

Teaching to Test or Communicate

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Abstract

This study addresses the controversial question of which is more effective; teaching to the test, or teaching to communicate. It also highlights the viewpoints of some scholars about tests in different regions of the world; the Middle East and the West. The content of the research embedded in this article shows that there are a number of teachers who still believe in teaching to test following the traditional method, while some others think tests -especially in the elementary phase- cause anxiety, chaos and disappointment, and should be ruled out as a means of assessing students. In the Arab World, tests are still considered the main criterion by which students prove eligible to move to upper classes and get admitted to university programs. To provide the readers with a more concrete grasp of the discussed viewpoints, a questionnaire has been distributed among sixty-five male and female students taking English courses in the Foundation Program at Ibri College of Applied Sciences- the Sultanate of Oman. The results, implications, and applications will be discussed throughout this article while tackling the two major controversial issues: teaching to test or communicate.

Keywords: administration, anxiety, cloze test, communicative approach, curriculum, hinder, impose, old-fashioned, promote, reformation, stimulating

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Introduction

“Testing crushes creativity, narrows the curriculum, doesn’t focus on what students actually learned, and leads to unfair evaluation of students, with results that do not predict useful things” (Phelan & Phelan, 2013, para.3).

Some decades ago, academic institutions-schools, colleges, and universities- were considered prestigious places, where students and teachers, both, enjoyed and boasted belonging to. Teachers were treated as respectful models and figures in the society. Moreover, they were considered the elite: well-educated, smart, genuine, and -to some extent- played the role of social reformers. Students, on the other hand, were very motivated and industrious.

Students were dedicated, industrious, and hardworking in classrooms, as well as in daily-life activities that depended on skills such as discussion, debates, arguments, and all sorts of communication. This paper highlights a serious, heated and controversial issue: teaching to test, or communicate.

Literature Review

Change and Reformation in an ideal world should lead to good results. They should be viewed as positive signs of a developed and successful society. If a problematic challenge hinders a certain ongoing process of some society, things have to be reconsidered by making some alternations or amendments. One of the most important fields to continuously reconsider is “Education”.

The educational system in all countries should constantly be checked, reviewed and be in harmony with the latest technological and revolutionary era. In the past, teaching took place in simple rooms with black boards and white chalk. The syllabus taught was suitable for that time, though lacked technology. Tests, for instance, were written by hand, or by simple typewriters. Nowadays they could be done by utilizing the latest technology, which is a good step on the way of modern innovation in education. Reconsidering the whole educational system includes many fields: materials, methodology, and teachers.

Some teachers feel they are not free enough in performing their jobs in the way they see beneficial and successful, and believe that school administrations play a great role in imposing too many instructions and regulations which, almost always, hinder, rather than facilitate work. On the other side, some teachers feel that they enjoy teaching very much, and have no problems with administrations at all, as they are used to doing whatever they are asked to; pleasing their principals. Should certain criteria be considered upon recruiting teachers?

Some countries do not recruit teachers unless they have a license, and have undergone some tertiary training courses in several areas of teaching, such as evaluation, testing, methodology, etc. Japan, the USA, and the UK, for example, have certain conditions and criteria before recruiting teachers, whereas in some countries teachers don’t have to have a license to teach, and as soon as they get their degrees, they stand in the queue for a variety of jobs, including teaching, and -sometimes- with no interviews. These criteria are behind high-caliber, or low-level teachers.

Low-level teachers normally lack educational training in areas related to their careers. They seem -on the surface- dedicated in classrooms, and what they care about much is assuming control of the class, and finishing the material on time, otherwise, they might be accused -by their principals- of wasting time on trivial things throughout the semester, not on teaching. In this case, in order to protect themselves and be in a good shape, they do not think of any innovative ways or activities to teach outside the prescribed curriculum :giving students the opportunity to take part in class discussions, whether in pairs or groups or conducting debates to discuss some issues related to the topic in hand: local or international. What might be said is that education will never get promoted as long as old-fashioned hands resist development and modernization.

Some old-fashioned administrations consider group work in classrooms a waste of time, or dishonesty, or teachers lack assuming control over the class. It is normal to have some noise while having group discussion, but that is really more rewarding and could give students the chance to improve their communication skills in an authentic atmosphere so as to be more capable of coping with the world after school. Teachers who are comfortable to work under old-fashioned administrations are normally good at designing traditional tests, and believe they are the only way to check students' comprehension. Students, on the other hand, spend a lot of time memorizing material, mainly to pass and/or avoid punishment by the teachers, or principals, or both. Learning by heart does not create brilliant and smart people in the society: it's just parroting.

