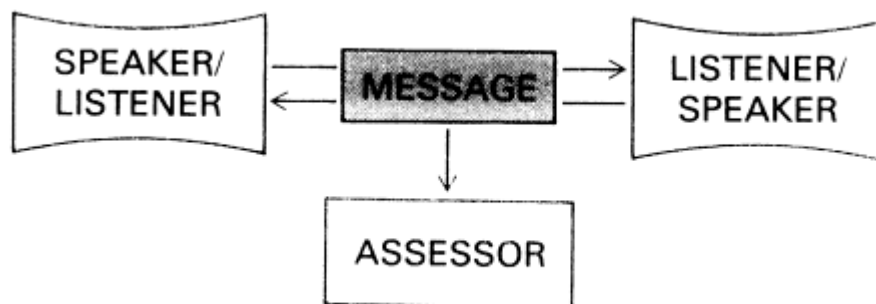


Figure 3. Learner-learner (Underhill, 1987)

There are two learners interacting and communicating with each other in order to perform a pre-determined task while the assessor listens to them without intervening as is illustrated in Figure 3. As the assessor does not have to keep the conversation going, s/he can fully concentrate on the speaking performance of the learners who are being assessed while carrying out the given task together.

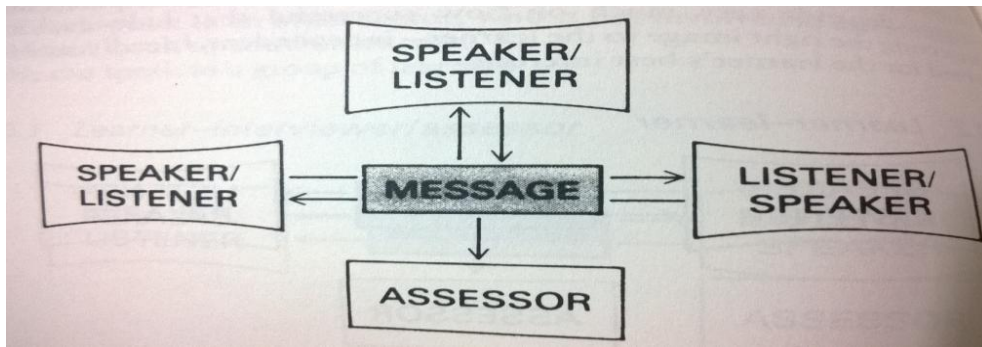


Figure 4. Learner-group (Underhill, 1987)

A group of three to six learners performs a pre-set speaking task together while the assessor does not intervene in the communication as is demonstrated in Figure 4. This type of communication model encourages a more real-life interaction, however, it is difficult for the assessor to follow five or six different people as they speak.

After describing the possible forms of interaction stated by Underhill (1987) in an oral test, it would be useful to explain the cycle of assessing speaking.

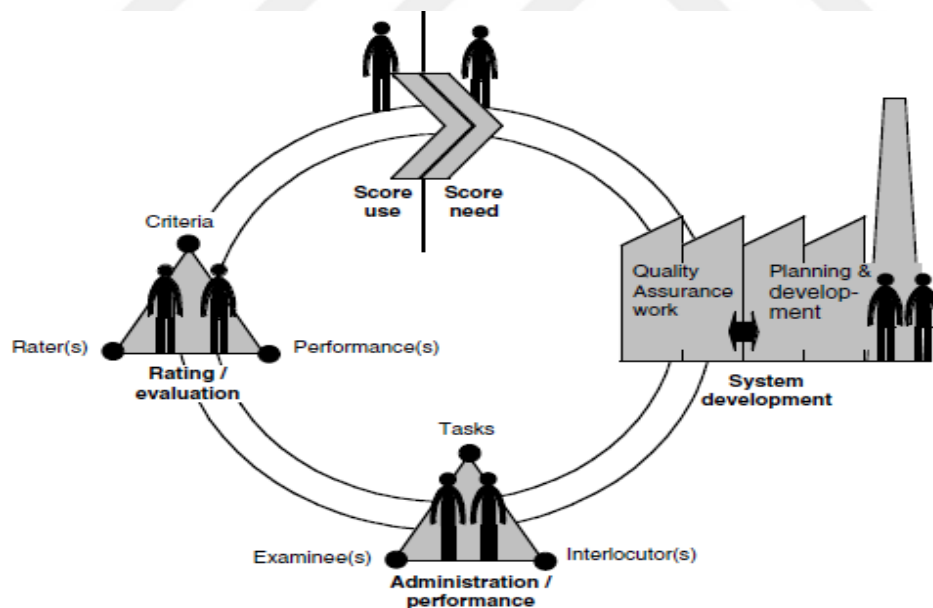


Figure 5. The activity cycle of assessing speaking (Luoma, 2004)

As illustrated in Figure 5, the assessment of oral skill consists of certain stages following each other, meaning that assessing speaking is a process. People act and interact to achieve certain pre-set goals and meet requirements for the following stage.

The assessment process begins at the top of the figure, when it is deemed that the assessment of speaking is required, which results in the planning and development stage. During this stage, the test developers determine what needs to be assessed, and then develop, try out and edit tasks, rating criteria, and administration procedures. In addition, quality assurance procedures are arranged and set up, which will aid in following the assessment procedure. The next two stages in the cycle are interactive and necessary for carrying out the speaking assessment. The first one is the test administration or test performance process in which examinees interact with the examiner(s) or with each other in order to show a sample of their speaking skills. The performances of examinees are typically recorded on an audio or video recorder. The following stage is rating/evaluation, where examinees' speaking skills are assessed and they are assigned a score by raters based on the rating criteria, as a result of which the aim set at the beginning of the assessment cycle is accomplished. If some improvement points are detected during a round of speaking assessment, necessary revisions are made and the next round of the cycle starts with the updated version of the test procedure (Luoma, 2004).

As asserted by Heaton (1995), speaking 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” (p.88). Adding to the reasons why the assessment of speaking is demanding, Coombe, C., et al. (2007) put forward that “resource requirements and reliability, including the perceived subjectivity in grading, lack of time, number of students, lack of available tests, and administrative difficulties” are other factors that result in the difficulty of administering speaking tests. Due to the obstacles encountered while assessing speaking skills, oral tests generally received little attention in the past.

In spite of the challenges emerging throughout the oral assessment procedure, significant reasons exist, which indicate the importance of assessing speaking. First of all, speaking is a major component of the language curriculum in communicative language teaching (Folse, 2006). Moreover, a great number of language learners study English with the aim of enhancing their proficiency in speaking. In order to help learners improve their communication skills and be good speakers of English, it is essential to include the assessment of speaking in language tests (Coombe, C., et al., 2007). This statement brings up the washback effect of language tests on the teaching

and learning process. With regard to the washback effect of speaking tests, Ur (1991) states that the testing of speaking is important due to its washback effect. In order to support her statement, Ur (1991) gives an example of an Israeli school exit exam in which an oral test part was integrated with a 20% weighting in the final score. As a result of the involvement of this new oral part of the exam, the emphasis on oral practice in classrooms along with the improvement in learners' speaking skills increased considerably.

There are some essential stages that efficient speaking tests should possess. Canale (1984) (as cited in Coombe, C., et al., 2007) suggested a framework for speaking tests that is still implemented. He asserts that learners can show their best speaking performance if the stages mentioned below are followed:

Warm up: The main aim of this stage is decreasing students' anxiety and making them feel comfortable. Learners are asked for personal questions such as their favorite free time activities. It generally lasts a minute or two and is not assessed (Coombe, C., et al., 2007).

Level Check: The examiner tries to decide the test taker's level of speaking proficiency by asking him/her a set of preplanned questions at this stage, which is marked (Coombe, C., et al., 2007). Depending on the kind of information required for the test results, this stage might include various tasks such as "describing or comparing pictures, narrating from a picture series, talking about a pre-announced or examiner-selected topic, or possibly a role-play task or a reverse interview where the examinee asks questions of the interviewer" (Luoma, 2004, p.36).

Probe: The examiner presents a challenge to the test taker in order to push the test taker to reach the height of his or her speaking skill. Moreover, this stage can function as the confirmation of the level check stage. If the test taker is unable to deal with the challenge in this stage, it is not assessed. On the other hand, the performance is scored if the test taker can go beyond his/her proficiency level (Coombe, C., et al., 2007).

Wind down: The examiner helps the test taker relax and feel comfortable at this stage and it is not scored. Usual content at this stage is where and when to get exam results (Coombe, C., et al., 2007).

2.3. Individual and Paired Oral Testing

According to Weir (2005), the individual oral testing format which includes interaction between a test taker and an examiner or interlocutor and the paired oral testing format involving interaction between two test takers are types of direct tests. Weir (2005) states that "directness" stated here is an indication of how closely a speaking task is connected to real-life performance. If a task is direct, it is easy to turn test results into an assumption about what test takers can or cannot do with regard to the real-life situation under review. As both individual and paired oral test types require direct face-to-face interaction, they are considered direct speaking tests. More detailed explanations, statements and study results in favor of and against individual and paired oral test formats will be discussed under the following headings.

2.3.1. Individual oral testing

The most common form of oral production assessment is the oral interview, which is an individual oral test type. In an oral interview, an examiner and an examinee sit down in a direct face-to-face interaction and carry out the speaking task containing a set of predetermined questions (Brown, 2004). The interview, which might also be audio or video recorded, is then marked based on a rating criteria including a number of specifications such as "accuracy in pronunciation and/or grammar, vocabulary usage, fluency, sociolinguistic/pragmatic appropriateness, task accomplishment, and even comprehension" (Brown, 2004, p.167). The duration of oral interviews range from five to forty-five minutes, which is determined based on their aim and context. For instance, an oral interview as part of a placement test may last only five minutes. On the other hand, longer comprehensive interviews like the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) are structured to assess preset oral production contexts and may require a considerable amount of time to administer (Brown, 2004).

The best known oral interview format is the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI), which is originally known as the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) test. The OPI was developed and improved with the help and support of Educational Testing Service (ETS) and the American Council on Teaching Foreign Languages (ACTFL) (Brown, 2004). In an OPI, a certified and trained examiner has a face-to-face interaction with a test taker with the aim of testing the oral production skill of the test taker. The speaking performance of the test taker is then scored based on the criteria in the rating scale (Swender and Vicars, 1999). According to Kanga (2012), many oral proficiency tests are in line with the OPI format developed by ACTFL. A good amount of the literature on test taker interaction with an examiner is in the context of the OPI. Because many individual oral tests possess the same features and format as the OPI and are almost the same in nature, assertions for and against the OPI as well as research results obtained about the OPI are applicable to individual oral tests in general. Because the interaction in all individual tests including the OPI is between a test taker and an examiner based on some predetermined questions and the speaking sample elicited is marked using a rating scale, the research on the OPI sheds light on individual oral tests in general.

2.3.1.1. Research results and assertions in favor of the OPI and individual oral test

Underhill (1989) points out that the interview technique is a more authentic type of elicitation of the learners' speaking sample compared to some other techniques such as "question and answer". He maintains that the interview is consistent and consists of more than one question or comment that proceeds in a relevant order. Underhill (1989) elaborates that various topics are covered in an interview, "each is explored in enough detail, with follow-up questions and prompting, to allow the learner to develop it and to show his proficiency, rather than just giving a straight answer to a straight question" (p.55).

Despite the criticisms against the OPI that it does not assess the learners' conversational ability, Raffaldini (1988) posits that the OPI is "one of the most valid measures of communicative ability available because the interview technique involves the learner in a live interaction with a target language speaker" (p.197). In addition, a study carried out by Jeng et. al (2000) compared three tasks of speaking assessment. According to the results of the study, individual interviews were identified as having higher value

because of their interactive aspects between test taker and examiner. Similarly, it is stated that "a well-structured OPI tests speaking ability in a real life context conversation" (ETS, 1989). As a response to the criticisms against the OPI that it does not involve real-life interaction, Moder and Halleck (1998) question if the dissimilarity between an OPI and a natural conversation is significant. They put forward that the OPI ought to be regarded as a sort of interview as it is an equally relevant communication and interaction.

Brown (2004) asserts that the OPI might have a positive impact on classroom teaching as it has the potential to motivate learners to speak in the classroom. Similarly, with regard to the OPI, Malone & Montee (2010) state that "the principles gained through training and testing can have positive washback at the classroom level" (p.979).

Brown (2004) points out that the OPI is reliable as certified examiners who pay considerable fees to acquire an examiner status are assigned to assess test takers. Moreover, examiners go through a rigorous training program, which contributes to the test reliability of the OPI. Similarly, Malone & Montee (2010) assert that the inter-rater reliability of the OPI is high as it is double-rated by certified examiners.

2.3.1.2. Research results and assertions against the OPI and individual oral test

With regard to the lack of interactional skills in oral interview formats, Silverman (1973) and Kress & Fowler (1979) argue that the examiner is allowed to start and end the conversation, to initiate new topics, as well as to ask questions. On the other hand, the examinee is rarely allowed to ask questions. Van Lier (1989), questioning whether or not the OPI is a "structured conversational exchange" and how similar the test taker's oral production in an OPI is to a real-life conversation, concludes that OPIs frequently do not include discourse similar to conversational exchanges because "the emphasis throughout is on successful elicitation of language not on successful conversation" (van Lier, 1989, p.501). Adding to the lack of interaction reflecting real life, Johnson and Tyler (1998) analyze an OPI in order to reveal the features of natural conversations. According to their report, the OPI lacks features common in natural conversational exchanges. Elaborating on their analysis, they state that turn-taking in an OPI is more structured and predictable and the examiners always take longer turns. In addition,

negotiation of meaning and topic nomination is different from real-life conversations and the examinee does not have any control over the interaction. Moreover, the examiner does not usually contribute to the test taker's expressions, which leads to a lack of interactional involvement. Based on the assertion that the OPI assesses speaking ability in the context of an interview instead of in a real-life context, Johnson (2000) criticizes the OPI for lacking validity and maintains that:

“considering the fact that the candidate's level of proficiency is determined within the Level Check and Probes, the OPI tests speaking ability in the form of a unique type of interview—a survey research interview, which is based on the behavioristic theory of stimuli and responses. This raises the question of the validity of the OPI testing instrument.” (p.226)

Similarly, Bachman and Savignon (1986), and Chalhoub-Deville and Fulcher (2003) question the validity of the OPI in terms of the lack of relationship between the OPI and any theory of second language acquisition (SLA). That's why they assert that the OPI is not a valid measure of general oral proficiency.

