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Perceptions of IELTS Test Takers towards Speaking in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

The current study aims to find out the perceptions of IELTS test takers toward speaking in Pakistan. The study is qualitative in nature. The study implies the use of a purposive and snowball sampling technique for the selection of the 10 participants in the study. The results of the study show that the IELTS test takers who had taken the test have positive and negative perceptions towards the speaking test environment, speaking test tasks, washback of the speaking test, speaking score, and time of the test. According to the findings of the study, IELTS test takers perceived enough time for discussion. Furthermore, the study shows that the feedback from the speaking not only encouraged the participants to improve their speaking and pronunciation but also helped them identify their speaking problems. Furthermore, the study discovered that test takers' positive perception of the IELTS speaking skill was influenced by the familiarity and ease of the topic in speaking. Because the study is limited to speaking, the results cannot be generalized; however, a more in-depth study of all four IELTS skills may be helpful in generalizing the results in the future.

| **Keywords:** | IELTS Speaking, Perceptions, Speaking Score and Time of Test, Speaking Test Environment, Speaking Test Tasks, Washback of Speaking Test |

Introduction

The current study's goal is to learn about IELTS test takers' attitudes toward the Speaking test. The current paper investigates the perceptions of IELTS test takers because it provides an opportunity to find out the reliability and practicality of the speaking test in IELTS and know the authenticity of the test for L2 learners. The main objective is to provide a deeper understanding of the IELTS speaking test based on the perception of IELTS test takers. Speaking is a very important oral skill for L2 learners, and from the perspective of international education, speaking in English needs to be at an intermediate or advanced level to overcome the speaking barriers. In the IELTS, speaking is the 4th part, which consists of a face-to-face interview between the test taker and the examiner. The IELTS interview lasts for 15 minutes and is recorded. The interview is divided into three phases. Phase one is the warm-up and introduction phase, in which the candidate is asked short questions for familiarity purposes. The questions are about self-likes and dislikes, culture, food, family, work, country, and hobbies. Phase two is more focused, with IELTS test takers given a topic on which they must speak. The questions in this section are more focused on determining the test takers' reasoning abilities. The time for this section is 2-3 minutes. The third phase of the speaking test consists of discussion or dialogue between the examiner and the test taker. The discussion is linked to the topic of phase 2.

Literature Review

Many studies have found that language tests have become highly significant in any society and play roles in professional development. Leung (2006) states that language tests like IELTS and TOEFL are used in many situations in many countries, especially in professional life. Shoamy (2001) writes that international students have to take the IELTS test to secure an admission or scholarship in a country where the education system requires English proficiency. However, the test takers need to have passion and interest to score well

in tests, as Zhengdong (2009) describes that the higher the stakes of the test, the stronger the urge to engage in the test preparation. The research shows that tests like IELTS have a big impact on the social and academic lives of test takers, as Green (2000) states that these tests have a big impact on the lives of test takers. There are studies like Myford (2012), which explores the perceptions of IELTS test takers about L2 examiners and presents some interesting findings like examiners of L2 countries showing leniency towards L2 test takers from their own country. Brown (2003) investigated the IELTS Speaking test and identified issues with speaking on behalf of interviewers. Murray (2012) points out that IELTS test takers' perceptions may have significant implications for the validity of the IELTS test.

Material and Methods

This section of the study briefly discusses the materials and methods used for the data collection and data analysis. The nature of the study is qualitative and descriptive. The study used purposive and snowball sampling techniques for the selection of samples and collection of information. Purposive sampling is used to obtain rich information, and the snowball sampling technique is used to obtain information from participants about other participants as chain referral. The study is based on the perceptions of 10 IELTS test takers toward speaking among those who have taken the test. To achieve the objective, the study uses an online survey questionnaire to find out the perceptions of IELTS test takers. The participants (six male and four female) of the study were those graduates who have completed their PhD degrees in Social Sciences, Natural Science, Business Administration, Finance, and Commerce from China and the UK and are currently serving at AJK University and the University of Kotli AJK. To maintain the study's ethics, participants are assigned an alphabetical code (A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J) to represent their identity while remaining anonymous. The researcher identified the participants who met the criteria using the colleagues' contacts at the universities and invited them to participate in the survey as volunteers. Those participants who agreed were sent the questionnaire and were requested to submit the filled-out form via the email provided on the questionnaire.