Schools are supposed to be places where children get knowledge, manners, and principles to hone their personalities. They are expected to be useful members in the society and the leaders of tomorrow. So, by exposing them to dialogues, debates, and discussions they could be placed on the right track that goes hand in hand with education. One possible way of teaching is asking questions.

Questioning, stimulating, and eliciting responses work best in the absence of testing environment. There is not much need for prior knowledge to get new life skills, or a certain amount of education about a certain field; it is carried out by utilizing logical questioning (Taylor, (n.d). para. 18).

Moreover, encouraging argumentative analysis, as well as critiquing, give tremendous results. It should be emphasized that doing is a form of sharing; students should be given the chance to conduct seminars, or small meetings (based mainly on asking questions) to ventilate their talents, knowledge, and thoughts, as thinking is the threshold to success. In this stage, an experienced, more patient and open-minded educator should observe their performance and see the nature of questions, answers, and comments -just in case- to help pave the way for them to become successful and sharp-witted future communicators in the society, not only at school. However, if they are threatened by the ghost of tests, things will differ, and this will put them under pressure and anxiety. Teaching in a passive environment normally creates unmotivated students and teachers, as well.

To be fair enough, some teachers are so ambitious and do believe in change, innovation, exploration, re-creation, but they face concrete walls of refusal from their stubborn direct administrations. What about giving teachers more freedom in classrooms?

By freeing teachers, and making students more secure, the evil of tests decreases, or even vanishes. Security leads to exploration, innovation, critical reflection, and more vivid and fruitful participation in open debates. In order to get more healthy educational institutions, the whole educational system should be re-considered, re-judged, and fully customized. Tests will have the priority to be re-judged when it comes to reconsidering the educational process.

The researchers are not utterly against conducting tests; on the contrary, they-tests- may be of great benefit and importance, as are considered among some other criteria to evaluate students' performance, bearing in mind they should be designed in a way to check how well students have acquired throughout the past period of time, and be considered as a guide for future design of courses and curricula.

Good tests provide valuable information and they can and should guide us in designing our courses and our curriculums. When learning goals are clearly defined and reliable assessments are aligned with them, "teaching to the test" is not only good, it is exactly what we should be doing" (Phelan & Phelan, 2013).

Moreover, tests should be valid and reliable. In case some academic problems arise, there should be someone to question, consult, or blame.

In fact some instructors, especially in higher education, bear some of the blame. They seldom enroll in regular and ongoing assessment training courses. What they do is just personal tries. They should work harder on the tests they write for their students; revised, and checked well before approval. Moreover, they should seek the help of more experienced senior colleagues in the same department, as students' benefit is the ultimate priority. President Obama has a viewpoint about school structure.

In the light of some decline in the educational sector in the USA, president Obama has suggested: Let's offer schools a deal. Give them the resources to keep good teachers on the job, and reward the best ones. In return, grant schools flexibility: to teach with creativity and passion; to stop teaching to the test; and to replace teachers who just aren't helping kids learn (Phelan & Phelan, 2013, para. 2).

President Obama has noticed that schools should take the initiative and exert efforts to save whatever possible in re-shaping their structure to be prestigious places as they should be. Could we be more optimistic one day to witness test-free academic institutions?

What if children of elementary stages have no tests at all? Just imagine a spacious hall with hundreds of books on different subjects, stories, videos, teaching aids, games, dancing corners, swings, cooking programs, comfortable chairs and couches, and an attached lounge with soft drinks, snacks, etc. All of that is carried out under the supervision of well-experienced teachers who teach them the basics, and give them enough time to explore their inner personalities and talents by guiding them to the fields of their interest. From time to time, children are asked to exchange information with their classmates, share ideas, and have reciprocal tasks. Later on, they would -with the assistance of their teachers- conduct small debates

and dialogues, tell stories, and discuss matters of interest on/ or related to what they have come across so far. All of that is done without mentioning the word “Test”. Gradually, they would be able to discuss particular matters that belong to the local society where they live, and about life issues in advanced stages.