Related to the discourse features produced in OPIs, Csepes (2002) and Johnson (2001) (as cited in Ducasse & Brown., 2009) put forward that interview discourse does not contain a balance of power over the interactional exchange between the examiner and the test taker as turn-taking, topic organization, order and the whole structure of the interview are pre-set and directed by the examiner. Similarly, Együd and Glover (2001) maintain that the unequal position of the examiner and the test taker has a strong influence on the patterns of the conversational exchange. They state that "the one-to-one interviews show patterns of interaction that are quite far from real-life communication" (p.75). They reveal that initiation-response-follow-up (IRF) interaction is the type of interactional exchange in one-to-one interviews, which is unnatural in real life. Due to these reasons, Shohamy and Reves (1985) point out that the OPI lacks authenticity.

According to Luoma (2004), the most significant downside of individual oral tests is the great amount of power the examiner has over the examinee. Hughes (1989) elaborates on the inequality of power in individual tests and states that the test taker is usually reluctant to take the initiative controlled by a superior who is the examiner. Moreover, many functions such as asking for information are not present in the speaking sample of

the examinee. With regard to the power differentials in individual oral tests, Együd and Glover (2001) state that the candidate whose sample of speaking performance is transcribed and presented performs less well compared to the paired test. They explain that the control of the examiner hinders the learner from performing well and showing his/her real language abilities even though the examiner's interventions are aimed at aiding the test taker. In the study of Brooks (2009), students were given the chance of experiencing both the individual and paired oral test. In the interviews conducted after the tests, some learners had a tendency to consider the interaction with an examiner easier as they thought that the responsibility was on the examiner to handle and direct the interaction. Brooks (2009) states that test takers "viewed the interaction with the teacher as being an open platform to talk without having to allow the teacher much 'floor time' (p. 355). Though the comments of the learners seem like a positive perspective for individual oral test, Brooks (2009) explains that the perception of learners reflects the uneven talking time in the individual oral interview which does not represent naturally occurring conversation.

Drawing attention to the lack of features of speech interactions occurring in daily life and its potential effects on the classroom, Malone and Montee (2010) assert that "students should have practice in a variety of speaking situations. Using only the ACTFL OPI as a model of speaking could have negative washback for learners by limiting the types of speaking situations encountered in the classroom" (p.979).

A last point that is considered a drawback of individual oral tests is the gender effect of the examiner on the performance of the test taker, as according to a number of researchers. While the influence of the gender of the examiner has been argued to have an impact on the test taker's performance in an individual oral test, there are also some studies that do not demonstrate any gender effect present on the test taker's performance. In a study, O'Sullivan (2000), worked with twelve Japanese learners who were interviewed once by a male examiner and once by a female examiner. The scores of test takers that were assigned by both examiners showed that test takers had a better performance when interviewed by a woman no matter what the sex of the test taker was. Similarly, the results of a study conducted by Porter and Hang (1991) revealed that the test takers, who were of mixed nationality learners, had higher scores when they were interviewed by women. Nevertheless, the studies of Porter (1991b) with both Arab and

Algerian learners revealed that test takers achieve higher scores when interviewed by men. On the other hand, a study carried out by O'Loughlin (2002) demonstrates that gender did not have any effect on the test scores of learners who took the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) interview once with a male interviewer and once with a female interviewer. Similarly, Brown and McNamara (2004) note that the gender effect is considerably complex and it does not have a direct effect on test performance and scores.

2.3.2. Paired oral testing

Due to the limitations of the individual interview as an oral test format, the paired oral test format has appeared as an alternative. In the main part of the paired test, the test takers are supposed to interact with each other while the examiner monitors them rather than being involved in the interaction directly as he/she does in an individual oral test (Luoma, 2004).

The shift towards using a paired speaking test format is the result of changes in the 1980s in the teaching and learning of EFL. The communicative function of language has become better understood thanks to the developments in applied linguistics in the 1970s, which has resulted in changes in approaches to language teaching. Rather than teaching knowledge about language, promoting the ability to use language for communication has become the focus in teaching and learning English. As a result, the use of pair work interaction has become common both in classroom context and in the testing & assessment context. University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) EFL explored the use of the paired test format in the 1980s and has adopted the paired test format for its speaking tests (Taylor, 2000). Therefore, examinations of the Cambridge main suite such as the Key English Test (KET), the Preliminary English Test (PET), the First Certificate in English (FCE), the Certificate in Advanced English (CAE), and the Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE) use the paired oral test type (Luoma, 2004).

With regard to the adoption of the paired oral test in many exams, Leaper & Riazi (2013) state that the use of the paired test as an alternative to the individual oral test type “signifies a move from conceiving of speaking ability as represented by the

linguistic features of an individual's spoken words to one of interactive communication" (p.77). In addition, Van Lier (1989) maintains that the major reason for the adoption of paired testing is that interview tests involve 'test discourse' or 'institutional talk', and do not reflect real-life conversation or allow test takers to show their ability to interact. Instead, test takers simply answer some questions as an interviewee.

2.3.2.1. Research results and assertions in favor of paired oral test

There are several arguments in favor of using the paired oral test as a test format compared to the individual oral test format. Firstly, there are arguments concerning interaction opportunities offered by the paired oral test type. According to Kormos (1999), paired oral tests give test takers high chances of showing their interactional and conversational skills. In relation to increased opportunities for interaction, Taylor (2000) asserts that the paired oral test involves less examiner talk and more examinee talk, which results in a more balanced interaction. Brooks (2009) provides a good example in his study with regard to the higher interaction opportunities paired tests include. Being interviewed about his interaction with another test taker for the purpose of data collection, one of the examinees, Jacques, compared the paired test to the individual test format and commented that in an individual format the examiner 'had a tendency to ask questions, questions, questions [...] [...] it is like one side conversation'. On the other hand, the test taker commented about the paired test that 'it was easy for me and we even make joke'. With regard to the interactional aspect of paired tests, Ducasse & Brown (2009) report that "peer-to-peer tasks have been found to provide the potential for a wider range of functional and interactional moves than is generally possible in the more traditional interviewer-led oral interview" (p.425). The interactional features present in a paired test are "conversation management, asking for opinion and clarification, challenging or disagreeing with a partner, and being able to deal with being challenged or disagreed with" (May, 2011, p.140).

Similarly, Brooks (2009) maintains that a wide range of features of interaction occurred in the paired test in his study. Brooks (2009) states that "in the paired format, students prompted elaboration, finished each other's sentences, referred to their partner's ideas, and paraphrased their partner's utterances, all features of interaction that were infrequent or absent in the student performance in the individual format" (p.355). As

those interactional features, such as elaboration and referring to partner's ideas, are prevalent in paired oral tests, it signals that the nature of the interaction is co-constructed and built up collaboratively (Brooks, 2009). As a benefit of the co-constructed nature of the paired test, Együd and Glover (2001) state in their studies that test takers felt more relaxed in the paired test as they could give and receive help by cooperating with their partner, which helped reduce their anxiety. Regarding the comfortable environment created by the paired test format for the test takers, Heaton (1988) asserts that:

“... the whole atmosphere will become more relaxed and the constraints of register will disappear, resulting in less artificial and stilled language being used. Students will use the language which they normally use in most speech situations in everyday life. No longer will an inferior (i.e. the student) be required to address a superior (i.e. the teacher) throughout the entire interview. Students will feel free to converse and use language in a more natural and purposeful way.” (p.97)

According to Együd and Glover (2001), a key point leading to a relaxed atmosphere in a paired test is reducing the distractive and intimidating impact of the examiner by adjusting the seating arrangement before the test. When Együd and Glover (2001) interviewed test takers for data collection and asked them whether or not they were anxious because of the presence of an examiner during the test, they answered ‘No’. In fact, “they did not pay attention to the assessor, who was sitting out of their line of vision, while they were busy solving their tasks” (Együd and Glover, 2001, p:76).

Another argument in favor of the paired test format is that test takers achieve a more successful result in a paired test compared to an individual test. In the study of Brooks (2009), participants were given the chance to take both a paired and an individual test. According to the exam results, test takers gave a better performance when they took the test in pairs. Brooks (2009) notes that “In the paired format, test takers demonstrated their facility in negotiating meaning and communicating with another language learner, co-constructing better, richer performance through their interaction” (p.361).

Concerning the use of the paired test format, Saville and Hargreaves (1999) underline the significance of testing learners in pairs as they state that the paired oral test format results in positive washback in the classroom by providing learners with a great motive

to communicate and interact in order to get ready for the test. With regard to the positive washback effect that the paired speaking test has on classroom teaching and learning, Ildiko (2002) maintains that:

“teachers may feel the need for providing their learners with opportunities for more peer interaction in order to prepare them for the paired task of the oral exam. In a similar vein, students may take speaking activities done in pairs and small groups seriously as these classroom management formats are likely to be perceived by them relevant in terms of exam preparation.”(p. 2)

Similarly, Ducasse & Brown (2009) and Taylor (2001) emphasize the importance of paired speaking tests in terms of their potential for positive washback on the learning and teaching process. Along with its positive influence on classroom instruction, the paired test is also claimed to be practical as it helps save time due to assessing test-takers in pairs instead of testing them one-on-one (Swain, 2001).

2.3.2.2. Research results and assertions against paired oral test

In spite of the fact that the paired speaking test format has a number of benefits, one of the main concerns with regard to the adoption of the paired test format is whether the matching of pairs is advantageous or disadvantageous for their performance (Foot, 1999; Fulcher, 2003; Norton, 2005). Related to this issue, McNamara (1996) maintains that “the age, sex, educational level, proficiency or native speaker status and personal qualities of the interlocutor relative to the same qualities in the candidate are all likely to be significant in influencing the candidate’s performance” (p.85). In addition, Davis (2009) asserts that “from a measurement perspective, the paired oral format may be problematic because a partner may unfairly influence an examinee’s performance or otherwise bias scores” (p.1).

One of the interlocutor aspects that is asserted and demonstrated to affect test taker performance is the proficiency level of the test takers, though some studies show that proficiency does not have any effect on the test performance of test takers. Foot (1999), who highly criticizes the paired oral tests, claims that pairs with differing proficiency levels will be disadvantaged. He warns that different proficiency levels pose a potential problem in a paired oral test.

Iwashita (1996) found differences in test scores and language production in a study in which Japanese students were tested orally in pairs. Students were grouped as high and low proficiency test takers and then tested once with a partner who had the same proficiency level and once with a partner who had a different proficiency level. Iwashita (1996) found that test takers achieved higher scores and talked more when they were paired with more proficient partners rather than less proficient ones. Therefore, the results of the study indicate that the proficiency level of an interlocutor in a paired speaking test might have an influence on both test taker scores and the quantity of output produced by the test taker.

Contrary to Iwashita's (1996) study, Davis (2009) found that the proficiency level of a test taker's partner in a paired speaking test had little influence on test scores. Davis (2009) states that "higher proficiency students did not generally appear to be harmed by working with a higher level peer, at least in terms of score" (p.38). Similarly, Csepes (2002) compared speaking test scores of test takers who were paired with lower, same, and higher proficient partners, and found no significant difference in the assigned scores. With regard to this study, Csepes (2002) puts forward that "this study disconfirms the assumption that mismatching proficiency level partners will exert negative influence on performance ratings" (p. 11).

There are also some studies which indicate that differing proficiency levels in a paired speaking test affect the quantity and quality of the discussion rather than the scores. For instance, Norton (2005) demonstrates that the type of language elicited and the amount of talk produced might be affected when one of the pairs has a higher proficiency level, although the influence on test scores was not certain. Similarly, Davis (2009) observed that lower-level test takers produced 35% more words when they worked with a higher-level partner even though there was no effect on the scores assigned.

Another aspect that is asserted to influence test taker performance in a speaking test is the familiarity of the test taker with his or her partner, which is called the acquaintanceship effect. O' Sullivan (2002) found evidence of an acquaintanceship effect with test takers who succeed to get higher scores when paired with a friend. In the study, O'Sullivan (2002) included 32 Japanese students who carried out some speaking tasks both with a friend and with a person that they were unfamiliar with. O' Sullivan

(2002) concludes that the acquaintanceship of partners is likely to affect scores assigned to the paired speaking test performance, though there is no effect on the linguistic complexity of the discourse produced. On the other hand, the findings of a study carried out by Porter (1991a) contrast with the results of the study conducted by O'Sullivan (2002). In the study, Porter (1991a) involved 13 Arab learners who were examined by both familiar and unfamiliar examiners. According to the results, no evidence of the acquaintanceship effect was found.

Along with the factors that are argued to affect test taker performance in paired oral tests, the difficulty of evaluating pairs individually in spite of the co-constructed nature of the interaction is a deep concern according to some researchers. The statement of Swain (2001) regarding the challenge of rating a speaking performance in a group speaking test also applies to the paired speaking test as the interaction is built by the contributions of more than one test taker in a paired test as well. Swain (2001) maintains that "in a group, the performance is jointly constructed and distributed across the participants" (p.296), which requires examiners "to be able to measure accurately the (solo) performance of test takers interacting in a small group setting" (p.296). Swain's (2001) statement is in line with Lazaraton (1997), who notes that "a sense of task completion was hard to evaluate for one test taker without taking into account the contributions of the other" (p.157). Highlighting the issue of interpreting the scores individually based on the interaction of test takers, McNamara (1997) underlines the necessity of a clearer understanding of the co-constructed interaction in paired speaking tests.

Several potential drawbacks of the paired oral test format have been put forward by Foot (1999), who is very highly critical of paired oral tests. First of all, Foot (1999) argues that the unsuccessful pairing of test takers might lead to a failure in building up the interaction during the test, which might also result in frustration rather than a sense of accomplishment. Furthermore, Foot (1999) draws attention to the possible impact of the personality of the test takers on each other's test performance. He claims that test takers might consider the test a competition and attempt to give minimum chance to his/her partner by dominating the conversation with the aim of making his/her partner seem less successful. Additionally, some stronger test takers might intentionally not show their real performance in a paired test as they believe that they will aid their

partner in speaking better than they usually do (Foot, 1999). Moreover, Foot (1999) asserts that test takers might feel more nervous about talking to an unfamiliar person and therefore make their partners also feel anxious. Another argument put forward by Foot (1999) is that test takers who do not share the same first language would be at disadvantage as they might not comprehend what the other says due to having a strong accent or pronunciation problems.