Shouldn't these early grades be a time to discover, play, and explore?”(Asks Los Angeles art teacher Ginger Rose Fox. “We talk all the Time about making our kids ‘college and career ready’ - even at such a Young age. Let's make them ‘life ready’ first. But I guess that doesn't fit into our test obsession.”(Walker, 2014, para. 4).

This is a sort of innovation in the teaching system, but what about a process conducted the other way around?

Just imagine a school of the same level with the same number of students, but it is test-oriented, where children live under pressure and nightmare of tests; no debates, no discussions, and no in / out-of- class activities. Teachers' ultimate aim is to see their children learn by heart what they get in class. They seem to work like machines, especially in memorizing poetry, or short speeches. It is noticed that in some areas in Jordan many students tear up their books as soon as they finish the academic year, as they were suffering a lot, and considered school-life miserable and hectic. It is likely that they remember little or none of what they had learned throughout the whole year. This shows that what they were taking in classrooms was just indoctrination: just for the sake of tests, not life-long knowledge or skills. What comes to mind now is why some teachers and their students struggle in classrooms?

Sometimes teachers, as well as their students, spend so much time in classrooms struggling to find indirect -referential- answers of some abstract questions on certain subjects. They all sweat to succeed, and when finally get the answer, they no longer refer to that content in the future. What if they had enjoyed that time discussing some issues about what interests them and their society, or people around the world? They would get better knowledge throughout discussions and debates, rather than by tough and rough tests which usually put them under too much pressure and chaos. In Jordan again, as well as many Arab countries, students and their families live under pressure for the whole year when their children have the Public High School Exam. From the society's view point, those who pass are looked at as successful individuals, while those who fail become useless, and considered bad examples, although they might have stunning life skills. Tests do affect negatively students' psychological conditions when they fail. One possible way to offer students independence, security, and more freedom in the classroom would be following the communicative approach.

The communicative approach allows students to share most of the burden of the communication process in classrooms: approximately eighty percent. The teacher plays new roles; teacher, facilitator, counselor, or sometimes parent. He/she raises a certain point, and then students talk, express themselves, and -ultimately- reach a solution. The teacher observes, interferes -if need be-, feels excited to see his/her students deal with the topic enthusiastically. This way aims at encouraging students express themselves in a democratic way that will prepare them for a promising future. Outdated teaching methods do not promote students' communicative skills.

The traditional ways of teaching, especially the Grammar-Translation Method, still exist and the local society, sometimes, plays a conspicuous role in keeping that continue. Some parents believe that it is the best way for their children to get knowledge, as it shows how clever they are at memorizing rules and vocabulary, although they normally explain rules of the target language in their first language (L1; mother tongue). This occurs in some remote places in Japan and the Middle East, particularly in the Arab World. Teachers, on the other hand, feel relaxed by seeing their students memorize the rules and explain them in both: target and native languages. Some old-fashioned teachers do the same in classrooms; explaining grammar rules in English and L1. This does them-students- severe harm when they join institutions of higher education.

By just teaching to the test, students become inactive, feel a big gap between the methodology their teachers used, and what they face when joining colleges and universities later on.

We doubt it that students like to see their teachers teach only to the test. They suffer a lot and live under extreme pressure and anxiety, as they have to memorize things before coming to class the next day and answer the teacher's questions. If they don't, they might be punished, sometimes corporally, not only by the teacher, but also by their parents. It is wise to always bear in mind that teaching is a comprehensive process.

The teaching process should be accomplished under the umbrella of co-operation and comprehensiveness; all are responsible for carrying out this mission. When teachers feel they are supported by a strong administration, they do their job without fear or blame. Principals should be trusted and given a considerable range of freedom so as to first free their teachers to become more creative and understanding of what they are doing in class, and second, they -principals- can manage things properly, and work in a healthy environment. Other principals, on the other hand, keep asking their teachers to refer to old tests and stuff, and ask students to memorize and keep in touch with the past experiences.

There are, of course, ways to teach to the test that are bad for kids and that occur now and then in schools. Principals afraid that their scores would look bad, have forced their teachers to go over the same questions from old tests day after day, to prepare for some state assessment. But there is no evidence that this happens often. Strong teachers usually raise a ruckus, administrators back down, and everybody goes back to the traditional lesson reviews that all good teachers use (Mathews, 2006, para.3).

The material taught, as well as tests, should be of a high value and quality, not just simple and naive pieces of information that have no effect on the personality and well-being of students. Consider deeply the following quotation, and see whether it enhances students' knowledge.

We can readily summon facts from lessons drilled into us decades ago. When we were in grade school: Columbus sailed on the Nina, the Pinta, and the Santa Maria. The Civil War ended in 1865, Gregor Mendel was a monk. But does knowing these facts reflect mastery of important concepts and skills? Of course not. (Phelan & Phelan, 2013, para.4).

Teaching should not be limited to only testing; it should be a useful tool for students to communicate, initiate and create. They might become -one day- important figures in their countries: thinkers, life- makers, philosophers, etc. Let teaching have no boundaries and focus on creating brilliant youth who can lead and/or explore the world. Let communication have the ultimate priority in our life so as teaching could become more reliable, respectful, and competitive. “Any teacher who teaches only to the test, or any district that tries limiting its teachers to doing so, is surely misguided. But the occasional or lazy teacher doesn’t mean the tests are themselves the problem” (Lineberry, 2012, para. 1).

Gerald (n.d.) believes that some forms of direct test preparation -small doses- is considered quite healthy for students in the classroom, and it may well contribute to providing valid results later on. Certain tests could be tailored according to some students’ needs: Cloze Test.

Some prospective students are asked to perform certain tasks in order to know how well they perform certain logical structures. The Cloze Test aims at assessing students’ proficiency, mainly those joining US institutions. This kind of tests shows how creative and thoughtful students are. It helps them think logically before inserting the missing words into the spaces “The cloze procedure is one of a variety of test formats frequently used today to assess the language proficiency of foreign students studying in the United States” (Hinofotis, 1987.p. 412). Co-operation between native and non-native teachers of English should be reflected in the academic domain in order to have a wide variety of vocabulary and expressions to use when exposed to Cloze-Test exams.

Native and non-native teachers should work hard and take training courses on teaching methodology. This gives them power and skill for answering some questions raised by some distinguished students in classrooms. For non-native teachers, exposing to English native speakers and mixing with them in their daily-life activities gives them not only a good chance to know more about cultural things, but also academic issues. With the spread of technology, things have become easier and more flexible; one can talk with people in English speaking countries via Skype, etc. (Arntsen (n.d.). p. 6).

Can all tests give a clear-cut sign of students’ level? Some educators believe in conducting valid tests to check students’ comprehension of the material they have been taught, and believe that test results measure learning and comprehending the material given in class. They, on the other hand, think that students become confused and dissatisfied with any sort of tests that have been written haphazardly.

Ideally, scores and grades reflect a student’s learning of a particular body of content, content we intended them to learn. Assessments (e.g., tests, quizzes, projects, and presentations) that are haphazardly constructed, even if unintentionally, can result in scores and grades that misrepresent the true extent of students’ knowledge and leave students confused about what they should have been learning. (Ramsay & Raynak, 2016, para.1).

Teaching is a marvelous and enjoyable career; it should be carried out by willing, brilliant, open-minded, understanding, licensed, well and highly qualified teachers. It is not just having

children in a premises called “school” with an image called “teacher”. Teachers should be able to cope with the latest academic training: attending workshops, seminars, symposia, lectures, etc. They should adopt and follow diverse ways of teaching that help students communicate, not memorize. They should think that constructive “Change” in any field does really count. Let teachers not indoctrinate and be more flexible and innovative, and encourage students to explore, in / and out-of- classroom experiences. Fanselow (1987), urges teachers all over the world to follow new and different ways to carry out this process; teaching. He urges teachers to break the rules if that gives positive results. It is not how much time spent on exercises that tires students; it is the quality of knowledge they get. Too many drills do kill the desire and will to learning. “Over-reliance on ‘drill and kill’ and test-preparation materials is not only unethical in the long-term but ineffective in the short term” (Gerald, (n.d.). para.26).

Teachers, especially at colleges or/ and universities understand the negative effect of exams on their students’ psychological conditions. To avoid that, some of them –teachers- ask students to write essays instead, or sometimes conduct open-book exams. By doing so, students would avoid the anxiety of exams. The exam phobia has made some countries rethink and reconsider their teaching systems and evaluate them in a better way. They strongly believe that their development will not proceed without a powerful educational system. Finland, for example, has followed a very astonishing model in teaching.

Finland seems to have adopted a more logical and economical strategy in the teaching system, particularly testing. “Finland doesn’t waste time or money on low-quality mass standardized testing. Instead, children are assessed every day, through direct observation, check-ins and quizzes by the highest-quality “personalized learning device” ever created - flesh-and-blood teachers ” (Doyle, 2016, para. 7).