2.4. Learner Preferences for Paired and Individual Oral Tests

There are some studies on learner preferences which indicate controversial results. According to the study carried out by Együd & Glover (2001) and Baker (as cited in Taylor, 2001), test takers show a preference for the paired oral test format. A study conducted by Együd & Glover (2001) indicates that students at a Vocational Secondary School in Hungary also opted for the paired oral test format. In fact, all 14 of the test takers participating in the study were in favor of the paired test. One of the reasons why learners preferred the paired test was stated by the test takers as feeling quite comfortable with a partner. Their stress level was highly relieved when they worked with a partner. Another recurring reason for paired oral test preference in student comments is that test takers could give help to and get help from their partners. That's why they felt that the paired test was easier.

For a study carried out by Baker (as cited in Taylor, 2001), 130 participants who had taken one of the Cambridge EFL tests, namely PET, FCE, CAE, CPE were given questionnaires to find out their perceptions about the paired oral test type. According to the results of her study, participants agreed or strongly agreed with most of the statements in the questionnaire. Some examples from the statements included in the questionnaire are "I like paired tests" and "The test gave me a good opportunity to speak".

However, the research done by Marochi (as cited in Kanga, 2012) reveals that test takers are in favor of the individual test type rather than the paired test. In fact, eight participants out of ten in the study preferred the individual test after taking both individual and paired tests. The reasons given for why test takers did not like the paired test type were that test takers found it difficult to interact with a stranger and they could

not focus on the test due to the confusion of whose performance they should focus on. Indeed, they were unsure whether to concentrate on their own production or on their partner's statements.

According to the study carried out by Kanga (2012), which reveals similar results to the study of Marochi (as cited in Kanga, 2012), 11 test takers out of 14 preferred the individual oral test format rather than the paired oral test type. The participants were international students studying at a university in the United States and were from several different countries, namely China, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Korea, Ghana, and Russia. For the paired test, the researcher paired the participants randomly. After taking both oral test types, participants proposed several reasons in the interview to justify their oral test type preferences. First of all, many of the test takers in favor of an individual speaking test stated that it enabled them to prepare for expressing their opinions due to the presence of preparation time, which was not included in the paired test. Secondly, many test takers felt that their partners were not proficient enough in order to build and achieve a successful interaction, which resulted in feelings of annoyance. Moreover, many participants expressed that they could have performed differently if they had had a different partner. A substantial majority of participants argued that the fact that their partner's inadequate level of proficiency and the amount of time the partners 'stole' from them disturbed them and compromised their performance (Kanga, 2012).

On the other hand, a study conducted by Yıldız (2013) demonstrates that half of the participants in her study preferred individual tests whereas the other half opted for a paired test. The participants in her study were students studying at a private university in Turkey. The participants in favor of individual tests stated that they think they can have a better performance alone because they do not want to take responsibility for their partners. In addition, they commented that they feel less nervous when they are not with a partner because they think that their performance will be influenced negatively if their partners put in a poor performance. Nevertheless, the participants preferring the paired test format commented that being with a partner helped to relieve their stress as they could help each other to speak better (Yıldız, 2013).

In another study conducted by Güneş (2010), student preferences for five oral test types were investigated. Participants in the study were first year ELT students studying at Middle East Technical University, Hacettepe University, and Gazi University in Turkey. One of the research questions in the study was regarding the attitudes of students towards five test methods namely, oral presentation, individual interview, paired interview, role-play, and class discussion. Results of the study indicated that class discussion is the most favored test type. One point that drew the researcher's attention was the learners' attitudes towards the paired interview due to the controversial research results and assertions about test taker-test taker interaction in EFL/ESL literature. What's more, the number of participants who preferred the paired interview type was close to the number of learners who were in favor of class discussion, which was the most favored test method. With regard to the paired interview test method, learners commented that it is close to real-life communication. On the other hand, participants criticized the paired interview method by saying that their performance depends on the proficiency level and personality of their partners. As for the individual interview, it was the third favorite test type among the five test methods, according to learners' preferences (Güneş, 2010).

2.5. Being a Learner in a Multicultural Environment

Because there is no relevant research on pairings consisting of different origins in a paired speaking test as an effective factor on learner preferences or on any related test aspects, the effects of learning in a culturally diverse context is presented in this section. With regard to a multicultural learning environment, Maruyama and Moreno (2000) argue that a diverse student population is essential in terms of maintaining a learning context which aids learners in gaining new perspectives. Concerning this, Maruyama and Moreno (2000) add that "diverse views are the backbone of universities, for they stimulate new ideas and creations" (p.10). Concerning the contributions of a culturally diverse classroom to the improvement of learners academically and intellectually, Gurin (2003) puts forward that culturally diverse interactions in classrooms enhance active thinking, academic engagement, motivation, and academic and intellectual skills. With regard to studying in a multicultural university, the study carried out by Maruyama and Moreno (2000) in a university in the U.S. inquires into university faculty members' views about the diversity in classrooms. According to the study, almost none of the

faculty members in the university stated that a culturally diverse classroom has negative impacts on their classes and institution. The faculty members state that they value diversity and believe that it brings many benefits to all learners and teachers.

Lightbown and Spada (2006) state that many EFL learners have limited contact with the language because teachers often switch to the learners' first language in order to maintain classroom management. Therefore they do not provide the learners with sufficient opportunities to practice the language in real communication. In light of this problem, it is apparent that being an ESL or EFL learner in a multicultural environment is advantageous since there is a substantial amount of exposure to the target language in a multicultural learning context where learners with different native languages have to communicate in English both in and outside the classroom.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study aims to discover learners' preferences for paired and individual speaking tests, as well as the reasons behind their preferences in a multi cultural learning environment. With this in mind, this chapter aims to describe the design of the study implemented, the participants taking part in the study, the data collection process followed, the data collection tools utilized, and the data analysis applied.

3.1. Research Design

The present study adopts a qualitative approach. As this study's purpose is to inquire into student preferences for paired and individual oral tests, including the reasons behind their preferences, it is significant to reveal what participants think of both oral test types based on their perceptions, attitudes, experiences, and perspectives. Therefore, understanding and interpreting experiences call for a qualitative research design. According to Kothari (2004), qualitative studies enable researchers to “analyze the various factors which motivate people to behave in a particular manner or which make people like or dislike a particular thing“ (p.3). Furthermore, concerning the fact that how individuals perceive and associate things in their own way is at the heart of qualitative research studies, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) maintain that “qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them“ (p.3).

3.2. Participants

The participants in this study include 22 students who studied in the upper-intermediate level in the School of Foreign Languages of a private university called Antalya International University (AIU) located in Antalya, Turkey. AIU, which has the highest percentage of international students among universities in Turkey with 35 percent of its overall learner population being foreign, offers its learners a diverse and multicultural learning environment. For that reason, learners have the opportunity of learning English with classmates coming from various countries, which enables them to use English as a means of communication not only inside the classroom but outside the classroom as well. As the participant group of this study learns English in an international university,

the researcher decided to include not only Turkish students, but also students from diverse origins in order to represent the multicultural nature of this learning environment. In addition, in case the paired test format is adopted for future speaking tests in AIU's School of Foreign Languages, students would be paired randomly, which could result in pairings made up of different combinations in terms of origin, such as Turkish-Foreign Student, Foreign-Foreign Student, Turkish-Turkish Student pairings. Therefore, the researcher opted for involving both foreign learners and Turkish learners in the study and pairing them randomly as is demonstrated in Table 1. Therefore, 12 participants out of 22 are Turkish students and the remaining 10 learners are from several different countries, namely Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Iraq, Egypt, and Mozambique. 10 of the participants were in an upper-intermediate level class between February-April 2015, which coincides with module 3 at AIU and the remaining 12 participants were in an upper-intermediate level class between April-June 2015, which coincides with module 4. The data were collected through the third and fourth modules when the students were in an upper-intermediate level class. Each module in AIU's School of Foreign Languages for a student consists of a two-month period of English instruction in a particular level, which includes the same syllabus, teaching materials, and exam types in all modules. This means that students studying in Upper-Intermediate level in Module 3 and students studying in Upper-Intermediate in Module 4 are provided with the same teaching materials and given the same test types. For that reason, the participants from module 3 and 4 went through the same learning process. To elaborate on the speaking tasks and materials that the participants were exposed to before this research, it can be said that all participants had Listening & Speaking skills lessons which focused on speaking activities in pairs and groups based on the topics covered in the course books. Moreover, the participants had 2 speaking tests which were individual type tests in a module. Hence, the participants had plenty of opportunities and experiences with speaking tasks and tests by the time they became Upper-Intermediate level students. While half of the participants are Turkish students, the other half is from several different countries. The participants in the February-April group are all classmates. In the same way, the participants in the April-June group are classmates as well. For that reason, the participants had equal levels of familiarity with their partners during the paired test conducted prior to the interview. The researcher was the reading teacher of all participants, which provided equal conditions to all participants in terms of the "acquaintanceship effect" with the examiner during the individual speaking

test. It is significant to highlight that participants were not chosen based on their performance or any other specific criteria. The fact that the participants were in the researcher's class that she was teaching was the main reason for selecting them as it enabled the researcher to arrange individual and paired tests, as well as interviews with her own students with ease. Moreover, the research population of the study consists of learners who volunteered to take part in the study without any force or pressure from the researcher. The main motive behind participating in the study for learners was getting a chance to practice their speaking in a real exam-like context as well as expressing their ideas about their experiences of both exam types. As learners in AIU School of Foreign Languages have to take a proficiency test that includes a speaking part at the end of the academic year, participants were more than happy to get a chance to experience a practice exam. Additionally, the prospect of talking to their teachers about their experiences with speaking exams made them excited for taking part in the study.

Table 1: Randomly paired pairs by origin and gender

Pairs	Gender	Origins
P1-P2	Male-Male	Iraq-Egypt
P3-P4	Male-Female	Russia-Turkey
P5-P6	Male-Male	Kyrgyzstan-Russia
P7-P8	Male-Female	Mongolia-Turkish
P9-P10	Female-Female	Turkey-Turkey
P11-P12	Female-Female	Turkey-Turkey
P13-P14	Male-Female	Egypt-Turkey
P15-P16	Female-Female	Turkey- Kyrgyzstan
P17-P18	Male-Male	Turkey-Turkey
P19-P20	Female-Male	Turkey-Turkey
P21-P22	Female-Male	Mozambique-Mozambique

3.3. Data Collection Process

This section contains detailed information about the procedures the researcher followed while collecting data by means of instruments utilized. Before carrying out the study in AIU, the researcher got authorization from the director of AIU's School of Foreign Languages. After obtaining the authorization, the researcher started by informing her students in her upper-intermediate reading class about the aims of the study and asked if anyone would like to volunteer to take part in the study. In that way, the participants who were willing to be involved in the study contacted the researcher after class time. Students who decided to participate in the study were randomly paired by the

researcher, which did not lead to any problems as all students were already familiar with each other. After that, the researcher arranged appointments with each pair for a paired speaking test and with each student both for an individual test and for an interview, which is the major data collection instrument of the study. The process followed for selecting the participants and arranging the appointments for data collection were applied in the same way both in the February-April and April-June periods.

The data collection part of the study consists of two stages. The first stage involved two speaking test formats, namely an individual and a paired test, and the order of administration was controlled. The second stage, which is the fundamental data collection process, is the interview with each student. In the test stage, the individual test was conducted first, which was followed by the paired test. After the participants experienced both test types, they were interviewed one-on-one in order to understand their preferences regarding both test types. In fact, the order that the speaking tests and the interview were administered was the same all through the data collection process. The reason for the strict order of administration of these data collection tools was because the time when students did not have any classes and the researcher was available was restricted to break times, lunch time and the time period between 14:45 p.m. and 4 p.m. on weekdays. As the learners had to attend their classes between 9:15 a.m-14:45 every day, 15-minute break times in the morning were used for the individual test, lunch times were used for the paired test and the time when the afternoon classes were over was used for the interview. In that way, a consistent order for the implementation of both speaking test types and the interview was maintained.

The fundamental data collection was achieved by conducting interviews designed to reveal student preferences for individual and paired oral tests, including the reasons for their preferences. On the other hand, the major aim behind the implementation of a paired test and an individual test was so that students could make a direct comparison of both test types based on their very recent experiences with both test types. Although students have experienced the individual speaking test type several times in AIU's School of Foreign Languages as part of an assessment instrument, they were given the opportunity to take both test types on the same day to enable them to compare both test types with more precision. Furthermore, the fact that students had not had a chance to

take a paired speaking test before called for the administration of a paired test in order to uncover student preferences regarding both oral test formats.

In the testing stage of the data collection process, the individual test was administered prior to the paired test, during the break time periods in the morning. In one of the break times, one of the participants in a pair was tested individually. Similarly, in another break time, the other participant in the pair was tested individually on the same day. The individual test lasted approximately 7 minutes, so the 15-minute-break times were optimal time periods for the administration of the individual tests. As participants have had individual speaking tests several times, there was no need to give them a detailed explanation about the test. The participants were only reminded of the stages of the test. The individual test performance of the participants was video recorded as it was thought that it might be useful in terms of providing the researcher with supporting data for the responses of the participant in the interview. Furthermore, video recording of the test performances was thought to present data that would not be possible to obtain from the face-to-face interview. With the same purpose in mind, the paired test performance of the participants was also video recorded. For the paired test, the researcher and the pairs met in the researcher's office during lunch time on the same day that the individual oral tests were given. The paired test lasted almost 15 minutes. Before starting the test, test takers were informed about the stages of the test and warned against not dominating the conversation. In fact, test takers had not taken a speaking test with a partner before, which called for providing the participants with necessary clarification about the test. However, being used to paired speaking tasks and activities from the speaking lessons, the participants did not have any big concerns or problems with the paired test. Moreover, as the paired test that was given to the students for this study was very similar to the individual oral test that the participants had taken, they were used to it in many respects except for the high interactional opportunities that were opened up by the paired test format. Talking to a friend rather than a teacher was the main difference between the test types implemented for the study, which allowed the participants to understand the clarifications about the paired test immediately.

The second stage of the data collection process consisted of an interview with each student, which is the most essential part of the study. The main aim of the researcher in using the interview as the most significant data collection tool was that it gave the

students an opportunity to explain, clarify, and elaborate on their preferences for paired and individual oral test types, including the reasons for their preferences. Overall, the interviews were carried out in the form of a face-to-face conversation initiated by the researcher for the specific purpose of eliciting learner responses based on questions specially prepared for revealing learner preferences. To obtain in depth information about the reasons for students' oral test type preferences, they were all asked open ended questions, which were conducted in a semi-structured interview format.