Students in Finnish schools enjoy their time very much; they don’t have to worry about tests or punishment or any kind of stress. “In classrooms Finnish children behave naturally, and feel no much difference between homes and schools, and expected not to have school phobia. They can enjoy their time freely, although the teaching day is relatively short” Doyle, (2016, para.8).

Finnish programmes highlight the psychological side of students, particularly children and give them time to live their natural childhood. Doyle (2016, para.8) concludes:

In class, children are allowed to have fun, giggle and daydream from time to time. Finns put into practice the cultural mantras I heard over and over: “Let children be children”, “The work of a child is to play,” and “Children learn best through play”.

The Finnish experience in teaching has become amusing and entertaining. An American professor from Harvard University admires the educational system Finland adopts and advises Americans openly to take it as a model. This witness comes from the top of the academic hierarchy. If this professor hadn’t studied the Finnish experience deeply and critically, he wouldn’t have given his precious piece of advice to his nation. “Learn from Finland, which has the most effective schools and which does just about the opposite of what we are doing in the United States.” (Doyle, 2016, para. 1).

Children in Finland are well-taken care of; Schools do offer some outdoor physical exercises and training almost hourly; this is beneficial for refreshment of the brain, body, and spirit. The following quotation gives the difference between American and Finnish schools.

Unlike in the United States, where many schools are slashing recess, schoolchildren in Finland have a mandatory 15-minute outdoor free-play break every hour of every day. Fresh air, nature and regular physical activity breaks are considered engines of learning. According to one Finnish maxim, there is no bad weather. Only inadequate clothing.”(Doyle, 2016, para.5).

It seems that the success of Finnish schools is due to the ultimate support from the government and society. In addition, schools have prestigious status and work independently; they allow nobody to interfere with their job, unlike many schools in the Arab world.

Methodology and Procedures

In order to get a clear idea about what is taking place in classrooms -teaching to test or communicate-, the researchers have conducted a survey. The participants are students at Ibrī College of Applied Sciences- the Sultanate of Oman.

Ibrī College of Applied Sciences is one of six colleges that belong to the Ministry of Higher Education in the Sultanate of Oman; a peaceful Arab country on the Arabian Gulf. It is a specialized college with Information Technology (IT), Design, and Business majors. Students admitted are all locals -Omanis- and come from diverse regions of the vast country, while a small number comes from the Comoros in the light of cultural cooperation. In General, they are of high GPAs. Their L1 is Arabic. Before they join their majors, they all have to take a placement test, and those who meet the College requirements directly join their majors, but those who do not, have to take a remedial course for one semester, two, or more; depending on their results in the placement test.

In the Remedial Course, or as it is called here the Foundation Year Program (FY), students take the four skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking), and as they move into their majors, they also take two more advanced courses of English with a strong and condensed dose, as English is the medium of instruction in classrooms for all majors. This College is co-educational, and the majority of students are female. Teachers come from different countries in the world, and use English as Lingua Franca.

Results and Discussion

The aim of this study is to highlight two academic controversial matters; teaching to test or communicate. Moreover, it attempts to find out the differences and similarities between them. The following section sheds some light on the findings as appeared from a questionnaire done by students at a government college in the Sultanate of Oman. The study deals with three main topics; methodology, textbook, and assessment. This section represents the findings.

The population of the study consists of (65) students who belong to different regions in the Sultanate of Oman. They are all in the Foundation Year-FY- and between 18-19 years of age. All

were briefed about the questionnaire in detail and told it is voluntary.

Table 1: Shows students' responses in the Methodology part.

Q	yes	No
1	16	49
2	53	12
3	49	16
4	48	17
5_A	53	12
5_B	57	8
5_C	42	23
6	56	9
7	58	7
8	10	55

Table 1 shows students' responses to the first part- methodology- that consists of eight questions (shown in the questionnaire). It is clear that 16 out of 65 say that the teacher teaches them only for the test, whereas 49 say they are taught for promoting their communication skills. This shows that the teacher does care about students' communicative skills, as well as preparing them for the test. The second question that combines both: teaching for the test and practicing communication skills reflects students' internal wish to gain both altogether; test and communication.

How far do students feel they become under pressure if they are taught only for the test?