While the researcher worked with only two students (1 pair) in some weeks, she worked with four students (2 pairs) in other weeks, depending on the researcher's work load. As the researcher has been working in the testing office for two and half years at AIU, she has adequate experience in administrating speaking tests, which allowed her to administer the speaking tests for the present study smoothly. Moreover, the fact that the researcher works in an office that only she uses made it possible for her to administer the exams and hold the interviews without any interruptions or disturbance.

3.4. Data Collection Tools

In this study, the major data collection tool is the interview conducted with each participant one-on-one while the paired and individual tests were given with the aim of providing the participants with a recent experience of both test types in order to enable them to compare both test types with ease. In other words, the oral tests given to the participants prior to the interview formed the basis for the interview. Additionally, the video recordings of the tests were viewed to provide the researcher with concrete support and meticulous details for the student responses, which might contribute to the validity and reliability of the research. In the following subtitles, each data collection tool will be presented with more detail.

3.4.1. Individual and paired speaking tests

As already stated, the purpose of giving an individual and paired speaking test to each participant is to form the basis for the interview stage by providing the participants with a recent experience of both oral test formats. With this in mind, the participants took the

individual test and paired test on the same day based on the arranged appointment with each participant and pair.

The individual test was conducted according to the speaking tests administered at AIU. The individual speaking test type adopted by AIU has been revised several times based on the feedback from teachers and students, which contributed to its validity and reliability as an assessment tool. The questions asked in the speaking tests are written based on the topics covered in intermediate and upper-intermediate level classes, which means that learners encounter the topics they are already familiar with. Moreover, the researcher got help from the other testing office members while writing the speaking prompts in order to ensure that they are similar to each other in terms of difficulty. Therefore, the researcher utilized the same individual test for the present study. Following the same principle while preparing the speaking test prompts, the researcher wrote the questions by taking the topics that the participants were familiar with into consideration (See Appendix A). The individual speaking test is approximately 7 minutes long and consists of three parts. The first part is a warm-up stage in which the test taker is asked a personal question, such as his or her interests, family, and home town in order to ease his or her anxiety. The second and third parts are exactly the same, in which the test taker draws an opinion question from a previously cut bundle of questions. If the test taker does not like the question, he or she can change it once. After the test taker gets the question, she or he may think about it for a minute and is provided with paper so that she or he can take notes. Once the test taker is ready, she or he is supposed to respond to the question for two minutes. The examiner has two follow-up questions for each opinion question and asks them when the test taker cannot talk enough, gets stuck, and is unable to talk (See Appendix A). For that reason, the individual speaking test adopted for the present study based on the speaking exams conducted at AIU differs slightly from the Oral Proficiency Interview. While OPIs are administered in an interview format which includes several questions asked by the examiner and responses to those questions given by the test taker, in the individual test type used in the present study, test takers are expected to develop a monologue-like response to the opinion question drawn. In case the test taker cannot develop his or her speech, he or she is asked questions, which is similar to an interview. However, as the test in an OPI and the one in this study is held between an examiner and an examinee, they share the same features.

The paired speaking test was prepared by the researcher with the other testing office members at AIU based slightly on the Cambridge FCE speaking test and, to some extent, on the individual speaking tests at AIU. The questions were written by taking the topics the participants are already familiar with into consideration (See Appendix B). The paired speaking test is approximately 10 minutes long and consists of three parts. In the first part, the examiner asks each speaker a personal question to relieve their stress, which lasts nearly 2 minutes. In the second part, the test takers pick an opinion question from a previously prepared bundle of questions and are given 1 minute to think and take notes about it (See Appendix B). If they do not like the question, they can change the question once. Once the test-takers are ready, they are supposed to discuss the opinion question for 4 minutes. In the last part of the test, test takers are shown a set of pictures accompanied by two questions and are supposed to talk about those questions based on the pictures (See Appendix B). They are not given note-taking and preparation time in this stage and are supposed to discuss the questions for 4 minutes. In the second and third parts of the exam, the examiner did not join in the conversation. The interaction occurred only between the two test takers while the examiner monitored them.

Before the researcher started giving the oral tests for the study, she piloted both test types with 2 learners who are not included in the study with the purpose of collecting data. After the piloting study, the researcher did not need to make any changes as the testing process in each test type went smoothly with no problems.

3.4.2. Interview

The main data collection tool employed for the study is the interview. As Miller and Crabtree (as cited in Dörnyei, 2007) point out, “the interview genre with its turn-taking conventions and expectations for participant roles, etiquettes, and even linguistic phrases is usually shared cultural knowledge” (p.134). As the participants in the study are from several different cultures, interview as a data collection instrument serves the purpose of the study. The interviews carried out in this study were semi-structured and less formal compared to structured interviews as the researcher could make changes in the order of the questions, explain, or add to them in some cases. That’s why some follow-up questions were also asked to students depending on their responses during the interview. If an interviewee came up with a bright and interesting idea, the researcher

tried to get the interviewee to elaborate on it. In that regard, Dowsett (as cited in Nunan, 1992) points out that the semi-structured interview “is quite extraordinary-the interactions are incredibly rich and the data indicate that you can produce extraordinary evidence about life that you don’t get in structured interviews or questionnaire methodology” (p.149). Additionally, adoption of the semi-structured interview type helped to provide learners with a relaxed atmosphere where they could express their opinions without being limited by a set of pre-determined questions.

Before starting to carry out the interviews, interview questions were piloted with 2 interviewees who were not included in the study with the aim of data collection. With regard to the significance of piloting an elicitation instrument with a small sample of subjects, Nunan (1992) states that the piloting of an interview offers the researcher the opportunity to remove any questions that were complex, unclear, and confusing to the participants. In this regard, some of the questions were improved by making some changes to the wording of them after the piloting stage.

The interviews with foreign participants were held in English. However, the researcher asked Turkish participants which language-English or Turkish-they would like to speak in through the interview with the aim of making them feel relaxed and more eager to express their opinions and elaborate on their responses to the interview questions. Interestingly, all Turkish participants preferred to speak in Turkish during the interview even though they were competent enough to express their opinions in English as upper-intermediate level English language learners. The reason why the researcher did not give the same opportunity to the international participants is that the researcher’s first language is Turkish and she can speak only English as her second language. That’s why she could not offer the same chance to the foreign participants.

In order to elicit participant responses to the interview questions which aim to reveal learner preferences for both oral test types with the reasons behind their preferences, the researcher prepared eight interview questions in both English and Turkish (See Appendix C). Interviews were carried out with each participant one-on-one on the same day that he/she took the paired and individual speaking tests. The interviews were held after the participants took both oral test types. In order to analyze the data gathered by the interviews, the researcher video recorded them to be transcribed. The duration of the

interviews varies from 12 minutes to 20 minutes. Interviews held in Turkish generally lasted a shorter time compared to the interviews conducted in English with the foreign participants.

3.5. Data Analysis

Before starting the data analysis, the researcher transcribed all the interviews conducted with each participant and then the data gathered through the interviews were analyzed through a qualitative analysis technique called content analysis technique. Concerning the content analysis technique, Ellis and Barkhuizen (as cited in Dörnyei, 2007) state that “this type of analysis follows the very generalized sequence of coding for themes, looking for patterns, making interpretations, and building theory” (p.246). The approach adopted for content analysis for the present study is a conventional content analysis approach in which the categories and names for categories flow from the data rather than using predetermined categories (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). Based on the conventional content analysis approach, the researcher read the transcripts of the interviews several times and highlighted any data that were relevant to the content and topic of the study with the aim of coding them. In order to facilitate the coding process, the researcher utilized a crucial analytical tool called “analytical memos” while applying the coding to the transcribed data. Taking notes on any ideas that come to mind during the coding process is referred to as “analytical memos” according to Dörnyei (2007), who argues that analytical memos “contain the embryos of some of the main conclusions to be drawn from the study. Thus, memos are in effect explorations of ideas, hunches, and thoughts about the codes” (p.254). Having coded the data accompanied by the use of memos, the researcher put the emerging patterns and topics into categories which aided in interpreting the data and drawing conclusions. While the videos of the interviews were transcribed for the data analysis, the videos of the individual and paired speaking tests were not transcribed. Instead, the researcher watched the videos of the tests during the data analysis of interviews and added relevant supports to the interview data.

4. RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings and the analysis of the study. In line with the objectives of the current study, the researcher used semi-structured interview questions to obtain data regarding both Turkish and international students' preferences for paired and individual speaking tests. The findings of the study are presented in three main sections. The first section presents quantitative data with regard to the number of students who prefer individual and paired speaking tests with the aim of revealing which oral test type is favored more by test takers. The second section involves qualitative data explaining the reasons for students' oral test type preferences, and the final section involves both quantitative and qualitative data regarding the differences between international and Turkish students' oral test type preferences.

In the data analysis of the interviews, it was found that while learners prefer a speaking test type for certain reasons, they are also against the other test type for other reasons. Therefore, the negative opinions of the participants about both paired and individual oral tests are also presented in the second section of this chapter, in addition to the participants' positive opinions of their favorite speaking test type. Moreover, those reasons were organized into categories which were determined by the researcher based on close relationships between them. In other words, the reasons why the participants are in favor of or are against an oral test type are considered to fall under certain umbrella terms and therefore the reasons were organized and placed under certain headings, as demonstrated in the tables.

While illustrating and supporting the emerging results based on the analysis of the interviews with the participants' relevant comments and responses, the letter "P" has been used to refer to the word "Participant".

4.1. Speaking Test Type Favored More by Test Takers

The number of participants who show a preference for paired and individual speaking tests is illustrated in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Speaking Test Type Preferences of the Participants

Speaking test type	Frequency
Paired test	13
Individual test	8
Not a certain test type preference	1

Based on the findings obtained through interviews with test-takers, it has been found that 8 students out of 22 show a preference for an individual test while 13 students out of 22 are in favor of a paired speaking test. The remaining student's preference is dependent on whether the person he is going to be paired with in a future paired test will be familiar to him or not, which does not allow him to express his preference specifically for only one test type. As demonstrated in Table 3, the majority of the students favor a speaking test which they can take with a partner.

4.2. The Reasons for Students' Preferences for Paired and Individual Speaking Tests

Students' answers to interview questions were analyzed to discover the reasons for their preferences for paired and individual speaking tests. When student interviews were analyzed, it was found that students also stated reasons for why they do not prefer an oral test type, in addition to the reasons for their favored test type. Therefore, not only the reasons for the favored speaking test type, but also the reasons for why a test type is not favored are demonstrated in the tables with explanations and the related student comments below. Furthermore, as the interviews with Turkish students were conducted in Turkish, their comments are provided in both Turkish and English.

4.2.1. Why paired speaking test is preferred

The enquiry into student preferences for their favorite oral test type revealed that they opt for a paired oral test for several reasons, which are illustrated in Table 3 below along with the number of students who stated these reasons. The specific reasons students expressed were grouped under three main categories, which are a non-intimidating test environment, the partner as a source of comfort, and test items.

Table 3: The reasons why paired test is favored

Why paired test is preferred	Frequency
A. A non-intimidating test environment	7
* There is no stress of making mistakes and being assessed	5
* It is comforting and fun	2
B. Partner as a source of comfort	32
* A familiar partner helps you feel relaxed	9
* Interaction in the test is advantageous	10
* Collaboration with a partner helps you do well in the test	13
C. Test items	20
* Test questions with pictures are easy to talk about	8
* Test questions with pictures help you produce more ideas	12

4.2.1.1. A Non-Intimidating test environment

Contrary to individual speaking tests in which students suffer from considerable anxiety due to the fact that they are being assessed by an authority, a teacher as an examiner, a test with a friend is thought to not arouse such feelings of nervousness. Because the partner is not involved in assigning the grade, students as test takers feel quite comfortable and believe that a paired oral test puts them at ease. This situation is clear in some students' responses when they were asked which test type they would prefer for a future test and why:

P1: *"I think the test with Mohammed because we were talking about in the friendly way and we can say what we want to say without fearing anything when we make some little mistakes we can fix it easily."*

P4: *"It was good for me. Also I was comfortable because my friend won't give marks to me."*

P19: *"Ama karşımda bir arkadaşım olduğu zaman ben ona konuşuyorum, o bana konuşuyor. Birbirimize not verme gibi bir durum olmadığı için daha rahat konuşuyoruz."* (However, when there is a friend in the test, I'm talking to her and she is talking to me. As we are not giving grades to each other, we speak more comfortably.)

Some students explicitly stated that in addition to feeling relaxed with a friend in the speaking test, they also enjoyed such an experience because it was a test atmosphere

which was different from what students are used to. Following examples are students' comments about this issue:

P1: *"I think it was nice. I felt comfortable and I think it was really fun with a friend. I enjoyed it really."*

P21: *"Arkadaşımınla konuşurken sınav havasında olmaktan daha uzak olduğu için daha rahat hissettim. Daha az heyecan hissettim. Daha rahat olarak konuştum. Ayrıca öğretmenle olan sınavlardan farklı bir ortam olduğu için eğlendiğimi de söyleyebilirim."* (I felt comfortable while talking to my friend in the test because it was not a stressful exam environment. I felt less nervous. I could talk more comfortably. Moreover, I can say that I enjoyed it because it was a different exam environment than the one with a teacher.)

4.2.1.2. Partner as a source of comfort

Interacting with a familiar partner is an important factor that leads to a relaxing test environment and accordingly students can speak with ease and without worry. When asked whether or not talking to a classmate had an effect on their test type preference and if so why, some students provided the following responses:

P1: *"There is an effect when this friend I know so I can think easily, so relaxed and what I want I can say without any stress."*

P15: *"Arkadaşımı önceden tanıdığım için diyalogu daha rahat şekilde sürdürebildim. Karşıdaki kişiyi tanımyorsam bu durum tabii değişiklik gösterecektir. Tanımadığım bir kişiyle bu kadar rahat olamazdım diye düşünüyorum."* (As I know my partner, I could talk comfortably in the conversation. If I don't know the person, the situation will be different. I think that I wouldn't feel as relaxed with a person I don't know as I was in the test with my friend.)