This is clear in the third question of the Methodology part-Table 1- that 49 admit they suffer from chaos and anxiety when they are taught just for the test; 75 % of the total.

What if students are free to choose the method of testing? Which would they prefer?

In fact, while conducting the study, students were told to be as frank as possible, and their answers will be top confidential. Question seven -Table 1-shows almost the reality inside themselves; 58(89.23%) out of 65, not only prefer, but would love to have a test-free system.

Moreover, in Table 1, it seems there is full harmony between students' responses to both questions: 7 and 8 in the way they look at tests. 84.61 % (55) refuse to have courses that focus only on tests for evaluation. West (2018, para. 7) clarifies this as follows:

Learning based on memorization and recall may improve student performance on tests, but fails to develop higher-level thinking skills. Furthermore, teaching to the test often prioritizes linguistic and mathematical intelligence at the expense of well-rounded education that fosters creative, research, and public speaking skills.

Table 1.2: Shows percentage of students' responses in the Methodology part.

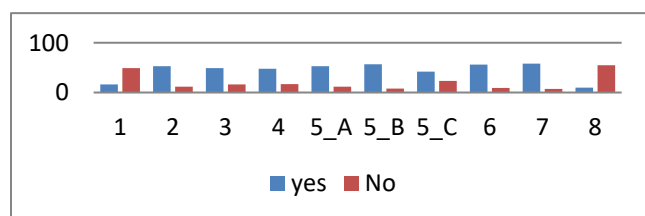


Table 2: Shows students' responses in the part of the textbook they study.

Q	yes	No
1	36	29
2	49	16
3	42	23
4	52	13
5	41	24

There is a triangle that covers the educational process; student, text-book, and teacher. The Following-table 2- sheds some light on the role of the textbook in this field.

Question 1-table 2- asks about whether the textbook is challenging and meets with students' ambitions. Just 36 (almost half) of the total number (65) say it really is. To be honest, as teachers who have been teaching this book for many years, we dare say that it is a strong one that encourages students to practice the four skills, and was chosen carefully.

It seems there is some contradiction in the student's responses regarding the textbook. Question 4 checks the effect of the textbook on their academic life skills and experience, as well as individual development. It seems that 52 praise it and agree that it has a positive effect on their life-long skills; 52(80%), whereas their response in question 1 was (36); 55.38%.

In fact students take 20 contact hours of English per week; 10 as general English, and 10 as academic. They are taught the four skills in the general English, while they take an essay writing in academic English. Depending on this, question 5 asks whether the number of contact hours is in harmony with the material covered per academic semester.

As shown in table 2, 41 students chose (yes), while 24 chose (no), which means that they have different perceptions regarding textbook.

Table 2. 1: Shows the percentage of students' responses in the textbook they study.

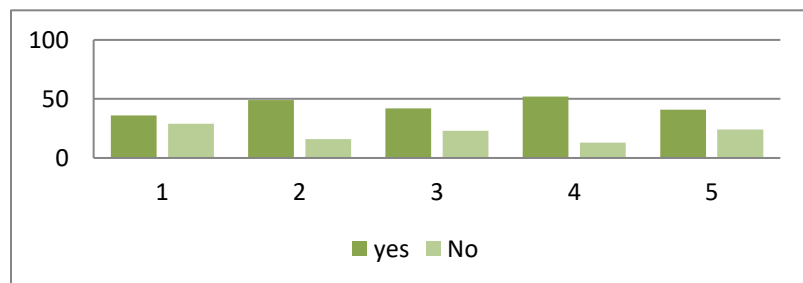


Table 3: Shows students' responses to questions three through six in the assessment part.

Q	yes	No
3	59	6
4	62	3
5	59	6
6	58	7

Table 3 covers questions 3 through 6 of the Assessment part. Question 3 asks whether students perform better in a free-test situation. The answers are amazing; 59 out of 65 answered positively, while 6 only answered negatively.

From a psychological view point, failing tests severely affects students' mood and attitude towards learning, which is clear in question 4.

Question 5 supports the theme of this paper: *Teaching to Test or Communicate*, which is reflected in their answers. They advocate debates, class discussion, conducting seminars and conferences which lead to self-confidence and self-esteem.

If the authors were free, they would exempt students from sitting for tests and teach via pure discussions and debates. Students, by nature, hate living under stress and anxiety; they prefer exchanging ideas, discussing issues that are authentic and related to daily life issues.