One reason why some students think that being paired with a familiar partner is important is clearly related to their personality. Following are some examples from students:

P2: *“I can speak better with the person who I know him. I can talk about everything. I’m not confused but when I see a person first time, I can’t talk all of things in a relaxed way. Because I’m shy.”*

P9: *“Not at all because I know Evander before so it was relaxing for me. If there was another person, I would feel shy.”*

Another reason why a familiar partner is thought to be a significant point for the participants results from the possibility of being paired with an unfamiliar partner who might bring about some communication difficulties during the conversation in the test. Related student comments are given below:

P12: *“Tanımadığım bir kişiyle bir konuyu tartışırken belki benim fikirlerimi eleştirebilir. O yüzden kendimi pek rahat hissedemeyebilirim ve söylemek istediklerimi iyi ifade edemeyebilirim.”* (While discussing a topic with a person I don’t know, he/she can criticize my opinions. For that reason, I might not feel comfortable and express what I want to say well.)

P20: *“Tanımadığım bir kişiyi ise ilk defa göreceğim. Nasıl düşündüğünü, nasıl bir kişiliğe sahip olduğunu bilemeyeceğim. Benim söylediğim bir şeyi farklı algılayabilir, onun söylediğini ben yanlış algılayabilirim.”* (I will see the person I am unfamiliar with for the first time. I won’t know the way he thinks and what his personality is like. He might misunderstand me, or I might misunderstand him.)

Familiarity with a partner is such a strong factor for one of the students (P21) that it is the main determinant in his oral test type preference. When asked which test type he prefers for a future speaking test, he gave the answer below:

P21: *“İkili testte tanımadığım birisiyle konuşmam gerektiği sürece bireysel sınavı tercih ederim. Eğer tanıdığım arkadaşlarım olursa-mesela sınıf arkadaşlarım-ikili testi tercih ederim.”* (As long as I have to talk to a person I am not familiar with, I prefer individual test. If I can talk to a person I know like a classmate, I prefer paired test.)

As there are two test-takers interacting and sharing ideas with each other in a paired speaking test, it is more like a real-life conversation in which test-takers pay close

attention to each other's opinions with the aim of contributing to the mutually built conversation. Hence, it is different from a test with an examiner because a paired speaking test is like a real-life conversation that doesn't include the aim of assessment like a test with a teacher. This helps test-takers feel comfortable in the test. Here are some excerpts from student interviews with regard to this point:

P1: *"My friend want to discuss the situation and subject with me and know my idea. When I speak to teacher, you want to see my ability in English."*

P2: *"I think with my friend it's more reality and we can share together like we are sitting in a café. We talked to each other, I didn't look at you in the exam with Ako. I was focused only my friend. It was better really."*

P20: *"Arkadaşla olan sınavda karşılıklı bir konuşma olduğundan ve fikirlerimizi ifade etmek ön plana çıktığından daha rahat şekilde konuşmamı sağlıyor."*
(Because in a test with a partner there is interaction and expressing our ideas is important, I can speak comfortably.)

Furthermore, one participant stated that sharing ideas with a partner in a speaking test provides her with a broader perspective related to the topic and helps her to improve her thinking skills. This point is illustrated by the following extract:

P6: *"It is really good with my friend because you will learn extra ideas, you can increase your thinking skills. You can share ideas of each other."*

Most of the participants who favor a paired speaking test stated that they could show a good performance in the paired speaking test thanks to the collaboration with their partners. Many participants associated a good performance in the paired test with producing more ideas, better justifications for their arguments, and being able to talk longer compared to their talking time in individual speaking tests. When participants were asked why they show a preference for the paired oral test, they made the following comments:

P2: *"I think, in paired test. Because we talked all of our time. Because in individual one, I talked maybe just one minute. And I told that's all. My time had other one minute. So I didn't talk all of my time in individual speaking test. But in*

with Ako, we talked a lot of time. You said that's enough. I think it is very important to talk all of your time."

P6: *"I think we talked more together. We had more reasons. Alone I could say less things."*

P18: *"Karşımdaki arkadaşım benim söylediğim şeyler üzerine farklı yorumlar yapıp konuşmayı zenginleştiriyor ve bu da daha çok fikir üretmeme yardımcı oluyor ve daha çok konuşmamı sağlıyor."* (My partner makes different comments on what I say and enriches the conversation and this helps me produce more ideas and talk longer.)

Other than viewing their partners as a source of help in terms of producing more ideas, some participants also noted that their partners provided them with useful vocabulary items and grammar structures during the exam:

P3: *"I know she will say a lot of mistakes but of course I will take a lot of vocabulary from her. She can remind me a lot of vocabulary because we are in the same level in upper and intermediate so she will use a lot of words I know because we studies the same books."*

P15: *"Tıkandığım zaman arkadaşımın kurduğu cümleler ve kullandığı kelimeler bana yardımcı oldu."* (When I got stuck in the exam, the sentences my friend formed and the words she used helped me.)

Working in collaboration in the paired test also brings about a comforting test atmosphere for some students:

P16: *"Birimizin takıldığı yerde yardımcı olması açısından sınavın arkadaşla olması daha iyi oluyor. Daha rahat hissettim çünkü ben bir yerde takıldığımda o bir şeyler ekledi, bu arada benim aklımda yeni fikirler oluştu."* (It is better when the test is with a partner in terms of giving help to each other when we get stuck. I was more comfortable because my friend was talking when I hesitated and got stuck, meanwhile I could think of some ideas.)

Since a paired speaking test involves collaboration with a partner, it is the major determinant for one of the participant's (P10) oral test type preference, even though he

thinks that he had a better performance in the individual test with the examiner. Because he is concerned about drawing a difficult speaking prompt in a future individual test and having difficulty in speaking alone, he opts for a paired test due to the chance of getting help from a partner. When asked about which test type he prefers for a future speaking test, the student gave the following response:

P10: *“I think with my friend because I’m thinking about some possible things. OK, I could do it well in this test with the teacher, but if I pick a difficult topic next time and if I’m alone, it can be very difficult. But a friend can help me to better talk. So, I prefer a friend in a test because I don’t know when I will choose a hard topic. It’s kind of random.”*

4.2.1.3. Test items

The paired speaking test that participants experienced in this study consists of stages that include a written opinion question and another opinion question accompanied by related pictures. The main difference between the paired test and the individual test carried out in this study in terms of test items is in the last stage, which involves two opinion questions provided with a set of related pictures. In the interviews with the participants, it was revealed that the picture questions stage in the paired oral test influenced the test type preferences of some students who think that picture questions are easy to talk about since they allow the participants to describe, make inferences, and visualize the topic. Below are some excerpts from student answers related to this issue:

P1: *“It is easier to talk about it. The picture is open. You can describe it. You can imagine it. You can imagine the situation and you have idea about it. When you see the pictures you already imagine it. You remember somethings from your mind and you can easily talk about.”*

P13: *“Resimler insanı farklı yerlere götürebiliyor. Farklı fikirler verebiliyor. Önündeki görsellere bakarak çıkarımlarda bulunabilir, bir şeyler söyleyebilirsiniz. O yüzden resimli sorularda konuşmak daha kolay oluyor.”* (Pictures can make you feel that you are in a different place. They can provide you with ideas. You can make inferences and talk by looking at the pictures in front of you. Therefore, it is easier to talk about questions with pictures.)

One of the reasons why the picture questions section is thought to be easy is that it suits the intelligence type of the students because one of the participants(P6) is aware that she is a visual learner and finds picture questions easy to talk about:

P6: *“I liked picture questions because when you see something, you can get more ideas. You know there are some visual people. I’m a visual person, for example, when I see something, I quickly, easily understand it. For example, if there are some pictures in a book, I can learn better. I can keep in my mind better. When I see a picture, I can talk easily.”*

Moreover, due to being easy to talk about, questions with pictures make students feel relaxed, as can be understood from the following student comment:

P14: *“Resimli soruların daha kolay olduğunu düşünüyorum, bu yüzden rahat hissettiriyor.” (I think that picture questions are easy, so they make me feel relaxed.)*

Some participants stated that they could produce more ideas and talk more while talking about picture questions since visuals reduce the time needed to think about the exam questions:

P6: *“When I read a question, I need to imagine and I need more time to think. But in a picture my ideas appear automatically. I can talk more.”*

P17: *“Öncelikle resimli sorularda insanın aklına daha çok şey geliyor. Çok daha fazla fikir üretebiliyorsun.” (First of all, more ideas come to your mind while talking about picture questions. You can produce a lot more ideas.)*

4.2.2. Why individual speaking test is not preferred

While participants were explaining in the interview why they favor the paired speaking test, they also talked about the reasons why they do not prefer the individual speaking test. Their expressions about the negative aspects of individual speaking tests reinforce

their reasons why they opt for a paired oral test. In relation to this point, analysis of the interviews with participants revealed the reasons shown in Table 4 below:

Table 4: The reasons why individual speaking test is not favored

Why individual speaking test is not preferred	Frequency
A. Teacher as a source of test anxiety	14
* Negative teacher attitude causes anxiety	4
* Talking to an unfamiliar teacher is stressful	3
* There is fear of making mistakes and being assessed	7
B. Test items and test specifications	19
* There is no interaction and collaboration	10
* Written questions are hard to talk about	6
* It is serious and academic	3

4.2.2.1. Teacher as a source of test anxiety

Since participants had experienced individual speaking tests several times before, they had the chance to base their arguments for and against the individual speaking test on their former experiences, in addition to their experiences with the present study. Hence, when talking about why they do not prefer individual speaking tests, some participants stated, based on their former experiences, that they get nervous in a test with a serious looking examiner who has a negative and discouraging attitude. Some interview excerpts are as follows:

P1: *“In addition there are some strict teachers and you don’t know when will you be with a strict teacher. If teacher is strict I feel stressed I feel pressure. I feel bad.”*

P18: *“Ancak bazen tanımadığım bir hoca geliyor ve çok ciddi duruşlu olunca, ben konuşurken gülümsemeyince ben daha çok geriliyorum.”* (However, sometimes I have to talk to a teacher I don’t know and when he/she has a very serious attitude and when he/she doesn’t smile while I’m talking to him/her, I feel more nervous.)

Being assessed by an unfamiliar examiner is another significant reason for feeling nervous for some participants. Already feeling anxious about a speaking test, test takers experience deeper anxiety when talking to an unfamiliar teacher in the test:

P17: “Açıkçası en korktuğum sınav speaking sınavları. İnanılmaz gergin oluyorum. Hocaları hiç tanımıyoruz. Mesela sizinle girsem hep konuşma sınavlarına daha rahat olurum. Sonuçta dersime giriyorsunuz, beni biliyorsunuz. Tanımadığım bir hoca olunca stres seviyem daha da yükseliyor.” (To tell the truth, the speaking exam is the one that I am most afraid of. I feel extremely nervous. We don't know teachers at all. For instance, if I take the exams with you I feel more relaxed as you are my class teacher and you know me. When I talk to unfamiliar teachers in the exam, my stress level increases.)

In addition to resulting in test anxiety, unfamiliarity with the teacher also prevents test takers from showing their speaking ability comfortably, as can be understood from the student comment given below:

P1: “When you see he or she in the first time you don't know how he deal with you. When you present your idea when you don't know him it affects you. You cannot present everything you know, everything you want to tell because of stress and a new teacher.”

One of the primary reasons why participants find individual tests stressful is due to feeling worried about being assessed by a teacher, which is not the case in a test with a partner. Believing that the teacher pays close attention to every single word that they utter and every mistake they make, participants expressed their deep concern for being assessed. The following excerpt reflects the view of one of the participants regarding this issue:

P20: “Birebir konuşma sınavında hocanın benim nasıl konuştuğuma, nasıl cümleler kurduğuma, grammer ve vocabulary açısından performansına çok dikkat ettiğini biliyorum ve bu durum beni baya bir strese sokuyor.” (In an individual speaking test I know that the teacher pays very close attention to how I speak, what sentences I form, and my performance in terms of vocabulary items and grammar structures I use, and this situation makes me very stressed.)

Regarding an examiner as a person who is concentrating on the mistakes they make increases participants' test anxiety and causes them to feel afraid of making mistakes, as can clearly be understood from the student comments below:

P2: *“And with the grammar, you should take care to not do mistake in grammar. I always pay a lot of attention not to talk with errors. And I feel more nervous because I'm worried to make a lot of mistakes.”*

P18: *“Sanki öğretmen ben konuşurken ağzımdan çıkan her şeye çok dikkat ediyor gibi geliyor bana. Zaten bu yüzden öğretmenle konuşurken çok gergin oluyorum.”*
(It is like the teacher pays so much attention to every single thing I say. That's why I feel very nervous while talking to a teacher.)

4.2.2.2. Test items and test specifications

Participants state that in individual speaking tests they have difficulty in proceeding and developing their talk as they could do in the test with their partner. Therefore, the lack of collaboration in a speaking test with an examiner poses a challenge for them as they get stuck and are unable to develop their ideas. Below are the related student comments with regard to this point:

P6: *“You are alone and you have to find all ideas yourself. You don't have a friend to help you.”*

P11: *“Tekli sınavda konuşurken biraz tılandım. Konuşurken fikir açısından tıkanma oluyor. Musali'yle olan sınav gibi fikir açısından yardım olmuyor tabi ki öğretmenle birebir sınavlarda. Stresin etkisiyle de konuşmak zorlaşıyor doğal olarak.”* *(In the individual test I got stuck a bit. Getting stuck occurs while talking. Of course there is no help in a test with a teacher, like it was in the test with Mussali. It naturally becomes more difficult to talk with the influence of stress as well.)*

In addition to a lack of collaboration in the individual speaking test, the fact that examiners do not have much interaction with test-takers is another reason why some participants think that an individual test is disadvantageous. Since examiners do not

interact with test-takers during the test, which is one of the test specifications adopted for the speaking tests in AIU, participants feel discouraged and demotivated to talk:

P10: *“Instead of just teacher, I have not any help, just I’m talking and teacher is listening to me. I don’t have any response from the teacher. But with a friend, we talk and respond each other.”*

P18: *“Hocaya soru hakkındaki fikirlerini anlatıyorsun yani ama hoca hiçbir tepki vermiyor ama o anda arkadaşın o anda sana tepki veriyor. Bu da konuşmak için motivasyonunu ve performansını kötü yönde etkiliyor tabi ki.”* (You talk about your ideas about the test question to the teacher but the teacher does not respond to you, but your friend does. And this situation of course affects your motivation and performance negatively.)

Since the individual speaking test included only written opinion test prompts without any accompanying pictures, participants had negative opinions of the individual oral test particularly when they compared the picture questions part in the paired oral test with the written opinion questions. The reason for this is that participants think written questions are difficult to talk about without the help that visuals bring by allowing them to visualize the images and ideas easily in their minds. Thus, this situation caused some participants to get stuck while speaking, as can be understood from the following comment:

P17: *“Yazılı soru olunca o resmi senin kafanda çizmen gerekiyor. Fikirleri düşünmek daha zor ve konuşurken hemen takılabiliyorsun ancak görsel soru olunca bir adım önde başlıyorsun.”* (You need to draw the pictures in your mind when you are talking about written prompts. It is more difficult to think of ideas and you can easily get stuck, however, you start one step ahead when you have pictures.)

Because of finding the written questions hard to talk, one of the participants thinks that the note-taking time allocated for brainstorming, organizing ideas, and getting prepared to talk is not enough:

P6: *“I think it was more also more difficult to talk about opinion questions than pictures. I have one minute to take notes right? In one minute I can’t collect my ideas, I couldn’t get perfect ideas. I think I need more time to think for a written question.”*

Some of the participants stated that they try to use academic words and academic language while talking to an examiner since they believe that the individual speaking test is serious and formal, which increases participants’ test anxiety. The following interview excerpt clarifies this point:

P2: *“When I talk with teacher, I talk like respectful language. I don’t want to talk like I talk with my friend because with teacher I feel more serious and more stressful. But, when I talk with my friend, I can explain any language. I can speak faster. I speak informal because I feel good.”*

4.2.3. Why individual speaking test is preferred

The analysis of student preferences for oral test types revealed that they prefer the individual speaking test due to the reasons given in Table 5 below, which also includes the number of students citing those reasons. The specific reasons students expressed were grouped under three main categories, namely teacher as a source of comfort, talking to a teacher is motivating, and test items and specifications.

Table 5: The reasons why individual speaking test is favored

Why individual test is preferred	Frequency
A. Teacher as a source of comfort	10
* Positive teacher attitude is comforting	6
* Talking to a familiar teacher is relaxing	4
B. Talking to a teacher is motivating	7
* You can talk freely without any limitation caused by a partner	4
* It is easy to focus without the distraction of a partner	3
C. Test items and test specifications	8
* There is note-taking time	4
* It is more academic and serious	4

4.2.3.1. Teacher as a source of comfort

One of the main reasons for the participants' high opinions of the individual oral test results from the teachers' positive and encouraging attitudes towards them during the tests, which causes the participants to view teachers as a source of comfort. As participants took several speaking tests before the present study, they mostly base their reasons on their previous speaking test experiences at AIU. Having been tested by examiners who had friendly and favorable attitudes towards them, some participants showed a preference for the individual speaking test, as can be understood from the interview excerpts below:

P3: *"I feel better talking to a teacher than talking to a friend because teachers always smile and encourage me to do my best and say better than with my friend. In this test with you, it was also like that. I feel somewhat shy with my friend but I feel more comfortable talking to my teacher."*

P8: *"All my speaking can be comfortable with teachers. All of teachers are really polite with me."*

Another significant factor that relieves students' test anxiety and helps them feel comfortable is being tested by a familiar teacher. This point is clear in the participant's comment below, which was a response to a question asking how she feels while being tested in an individual test:

P13: *"Öğretmene göre biraz değişiyor. Tanıdığım öğretmen olunca biraz daha rahat hissediyorum. Konuşmam ona göre şekilleniyor. Mimik ve jestleriyle rahatlatıp devam etmemi sağlayabiliyor. Şimdi sizi tanıdığım için sınav gayet iyiydi mesela." (It depends on the teacher. I feel more relaxed when I'm with a familiar teacher. My speaking is shaped based on that. The teacher can help me feel relaxed and continue my speaking thanks to her facial expressions. For instance, my test with you was quite good since I know you.)"*

One of the participants believes that his feeling of comfort results from the fact that the teacher already knows the way he thinks and speaks:

P4: *“Also if I know the teacher before, I feel better because she knows my ability, she knows how I talk, she knows how I think. And this situation makes me feel better when with teacher.”*

Additionally, being examined by a familiar teacher aids one of the participants in showing his speaking skills in English better since he feels quite relieved without a partner in a speaking test. A familiar teacher allows the participant to support his point with all the ideas that come to his mind:

P5: *“In our test, I know you. It was okay and I could speak everything on my mind. But on the exams with different teachers I forget something because I feel nervous really.”*

4.2.3.2. Talking to a teacher is motivating

Some of the participants who opt for an individual oral test state that being tested by a teacher without the company of a partner is relaxing and brings about motivation to proceed talking since they do not have to limit themselves in terms of mentioning all their ideas with the worry of dominating their partner. An excerpt related to this point is as follows:

P7: *“Talking with individually is better like you can show all your performance with teacher. You can talk freely alone without a partner. In the other one you can't because you try not dominating somebody.”*

An individual speaking test also does not cause the participants to feel worried about what their partner is going to say during the test. Therefore, when they talk to a teacher only in a speaking test, participants can express their ideas freely without the possibility of a partner who might say their ideas before they have the chance to express them. Thus, participants become relaxed and motivated to share their ideas with the examiner. The following example illustrates this point:

P12: *“Hocayla birebir konuşurken karşımdaki kişinin söyleyecekleri hakkında endişeye düşmeden fikirlerimin hepsini rahatça söyleyebilirim. Arkadaşımın*

benim fikirlerimi benden önce söylemesine dair bir stres de olmaz hem.” (While talking to a teacher, I can talk about all my ideas comfortably without being worried about the things that my partner is going to say. In that way, I will not be stressed due to the fact that my partner might say the ideas that I am hoping to say.)

As a speaking test, involving the interaction of two test-takers requires both students to build the conversation together by contributing to each other’s ideas, meaning that test takers are supposed to follow what their partner says. This point is another reason why the individual oral test enables the participants to concentrate only on their own performance and to be encouraged to talk, rather than having to keep track of what their partner is saying. The student comments below provide examples with regard to this point:

P5: *“In the individual test, as I said just telling your ideas and it is good to focus on it and you don’t think about your partner and what he is thinking about. I think it is an advantage of the test with a teacher.”*

P7: *“I can’t focus on all my ideas fully with partner. You thinking about your friend and about yourself and it is hard to do a good performance, it is like for me. But with teacher it was better for me to focus and talk about my ideas.”*

4.2.3.3. Test items and test specifications

Since the individual speaking test in this study includes three sections, two of which involve written opinion questions with a one-minute note-taking time before each answer, some of the participants find the individual speaking test better and easier than the paired test. The reason why they think written opinion questions are better is due to the fact that they can brainstorm ideas, organize them, and think of vocabulary that they can use during the note-taking time just before they start to talk. When the participants were asked whether or not the questions in both test types had any effect on their test type preferences, they stated the following responses:

P4: *“Written questions are better because I will think in one minute how will I talk, which phrases I will use.”*

P7: *“Questions in the tests with teachers are not so hard actually, they are so easy. Teacher giving you one minute to write or to think and it is like for one minute you can do everything.”*

While the test specifications of an individual speaking test conducted in this study call for a kind of monologue speaking performance of the test-taker which is assessed by an examiner, the test specifications of a paired test require the interaction of two test takers which is assessed by an examiner. With regard to this point, the person that participants talked to in both oral test types had an influence on their test type preferences. Whereas participants think that the individual speaking test is more academic and serious, they consider the paired test to be informal and too simple, thus they state that they paid less attention and effort to the paired test. On the other hand, the participants note that they take individual speaking tests seriously and try to use academic words. Below are some interview excerpts regarding this point:

P3: *“...while talking with friends you try to be like American accent or British accent like “How is it going, How are you” something like that. I mean you are not very serious with your friend. With teacher, however, you feel like more academic.”*

P22: *“Böyle daha çok dikkat etmek durumundasın, daha hızlı düşünmek zorundasın öğretmenle olan sınavda. Ben kullanacağım kelimeleri ve gramer yapılarını daha doğru söylemeye çalışıyorum ve daha yüksek seviye kelimeler kullanmaya dikkat ediyorum mesela. Mustafa'yla olan sınavla karşılaştırdığım zaman öğretmenle olunca sınavı daha ciddiye aldığımı fark ettim.” (You need to be careful and think fast in a test with a teacher. For example, I try to say the words and grammar structures correctly, and use higher level words. When I compare the test with a teacher to the one that I took with Mustafa, I realized that I take the tests with a teacher more seriously.)*

4.2.4. Why paired speaking test is not preferred

The reasons stated by the participants for their preferences for an individual speaking test also revealed the negative opinions of participants with regard to the paired speaking test, which influenced their preferences. Based on the analysis of the

interviews, the following reasons were found and put into two main categories, as illustrated in Table 6 below:

Table 6: The reasons why paired speaking test is not favored

Why paired speaking test is not preferred	Frequency
A. Partner as a source of test anxiety	15
* You cannot or might not show your speaking ability well with a partner	9
* Your partner might make fun of you if you cannot talk well	2
* Talking to an unfamiliar partner is stressful	4
B. Test items and test specifications	4
* It is a new type of test	2
* Test questions including pictures are too simple and not serious	2

4.2.4.1. Partner as a source of test anxiety

Some of the participants who opted for the individual speaking test stated that there is the prospect of being paired with a dominant partner who might not give them the chance of showing their speaking performance in a future paired speaking test. They expressed this concern even though they said that they did not have such an experience with their partners in the paired test administered in this study. The possibility of a dominant partner who does not allow them to talk enough is a source of worry for some of the participants, as can be understood from the student response given below when he was asked which test type he would prefer for a future test and why:

P12: *“Arkadaşın senden daha baskın olması bir dezavantaj olabilir. Senden daha fazla konuşarak ve sana konuşma fırsatı vermeyerek senin performansını göstermene engel koyabilir ki bu da sınavda daha çok stresli olmana neden olur.”*
(A partner who is dominant in the test might be a disadvantage. By speaking more than you and by not giving you the opportunity to talk, your partner might prevent you from showing your performance, which makes you feel more stressed in the test.)

Due to the possibility of not being able to talk enough in a paired speaking test because of his partner’s dominance, one of the participants clarified his source of concern, which is getting a low score in the test, as can be understood from the interview excerpt below:

P4: *“Maybe partners will dominate me and they won’t give a chance to me to talk much. If I have a very talkative partner, I will not have a chance to talk maybe. And I will get the bad marks.”*

Moreover, some of the participants stated that they felt worried that during the exam their partner might say the ideas that they were hoping to say, which would lead them to speak less than they could in an individual speaking test. This can be understood from the below student responses that were given when asked which test type they would prefer for a future test and why:

P5: *“In the test with teacher. Because, for example, in the exam with David I became some nervous because maybe I am not gonna talk anything. I thought he will talk about all the good ideas first and tell my ideas.”*

P4: *“If I give the test alone, maybe I can make much more ideas than with my partner because my partner can say what I was thinking. Then I will think “what should I add?” I had this feeling while talking to my friend.”*

Another reason why a partner in a speaking test is considered to bring about nervousness is because of the possibility of losing face and being mocked by the partner after the test due to the mistakes the test-taker might make while speaking in the exam. Whereas making mistakes in an individual speaking test is viewed as a learning step, mistakes made in a paired test are regarded as a source of worry. The following student comment clarifies this point:

P9: *“The job of a teacher is teaching students and showing them their mistakes so I don’t feel afraid of making mistakes but a friend can laugh at me, can make fun of me after the test maybe.”*

Some of the participants stated that an unfamiliar partner would cause them to feel uncomfortable in a speaking test, as is clear in the following student comment:

P9: *“I know Evander before so it was relaxing for me. If there was another person, I would feel shy and uncomfortable.”*

Feeling uneasy in a paired speaking test with an unfamiliar partner results from the prospect of being criticized by the partner according to one of the participants:

P12: *“Tanımadığım bir kişiyle bir konuyu tartışırken belki benim fikirlerimi eleştirebilir. O yüzden kendimi pek rahat hissedemem bu durumda.” (While discussing a topic with a person I don’t know, he/she can criticize my ideas. That’s why I can’t feel relaxed in that situation.)*

In addition, one of the participants stated that he would not feel relaxed with an unfamiliar partner since he cannot use humor, as he could with a familiar partner. The following excerpt reveals this point:

P7: *“If you know your friend better for me because if I know my friend, she is my friend or he, I’m like kind of starting to be like using humor, my humor, joking, like this. But with a different student I don’t know well, I can’t make jokes. Maybe he will get angry. Then, I can’t be very comfortable with a different person.”*

4.2.4.2. Test items and test specifications

One of the aspects of the paired test that was criticized by two participants was that they were assessed through a new question type that included pictures. Since they were not familiar with that type of question, the participants stated that they were not at ease while talking about them, as can be understood from the student comments below:

P4: *“Also picture question is my first time so I was more comfortable with written one.”*

P12: *“Resimli sorular beni biraz zorladı. Farklı geldi. Biraz daha stresliydim alışık olmadığımdan dolayı.” (The questions with pictures posed a challenge for me. They were different. I was stressed because of not being used to them.)*

On the other hand, Participant 4 hints that he might change his ideas about picture questions if he gets more practice with them:

P4: *“...maybe I need more practice with pictures.”*

Moreover, the same participants who had negative opinions of picture questions added that the picture questions in the paired test are too simple to deepen and develop their ideas, which limits their talking. In addition, they stated that that question type did not seem serious enough. The following excerpts from the interviews reveal this point:

P4: “...pictures are like for primary school, simple and you can’t improve your ideas enough.”

P12: “Resimli soruları daha basit ve ciddiyetsiz buldum ve bu yüzden kendimi daha çok kısıtlanmış hissettim açıkçası.” (I find picture questions simple and less serious. For that reason, I felt limited.)

4.3. Differences in Foreign and International Students’ Oral Test Type Preferences

This section contains both quantitative and qualitative data regarding the paired or individual speaking test type preferences of Turkish and foreign students with the aim of revealing differences in their oral test type preferences. The data analysis results with regard to the differences between Turkish and foreign participants’ reasons for their oral test type preferences did not allow the researcher to illustrate those reasons in tables like the previous section because the researcher could not obtain several reasons why the participants favored or did not favor each test type. Therefore, the reasons stated only by foreign learners and only by Turkish learners for their preferences in oral test types were presented under the same headings without any particular groupings.