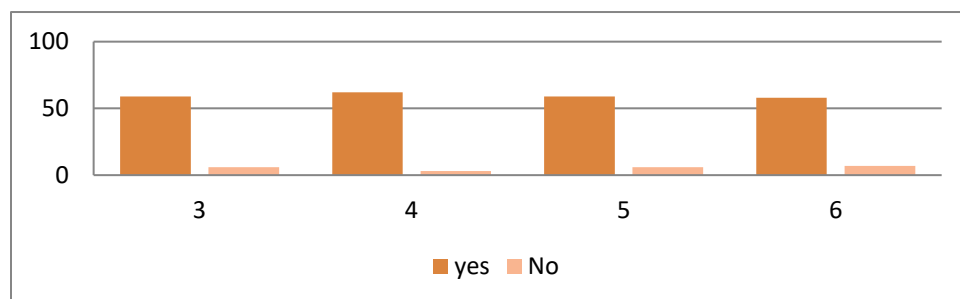
Table 3.1: Shows students' responses to questions 1 and 2 of the assessment part.

60	92.30%
63	96.92%

Question 1 asks clearly and openly about students' choices whether to be taught with the traditional or communicative method. It is surprising; 60 chose the communicative method, while only 5 chose the traditional one. Question 3 is also impressive; it promotes the communicative method almost unanimously: 63 preferred the communicative method to the traditional in the way they gain life-long skills.

Kennedy (2016, para. 4) concludes: "In CLT classrooms- communicative language teaching- students are grouped in cooperative structures and must take a much more active role than in more traditional methods. The teacher becomes more of a mentor and facilitator than a direct instructor".

Table 3.2: Shows the percentage of students' responses to questions three through six in the assessment part



Debates, class discussions, seminars, and conferences are normally conducted depending on speech, which means using the communicative approach, not the traditional. Students' responses support this in question 5 of the Assessment part. 59 responses are for the Communicative Method. Moreover, in question 6, 58 are for the communicative method, as well.

Table 3.3: Shows students' responses to questions 1 & 2 regarding the two teaching methods: Traditional and Communicative in the assessment part.

Q	Traditional Method	Communicative Method
1	5	60
2	2	63

Recommendations

In the light of this article, there should be some hints to consider:

- teachers should initiate a forum in the classroom for students to talk and express themselves freely and openly.
- students should not be put under the pressure and anxiety of exams, and if possible, exams should be cancelled in the primary phase, at least.
- teachers may try open-book exams, or writing research papers, instead.
- teachers should let their students feel secure, so as to exchange ideas with their classmates. Moreover, their viewpoints should be respected and accepted.
- in order to live in and practice an authentic atmosphere, students should have field visits to places and subjects mentioned in their textbooks—once a week, at least— to see things naturally - away from the hectic classroom routine.
- old-fashioned administrations should be given courses in modern administration and technology.
- good communication and encouragement achieve goals and good results.
- teachers should be selected carefully, especially for the elementary phase; as it is the base of creativity.
- for the senior phases, tests should be designed by expert teachers and psychologists.

Conclusion

This study dealt with two groups of academic viewpoints: teaching to test or communicate. Both are of great importance provided that students get the ultimate benefit. Exams are important and should not be underestimated, especially at the end of high school. They are considered a sign of legibility of joining higher education institutions. It should be emphasized that the aim of exams does not mean imposing more work or burden; they are essential in some cases, as they represent one major way of evaluating students' performance, without which, things get mixed up. I recommend that exams should be reduced in the elementary phases, and allocate much time for discussion and exchanging ideas, and conducting debates in classrooms.

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Appendices

Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect information for an article titled “Teaching to Test, or Communicate”.

This information will not be misused and you will not be identified.

Thank you for your co-operation.

الهدف من هذه الاستبانة هو جمع معلومات لمقالة بعنوان " التدريس لاجل الاختبار، ام لاجل التواصل".

لن يتم استخدام هذه المعلومات بطريقة غير لائقة.
ملاحظة: " ليس من داع لكتابة اسمائكم".
ليس ضروريا ان تكتب اسم مدينتك او قرينتك؛ فقط ضع اشارة صح في الفراغ المناسب
Male () ذكرFemale () انثى
City () مدينةRemote village () قرية نائية

1. Methodology

Please tick the right answer:

1. The teacher teaches us to prepare for the test, not communicate.

يقوم المدرس بتدريسنا لاجل الامتحان، وليس لتطوير قدراتنا التواصلية.

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. The teacher teaches us both: for the test and to improve our communication.

يقوم المدرس بتدريسنا لاجل الامتحان وتطوير قدراتنا التواصلية معاً.

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Teaching only to test puts students under pressure and causes anxiety.

التدريس لاجل الامتحان فقط يضع الطالب تحت الضغط كما يسبب له التوتر.

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. The teacher uses any methodology in the classroom: traditional, direct, grammar translation, eclectic (mixed methodology), communicative, etc.

يستخدم المدرس اي اسلوب تدريسي: التقليدي، اسلوب الترجمة الى اللغة الام، الاسلوب الانتقائي، التواصلية بمعنى ان يمارس الطلبة النقاش في غرفة الصف.

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. The teacher plays different roles in the classroom:

يلعب المدرس عدة ادوار في غرفة الصف مثل:

مدرس -teacher

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

يسهل الامور ويوضحها للطلبة ان تطلب الامر -facilitator

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

مستشارا للطلبة -counselor

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

-others? (Please mention).....

..... اي دور آخر للمدرس؟ اذكره من فضلك

6. Teaching to communicate, not to test, makes learning more enjoyable.

التدريس لاجل التواصل والنقاش، وليس لاغراض الامتحان، يجعل من التدريس عملية ممتعة.

Yes	
No	

7. If I were to choose, I would choose a test-free system

لو اتيحت لي فرصة الاختيار، لاخترت نظاما دراسيا بدون امتحانات

Yes	
No	

8. If I were to choose, I would choose a test-oriented system

لو اتيحت لي فرصة الاختيار، لاخترت نظاما دراسيا يركز على الامتحانات

Yes	
No	

2. The Textbook الكتاب

1. The textbook is challenging, attractive, effective, and meets students' ambitions.

الكتاب قوي، يجلب الانتباه، ويلبي طموح الطلاب

Yes	
No	

2. The textbook is designed mainly to fulfil the communicative approach activities i.e., group and pair work, miming, etc.

تم تصميم الكتاب بشكل رئيس ليعزز نشاطات التواصل كالنقاش الثنائي او في مجموعات داخل الفصل.

Yes	
No	

3. Students are tested on the material they learn in the classroom.

يتم اختبار الطلبة في المادة التي يدرسونها في قاعة الدرس.

Yes	
No	

4. The textbook enhances students' academic and daily life skills and experience, as well as individual development.

الكتاب الدراسي يعزز المهارات الاكاديمية والحياتية ويثري التجارب، كما يساعد في التطور والتنمية الفردية.

Yes	
No	

5. The number of classes is in harmony with the material covered per-semester.

يتناسب عدد الساعات الدراسية مع المادة المراد تدريسها في الفصل الدراسي.

Yes	
No	

6. The textbook has no offensive material or any items considered against local traditions.

الكتاب لا يحتوي على مواد مسيئة او مشينة تتعارض مع العادات والتقاليد المحلية

3. Assessment

1. Students can be effective and successful communicators if taught with

يمكن للطلبة ان يكونوا متحدثين بشكل مؤثر وناجح ان تم تدريسهم بواسطة:

Traditional methods الاسلوب التقليدي	
Communicative methods الاسلوب التواصلي والنقاشي	

2. Students gain long-life skills if taught with

يمكن للطلبة اكتساب مهارات مدى الحياة ان تم تدريسهم بواسطة:

Traditional methods الاسلوب التقليدي	
Communicative methods الاسلوب التواصلي والنقاشي	

3. Students perform much better in a test-free environment

يمكن للطلبة الابداع اكثر في جو خال من الامتحانات

Yes	
No	

4. Failing tests negatively affects the students' psychological attitude towards learning.

ان الرسوب في الامتحان يؤثر سلبا على الحالة النفسية للطلاب

yes	
No	

5. Debates, class discussions, seminars, and conferences promote students' self-confidence.

ان المناظرات، النقاش الصفّي، الندوات، والمؤتمرات تعزز ثقة الطلبة بانفسهم

Yes	
No	

6. Debates, class discussions, seminars, and conferences promote the students' global awareness.

ان المناظرات، النقاش الصفّي، الندوات، والمؤتمرات تعزز ادراك الطلبة لما يدور حولهم في العالم

Yes	
No	

This is quotation is not more than 40 words. It should not be block quotations. APA