4.3.1. The number of Turkish and foreign students favoring paired and individual oral tests

The number of Turkish and foreign students who prefer paired and individual speaking tests are illustrated in Table 7 below:

Table 7: Turkish and Foreign Students’ Speaking Test Type Preferences

Participants	Speaking test types	Frequency
Foreign	Paired test	5
	Individual test	5
Turkish	Paired test	8
	Individual test	3
	Not a certain test type preference	1

Based on the number of foreign and Turkish participants who favor paired and individual speaking test, it can be said that half of the foreign participants show a preference for the paired test while more than half of the Turkish participants opt for the paired test. In addition, the other half of the foreign participants favor individual tests whereas less than half of the Turkish participants prefer individual speaking tests. Moreover, only one Turkish participant does not have a specific oral test type preference because his test type preference is significantly dependent on whether or not he is going to take a future paired test with a familiar partner. That's why, based on this factor, his test type preference varies.

4.3.2. The reasons stated by only foreign students for their oral test type preferences

The reasons for oral test type preferences given in this section belong only to the foreign participants, which reveals the difference in their test type preferences from those of Turkish participants.

Some of the foreign participants who favor paired speaking tests stated that they felt comfortable in the paired test since they believe that it is less serious than an individual test, which allowed them to use informal language rather than academic language and it also allowed them to use humor. The following excerpt reveals this point:

P6: "For example when you are talking with a friend you can make jokes. When you talk with teachers, you should be serious and you shouldn't use street words, informal words. You should use more academic words. When you are talking with your friends, you can use street words and you can joke, you can do what you want."

One of the reasons some of the foreign participants cited for their individual speaking test preference is that they find expressing their ideas to a teacher easier than doing so with a partner since they believe that a teacher can understand the meaning they are trying to communicate even if they use incorrect language or mispronounce some words

while speaking in the test. However, they think that there might not be an ease of communication with a partner. The related student comments are as follows:

P3: *“Maybe my friend, she is also a student like me studying English maybe some time she doesn’t understand me but my teacher of course she understands me. Even I said wrong vocabulary, wrong grammar she will also understand me.”*

P5: *“Even if I have a bad pronunciation, you can understand me. But for example David I think I thought that he could not understand some words that I said and I was like confused, nervous.”*

In addition, some of the participants stated that they can use high level words that they know comfortably only while talking to a teacher as they think that a partner might not know those words, which might cause a communication breakdown during the test.

P4: *“Also you can use the phrases that you learn in the lessons with the teacher because you don’t know that your friend will understand this. Your teacher will absolutely know about it.”*

Similarly, one of the participants mentions the possibility of not being able to understand what his partner means:

P3: *“...and sometimes my friend might use advance vocabularies and I don’t understand.”*

One of the participants from Egypt who shows a preference for the individual speaking test stated that he considers the paired test to be disadvantageous as he notes that his partner dominated the conversation and said the ideas that he was planning to say before he could. The reason why he let his partner talk more and initiate the conversation was due to the gender of the partner. As his partner was a female participant, he allowed her to take the initiative during the test. Therefore, he emphasized in the interview that he would prefer a male partner in a future speaking test and that he prefers an individual test. The following interview excerpt clarifies this point:

P3: *“I couldn’t talk a lot today because my friend said all my opinion so it is disadvantage to do a conversation with your friend. Actually I wanted to start talking but she started speaking and talked all my opinion and I didn’t have anything to say and I just tried to say the same with other meaning. A felt a bit anxious. She was fast. I cannot say all my ideas because she already said. Because she is a lady I let her start before me. I wish next time I will do conversation with men, not women because next time I will be faster than my friend.”*

Similarly, Participant 10, who is from Mozambique, stated that the gender of his partner in the paired test posed a challenge for him because he felt uncomfortable with talking to a female. The reason for his nervousness while talking to a female partner resulted from the fact that he studied in a single-sex school before he started AIU. Below is his comment regarding this issue:

P10: *“I feel comfortable when I’m talking to a man different than when I’m talking to a girl. It’s because I came from a single-sex school and I don’t have like you know the interaction with a girl in the classroom, that’s why sometimes I didn’t feel comfortable in the test with my friend.”*

However, Participant 10 believes that he will adapt to his new environment in spite of his educational background. That’s why he stated that he prefers a paired test for a future test although he was uncomfortable with his female partner in the paired test. In fact, his preference for the paired test type was affected by a stronger factor which was mentioned in one of the previous sections. Here is the student’s comment about his belief in adapting to his new school environment;

P10: *“I’m from a single sex school, it’s a difference. But I’m trying to deal with language school here. I think I can change.”*

4.3.3. The reasons stated by only Turkish students for their oral test type preferences

The reasons for oral test type preferences given in this section belong only to the Turkish participants, which show the differences of their test type preferences from those of the foreign participants.

All of the Turkish participants who favor the individual speaking test stated that they did not find the test that they took with a partner serious and academic, which led them to put in less effort and pay less attention in order to have a good performance in the test than they normally do in an individual speaking test. The following example is one of the participant's comments about this point:

P13: *“Arkadaşımla konuşurken günlük hayat kelimeleri oldu genelde hep. Akademik kelimeler yerine daha basit kelimeler ve kısa cümleler kurdum genelde çünkü arkadaşla olunca sınav çok ciddi gelmedi bana.” (I mostly used informal words while talking to my friend. Instead of academic words, I used simple words and formed short sentences because I did not take the test with my friend seriously.)*

Another negative aspect that was stated by some of the Turkish participants about the paired test is the possibility of being paired with a partner who has better speaking skills, which might cause the participants to feel discouraged and bad about their own performance in the test. A related student comment is given below:

P12: *“Karşımdaki kişi güzel konuşursa ve ben düşüncelerimi onun kadar iyi şekilde ifade edemezsem, bu kez utanabilirim güzel konuşamadığım için. çünkü kendimi o kişiyle kıyaslayıp, kıskanabilirim. Sonuçta o kişi de benim gibi İngilizce öğrenen bir kişi. O yüzden karşımdaki kişi benden daha iyi konuşursa ve ben konuşamazsam kendimi kötü hissederim. Bu sebeplerden dolayı bir öğretmenle olan sınavı tercih ederdim.” (If the person I'm talking to speaks well and I can't express my ideas as well as she can, I might feel embarrassed because I can compare her with me and I might get jealous. Actually, she is also a person who is*

learning English like me. That's why if she can speak better than me and I can't speak well, I feel bad. Therefore, I prefer a speaking test with a teacher.)

Another participant who is in favor of the individual speaking test maintained that the stress he experiences while talking to a teacher during the test gives him more encouragement to do his best. Hence, he tries to use complex grammar structures while speaking in individual speaking tests. This point is illustrated by the following extract:

P22: "Ama öğretmenle olan sınavda daha düzgün konuşmaya, daha zor gramer kullanmaya çalışıyorum. Stresin negatif olduğu gibi pozitif bir yönü de var. Elimden gelenin en iyisini yapmaya beni zorluyor bir yandan da ne kadar gerilsem bile." (But in a test with a teacher I try to speak properly and try to use more complex grammar structures. Stress has also a positive side in addition to being negative. It pushes me to do my best although it makes me nervous, as well.)

As can be concluded, this chapter contains the analysis of semi-structured interviews with the participants which shows that the paired speaking test is favored more than the individual speaking test. Moreover, with regard to the reasons lying behind the learners' oral test type preferences, it has been found that learners not only state the reasons why they opt for an oral test, but they also state why they do not prefer the other oral test type. Hence, the reasons behind the participants' oral test preferences were presented under four subtitles. Finally, the research results have revealed some quantitative and qualitative differences between international and Turkish participants.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to shed light on both Turkish and international students' preferences with regard to oral test types, namely individual and paired, with the purpose of finding out which oral test type is favored more by the students in an international private university's school of foreign languages in Turkey. The study also aimed to reveal the reasons lying behind the students' oral test type preferences and to find out whether or not there are any differences between Turkish and international students' speaking test type preferences.

In this chapter, the findings of the study are discussed and compared with the results of the studies mentioned in the literature review. Moreover, some practical implications for the testing and assessment of speaking have been put forward. Each research question will be presented in subtitles and the answers to the questions will be given based on the findings of this study and finally the conclusion of the study will be presented.

5.1. Which Oral Test Type-Individual or Paired-Is Favored More By Test-Takers?

The results of the present study have revealed that the paired speaking test is preferred by most of the participants (by 13 participants out of 22), which shows that the paired oral test is favored more by test-takers compared to the individual speaking test. This finding is consistent with Együd & Glover's (2001) research findings which show that all 14 of the test-takers in their study were in favor of the paired oral test. The reason why all of the participants in Együd & Glover's (2001) study opted for a paired test might result from the fact that test-takers were required to share their opinions about the paired speaking test type after they took only a paired test for the study. As the participants were not given the opportunity to compare individual and paired speaking test types, they all stated positive opinions about the paired test in the interviews after they took only the paired oral test. Since test-takers in the present study took both a paired and an individual speaking test and were offered the chance of comparing their experiences in both test types, it is not surprising to find out that only one test type is not preferred by all of the participants. Although the paired oral test has been found to be more popular among the participants in this study, it is natural that an individual oral test is also favored by some test-takers although they are not the majority of the whole participation group.

Despite being in line with the results of the study mentioned above in the ELT literature, the present study's results do not support the findings of the studies conducted by Kanga (2012) and Marochi (as cited in Kanga, 2012) which show that most of the test-takers preferred an individual speaking test when they were given the chance of experiencing both oral test types. In terms of its participant group, Kanga's (2012) study is similar to the present study since both studies include participants from various countries although the origins of the participants in both studies are mostly different from each other. For that reason, it can be said that although the present study and the study of Kanga (2012) contain a participant group consisting of students from numerous cultures, the results of both of the studies yielded inconsistent findings in terms of the popularity of individual and paired speaking tests among both participant groups. This might result from the fact that the origins of the participants in the present study are significantly different from the origins of the participants in Kanga's (2012) study. While the biggest amount of the participants in Kanga's (2012) study are from Saudi Arabia and China, the largest proportion of the participants in this study are from Turkey. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the oral test type preferences of both groups are influenced by their origins.

It can be argued that the reason why the paired speaking test was found to be more popular than the individual speaking test format in this study is that the curriculum of AIU's School of Foreign Languages is based on the communicative language teaching approach. As lessons at AIU contain activities where students communicate and where tasks are completed through communication in pairs and groups, it is not very surprising that participants in the study show a preference for the paired speaking test format although they have not experienced a paired oral test as a speaking test before. Since the participants are involved in communicative speaking tasks in which they interact with their peers, especially in Listening and Speaking lessons, they are already familiar with a speaking task type that is performed with the interaction and collaboration of a partner. Therefore, it can be put forward that there are more proponents of paired oral tests compared to the individual speaking tests in this study due to the impact of the teaching approach adopted by the school administration.

Moreover, for most of the participants, all speaking tests they experienced prior to this study have been intimidating and a cause of anxiety, which they stated in the semi-

structured interviews. For that reason, it can be asserted that the majority of the participants have already associated individual speaking tests with feelings of stress, anxiety, and fear based on their previous experiences. When they had a chance to experience a paired test through the process of this research, they realized that a speaking test in which they talk to a peer like they do in their regular English classes is not as stressful as an individual speaking test. In other words, associating the individual speaking tests they had already taken as part of the assessment system at AIU with negative feelings can be argued to be a reason why the individual speaking test is favored less than the paired speaking test according to the results of the present study.

5.2. What are the Reasons for Learners' Preferences for Paired and Individual Oral Tests?

The results of the semi structured interviews with the participants have revealed several reasons why the participants opt for the paired speaking test or the individual speaking test. In addition to the reasons why they are in favor of an oral test type, the participants also stated some reasons why they do not prefer the other speaking test format. Therefore, the analysis of the learners' speaking test type preferences also revealed several reasons why they do not prefer individual or paired speaking tests. When all the reasons stated by the participants for and against individual and paired speaking tests are compared, it can be clearly seen that a factor which is considered to be positive by the proponents of one oral test type is viewed to be negative by the proponents of the other oral test format. In other words, depending on the side taken by the test-takers, the same aspects are perceived differently. Hence, one element that is thought of as a facilitator for a good performance by the supporters of one speaking test type is interpreted as a hindrance to a good performance and a relaxed test atmosphere by the proponents of the other speaking test format. To illustrate this point, while "talking to a partner" is regarded as a source of comfort by the participants favoring a paired test, it is considered to be a source of anxiety by the test-takers who prefer an individual speaking test. Similarly, whereas "talking to a teacher only" is a source of relief for the supporters of individual tests, it is thought of as a source of anxiety by those in favor of paired speaking tests. The same result applies to the test items and specifications of both oral test formats as well. The underlying reason why the test-takers have expressed opposite ideas and feelings about the same aspects can be said to result from learner differences in terms of their learning styles and personal characteristics. Based on the participants'

willingness to interact with a peer or a teacher during a speaking test, it is possible to infer that learners who prefer paired oral tests are collaborative learners, whereas those in favor of individual speaking tests are competitive learners. According to Grasha & Riechman's (1974) learning style classification, collaborative learners are aware that learning is achieved through sharing ideas and opinions with peers, and they consider the classroom to be a place for social interaction. On the other hand, based on this classification, competitive learners regard the classroom as an environment that consists of winners and losers and they learn with the aim of performing better than their peers. Accordingly, it can be argued that the speaking test preferences of the learners in this study are reflections of their learning styles in the classroom. Those preferring paired oral tests perceive their partner as a facilitator of their performance and feel very comfortable and happy to interact with a peer in the paired oral test, hinting that they are collaborative learners in the classroom. On the other hand, the participants who elect an individual speaking test believe that they cannot perform well while interacting with a peer in a speaking test and think that they can do their best freely and comfortably without the presence of a partner. It can be said that those students in favor of individual tests want to be the leader and the controller in the exam and feel content when they can make their own voice heard. Therefore, they state negative opinions about interacting with a partner in a speaking test. Hence, it is obvious that the participants in favor of individual speaking tests are competitive learners, which affects their oral test type preference.

Moreover, it can also be said that the participants who opt for paired speaking tests might be strong in visual and interpersonal intelligence based on Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences theory. This is believed because the test-takers who show a preference for the paired test stated that the picture questions as well as the collaboration and interaction with their partner in the paired speaking test were influential factors in their oral test type preferences.

One of the significant results of the study that is worth highlighting is the importance of familiarity for both groups of test takers who are in favor of individual and paired speaking tests. The participants show a preference for an oral test type since they regard being paired with a familiar partner or being tested by a familiar teacher is advantageous due to the fact that it considerably relieves their anxiety. Similarly, those who do not

favor a paired test for a future speaking test state that they are worried about being paired with an unfamiliar partner and the test-takers who do not prefer individual oral tests express their concerns about being tested by unfamiliar teachers. All of these statements which clearly reflect the significance of familiarity support the claims of Foot (1999) who asserts that being matched with an unfamiliar partner might increase learners' test anxiety. For that reason, it can be maintained that being familiar with the interlocutor in a speaking test is an essential factor for teachers and institutions to take into consideration. In light of these results, it can be suggested that test-takers should be tested by their own class teachers or should be paired with their own familiar classmates in order to relieve their test anxiety and provide them with a stress-free atmosphere. In that way, in addition to being provided with a comfortable test environment, the learners will also achieve higher test scores than they do normally with an unfamiliar partner or teacher, which is demonstrated to be possible by O'Sullivan (2002). O'Sullivan's study revealed that test-takers paired with a familiar partner got higher test scores compared to a test which they took with an unfamiliar partner. Hence, it is of great importance to provide learners with a relaxing test atmosphere in which they can show their speaking ability comfortably so that they can do their best to achieve success in speaking tests.

In addition to the element of familiarity in both oral test types, the great majority of the reasons and justifications proposed by the participants during the semi-structured interviews for their oral test type preference are based on what leads them to feel comfortable. To illustrate, the participants preferring the paired test regard the test environment and their partner as a source of relief. Moreover, the reasons they stated with regard to test items and specifications of the paired test enable them to feel relaxed since the visuals in the paired test were described as being easy to talk about. Similarly, those who opt for an individual test consider the teacher to be a source of relief and state that they can express their ideas freely and comfortably without the presence of and limitations caused by a partner. Furthermore, note-taking time was a determinant and comforting aspect for the test-takers in favor of the individual test. Thus, it is obvious that the primary reason lying behind learners' specific justifications for their oral test type preferences is feelings of comfort. Unlike the preferred oral test types, it can be clearly seen from the participants' stated reasons that the oral test formats that they do not favor are the ones that bring about test anxiety. Hence, it is apparent that a test type is not favored by test-takers when it results in stress and test anxiety. When the close

relationship between test anxiety and test performance is taken into consideration, it can be clearly seen that the participants will show a better performance and achieve higher scores in the oral test type that they are in favor of, as it is also stated by Zeider (1998). Zeider (1998) proposes that “reducing the effects of anxiety on performance is viewed as one possible avenue to improving the test performance of underachieving examinees” (p.4). Therefore, the primary concern for test developers and teachers should be trying to offer learners an oral test type in which they do not feel test anxiety so that they can show their best performance. Since it might be considered too demanding for institutions to administer individual oral tests only for the learners who favor that method and to administer paired oral tests only for those who favor paired tests, the learners might be required to take both an individual and a paired test in an academic year. In that way, an institution’s speaking tests will not be biased towards one group of learners.

As it is clear from the participants’ comments about the individual speaking test type, those preferring individual tests stated that the positive and friendly attitudes of teachers during the exam make them feel comfortable, while those who do not favor the individual test said that a negative teacher attitude is an important factor that increases their anxiety. It can be argued that these results have significant implications for the assessment of speaking, which teachers as examiners should pay attention to. Regarding the importance of the behaviors and attitudes of teachers, Aiada (1994) states in her research that a strict way of teaching might cause the learners to feel anxious and it creates a very uncomfortable atmosphere in the classroom. If a strict way of teaching creates an intimidating learning environment for the learners, as Aiada (1994) states, the negative and unfriendly attitudes of teachers during a speaking exam will be much more intimidating for the test-takers because a speaking test itself is already a source of anxiety for the majority of learners. Therefore, it is essential for teachers to have a positive, encouraging, and friendly attitude towards the test-takers during a speaking exam so that the students feel relaxed and can show their best performance. In practice, it can be recommended to those in charge of a school’s testing and assessment unit to highlight and remind teachers of the importance of showing a welcoming attitude to the learners during an exam. For that reason, in the standardization sessions before the speaking exams, the importance of adopting a positive attitude towards the learners

should be emphasized just as much as the importance of grading the learners' speaking skills consistently.

5.3. Are Foreign and Turkish Students' Speaking Test Type Preferences Different?

While the majority of the Turkish participants show a preference for a paired speaking test, the number of foreign learners who are in favor of paired and individual oral tests are equal. Based on this result, it is evident that cooperation and collaboration with a peer is valued considerably by Turkish learners who believe that they can perform better and feel more relaxed with a partner in a speaking test. In addition, it is also possible that the majority of the Turkish participants are visual learners who enjoy colorful images and pictures because the learners stated that the question type with pictures in the paired test was a significant factor for their paired speaking test type preference. However, one speaking test type is not superior to the other based on the international learners' oral test type preferences. This might result from the fact that foreign participants in the study come from several different countries with different educational backgrounds and cultural values that might be influential in their oral test type preferences. On the other hand, it can be asserted that because Turkish learners have similar educational backgrounds and share the same cultural values, one oral test type which is the paired test is preferred over the individual oral test. As a result, in terms of the number of Turkish and foreign learners who prefer both oral test types, it is obvious that there is a quantitative difference between foreign and Turkish learners' oral test type preferences.

With regard to the qualitative differences between Turkish and foreign participants' test type preferences, there are some differences between the groups because some of the reasons were cited only by foreign learners, while other justifications were provided only by Turkish learners. One of the differences between Turkish and foreign learners' oral test type preferences results from how they view paired tests. Foreign participants who favor the paired test stated that they found the paired test less serious and more informal, which was comforting for them, while Turkish learners who prefer an individual test said that the paired test was not serious and academic enough, so they did not try their best to perform well. The reason why the foreign learners who preferred the paired test regarded being able to speak informally in the paired test as positive and relaxing might be due to the fact that they felt like they were in a real, life-like

conversation in which using academic words would be unnatural. For that reason, it is possible that the nature of the test allowed them to feel relaxed with a peer, which was different from the serious atmosphere of an individual test. On the other hand, one reason why Turkish learners who favored the individual test did not find the paired test serious enough might be due to the paired test exam experience that they had in this research process. Because the paired test that they took for this study did not have any influence on their actual scores, it is not surprising that some learners did not take the paired test seriously. However, unlike the paired test that the learners took for the first time in this study, they have taken the individual test, which affects their scores, several times. Hence, it can be concluded that the fact that the paired test conducted for this study was not an exam that influenced the test-takers' overall scores might be the reason behind the Turkish learners' negative opinions of the paired test.

In the interviews with two of the foreign learners, it was found that the gender of their partner had an impact on their feelings during the test, as well as on their oral test type preferences, which is a point with regard to partner characteristics that calls for attention. One of the Egyptian learners stated that he let his female partner dominate the conversation and take the initiative since she was not a male peer. This might result from the culture of the participant because as it is stated on the website www.intercultures.gc.ca, Egypt is a conservative country and for that reason men are supposed to minimize their eye contact and keep some distance while talking to women. Hence, it can be said that the Egyptian learner did not want to be involved in the conversation with his partner because he felt that he needed to keep some distance with her. Thus, it is possible to put forward that the gender of the partner mattered due to the cultural rules of the Egyptian learner. Similarly, the male participant from Mozambique stated that he felt uncomfortable with his female partner during the test because he studied in a single-sex school in high school, which shows that the gender of the partner is an influential factor due to the learner's previous learning experiences. Hence, due to the educational background of the learner, the partner's gender plays an important role in causing the test-taker to feel intimidated during the test. With regard to the influence of the partner in a paired speaking test, O' Sullivan (2000) maintains that one of the concerns for test writers is the effect of the interlocutor since the age, gender, and the personality of an interlocutor are likely to considerably influence the performance and score of a test-taker. For that reason, it is apparent that the learners from Egypt and

Mozambique would be at a disadvantage in terms of the scores they would get due to their pair match if it had been a real exam.

One of the justifications given only by the Turkish participants to explain why they do not favor the paired test is due to the prospect of being paired with a partner who has better speaking skills than they do. In such a situation, the participants said that they would feel bad and discouraged to talk. This point also raises an issue about partner characteristics which is in line with the claims of Foot (1999) who puts forward that “unless the candidates are well-matched, their attempts to sustain a discussion are likely to be, and often are, faltering and desultory, and the outcome, for them a sense of frustration rather than of achievement” (p.40). As it can be understood from the statements of Turkish and foreign learners, partner characteristics play an important role in their oral test type preferences. This suggests that teachers should take learner characteristics and differences into consideration while matching the test-takers for a paired test so that they can perform at their best in a relaxing test environment.

5.4. Conclusion

The present study values what the learners in a multicultural learning setting think about the two oral test types in question-paired and individual- and aims to reveal their oral test type preferences so that teachers and test developers can become more aware of learners’ speaking test choices. That way, they can provide a testing environment in which the learners do not feel intimidated and can show their best possible speaking performance. Therefore, the present study aims to find out which speaking test type, namely paired or individual, is preferred more by learners and what the reasons behind their oral test type preferences are. In addition, it is aimed at revealing any differences between Turkish and international learners in terms of their oral test type preferences. According to the results of the semi-structured interviews with the participants, the paired test is favored more than the individual speaking test, although there are still some learners who opt for the individual speaking test. This shows that there is not a certain type of test that is seen as meeting the needs and expectations of all learners. When it comes to the reasons behind the learners’ preferences, the study demonstrates several factors for why paired and individual speaking tests are favored, in addition to presenting why both test types are not favored. Based on the data gathered from the

learner interviews, it is clearly seen that learners perceive the same elements with regard to one oral test format differently. To illustrate, while the learners who opt for the paired speaking test propose that a partner enhances their test performance, the test-takers favoring the individual test state that a partner prevents them from showing their real speaking ability. The same point applies to the test items and test specifications of both test types. For instance, while picture questions in the paired test are described as triggering language production by the participants preferring the paired test, they are seen as posing an obstacle to the participants who favor the individual oral test by limiting their language and idea production. Finally, the results show both quantitative and qualitative differences between Turkish and international learners' speaking test type preferences. Whereas the paired test is favored by the majority of the Turkish participants, the number of foreign learners who opt for individual and paired oral tests are equal. Moreover, while some justifications for oral test type preferences were given only by Turkish learners, some of the justifications were cited only by the international learners. This reflects the qualitative differences between both groups of learners.

Present findings demonstrate that learner differences play an important role in influencing oral test type preferences since the reasons stated by the learners to justify their preferences seem to vary depending on their learning style, intelligence type, cultural values, gender, speaking proficiency level, and previous learning experiences. Since the study suggests that learner differences are influential in their oral test type preferences, the relationship between the learner preferences and the learner characteristics that make them unique can be investigated deeper in future studies. Such studies could reveal a clearer picture of the relationship between learner differences and their oral test type preferences. In practice, the results of the study suggest that teachers and test developers should assess learners by using both oral test types instead of by using only a paired or only an individual oral test type since each oral test type has its supporters, although the paired test is favored more. In conclusion, the present study recommends educators to take learner preferences into consideration and to assess learners' speaking skills based on an assessment type that they favor so that their test anxiety is relieved and their test performance improves.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Individual Speaking Test Questions with Follow-up Questions

- 1. Do you think that young people nowadays are better communicators than their parents? Why or why not?**
 - a. Are young people better at face-to-face communication? Why or why not?
 - b. Are young people better at using social networking websites? Why or why not?

- 2. Do you think that a university education is essential to be successful? Why or why not?**
 - a. Is it possible to have a good job without studying at university? Why or why not?
 - b. What are some qualities of successful people?

- 3. Do you think that there are many advantages of living in a big city? Why or why not?**
 - a. Do you think there are any disadvantages of living in a big city?
 - b. Which one do you prefer? Why?

- 4. What are the benefits of travelling?**
 - a. Is travelling to foreign countries better than travelling in your home country?
 - b. Are there any disadvantages of travelling?

- 5. What are the qualities of a good student?**
 - a. Are you a good student? Why or why not?
 - b. What are the qualities of a good teacher?

- 6. Do you think that studying abroad has more advantages than studying in your home country? Why or why not?**
 - a. What kinds of problems do students have when they study abroad?
 - b. Which country would you like to study in?

- 7. What are the advantages of knowing a foreign language?**
 - a. What are some of the problems you've experienced while learning a foreign language?
 - b. How might knowing a foreign language help you in the future?

- 8. How does eating fast food affect people's health?**
 - a. Why do students usually prefer fast food?
 - b. What kinds of food make us healthy? Why?

Appendix B. Paired Speaking Test Opinion Questions (Part 2 and 3)

Part 2

1. Do you think that it is important to learn about the cultures and traditions of other countries? Why or why not?
2. Do you think that money can buy happiness? Why or why not?
3. Do you think failures and mistakes can help a person become successful? Why or why not?
4. Do you think that homeschooling is better than traditional schooling? Why or why not?
5. Do you think that it is important to learn about the cultures and traditions of other countries? Why or why not?
6. Do you think that tourism affects the environment positively or negatively? Why?
7. Do you think watching TV affects family life positively or negatively? Why?

Part 3



1. What difficulties might these people have while doing their jobs?
2. Which job might give more pleasure in terms of life satisfaction and helping other people?

Appendix C. Semi-Structured Interview Questions

In English

1. How did you feel when you were talking to your friend in a speaking test?
2. How did you feel when you were talking to an examiner in a speaking test?
3. What's the difference between talking to a friend and talking to an examiner?
4. What do you think were the advantages and disadvantages of the individual speaking test?
5. What do you think were the advantages and disadvantages of the paired speaking test?
6. When you compare both tests, in which test do you think you showed a better speaking performance?
7. For a future speaking test which of these two test types would you like to have? Why?
8. What's your ideal speaking test?

In Turkish

1. Bir konuşma sınavında öğretmen yerine bir arkadaşınla konuşmak sana nasıl hissettirdi?
2. Bir konuşma sınavında öğretmenle konuşmak sana nasıl hissettirdi?
3. Bir öğretmenle konuşmakla bir arkadaşınla konuşmak arasındaki fark nedir?
4. Tekli konuşma sınavının pozitif ve negatif yönleri nelerdir?
5. Eşli konuşma sınavının pozitif ve negatif yönleri nelerdir?
6. Her iki sınavı karşılaştırdığın zaman, hangi sınavda daha iyi bir performans gösterdiğini düşünüyorsun?
7. Gelecekteki konuşma sınavların için hangi sınav tarzını tercih edersin? Niçin?
8. Sana göre ideal bir konuşma sınavı nasıl olmalıdır?

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