Results and Discussion

Table 1
Demographic Data of the Participants

Participants	Sex	Age	Education Level	Field of Study	Country of Study	Purpose of IELTS	Year of IELTS	IELTS Score	Affiliation
A	M	35	PhD	Phy	china	HS	2013	7	UoK
B	F	35	PhD	Che	china	HS	2012	6.5	UoK
C	M	35	PhD	PA	china	HS	2014	6.5	UoK
D	M	40	PhD	PA	china	HS	2013	6	UoK
E	M	35	PhD	BA	china	HS	2012	6	UoK
F	F	30	PhD	FM	china	HS	2014	6.5	AJKU
G	M	30	PhD	ECO	UK	HS	2013	7	AJKU
H	F	35	PhD	Eng	AUS	HS	2012	6.5	AJKU
I	M	41	PhD	Phy	UK	HS	2014	6.5	AJKU
J	M	35	PhD	Che	UK	HS	2015	7	UoK

The data given above shows that the IELTS test takers had diverse demographic backgrounds. The participants were both male and female, aged 30 to 40 years old, and came from China, Australia, and the United Kingdom, where they completed their PhDs. The data also shows that the main purpose for which they had taken IELTS was higher studies (HS), and the years in which they had taken IELTS were from 2012–2015. The universities with which the participants are affiliated are the University of Kotli and the University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The participants were from diverse academic backgrounds, including science, business, social sciences, and commerce. The IELTS scores of the participants range from 6 to 7.5, showing their English language proficiency.

Existing English Speaking Skills

The participants were also asked to reflect on their current speaking abilities and in response to the questions they provided the following answers given in table 2

Table 2
Individual response of Speaking Skills Summary

No	Question	Low	Intermediate	High	Very High	Native Like
1	Current English Skills	4	3	2	1	0
		A,B,D,E	C,J,G	F,H	I	
2	Knowledge of Stress Pattern	3	5	1	1	0
		C,D,E	A,B,J,I	H	G	
3	Knowledge of English Syllable	6	2	2	0	0
		C,D,E,A,B,I	J,J	H,G		
4	Level of Vocabulary	2	3	4	1	0
		A,B	C,D,E	G,H,I	F	
5	Pronunciation	4	2	3	1	0
		C,D,E,G	A,H	F,J,B		
6	Knowledge of Computer	1A	2	5	1	0
		A	C,D	B,E,F,G,H	I	

The data given in Table 2 shows the individual responses of the participants in the study. The table reflects that the participants A, B, D, and E responded that their current English speaking ability is low; the participants C, J, and G responded to the question that their current English language skills are at an intermediate level; the participants F and H responded to the question that their current English language skills are high; and the table shows that only participant I perceived high English language skills. The data shows that in response to the statement of knowledge of stress, the participants C, D, and E responded that their knowledge of English stress is low, the participants A, B, J, and I responded that their knowledge of English stress is intermediate, the participants H responded that their knowledge of English stress is high, and only the participants I responded that their knowledge of the English stress pattern is very high. In response to statement 3, the participants C, D, E, A, B, and J responded that their knowledge of English syllable is low, the participants I and J responded that their knowledge of English syllable is intermediate, the participants H and G responded that their knowledge of English syllable is high, and no participants responded with very high or native-like knowledge of English syllable. The data shows the participants' responses to the statement about level of vocabulary, which is important for speaking, that the participants A and B have low vocabulary, participants C, D, and E have intermediate vocabulary, participants G, H, and J have high vocabulary, and only participant F has a very high vocabulary level. In response to the statement about pronunciation ability in English, the participants C, D, E, and G replied that their pronunciation in English is low; the participants A, H, and F replied that their pronunciation in English is intermediate; and the participants J, K, and L responded that their pronunciation in English is high. No participant responded that their existing pronunciation is very high or native-like. Moreover, computer skills are important for doing well in the IELTS test, so a question was included about the IT skills of the participants. In response to the statement, the data also shows that in response to the statement about existing knowledge of computer skills, the participants A responded that their IT skills are low, the participants C and D have intermediate skills, the participants B, E, F, G, and H have high computer skills, and the participant I has very high computer skills. The above table highlights the perceptions of the participants about their existing knowledge of English speaking and the important knowledge like syllables, stress, and vocabulary that is necessary for good and advanced level speaking in English. The data is presented in Table 3 to reflect the percentile differences of the participants in response to their responses about their existing speaking skills:

Table 3
Existing (%) English Speaking Skills of The Participants

No	Question	Low	Intermediate	High	Very High	Native Like
1	Current English Skills	40 %	30%	20%	10%	0%
2	Knowledge of Stress Pattern	30%	50%	10%	10%	0%
3	Knowledge of English Syllable	60%	20%	20%	0%	0%
4	Level of Vocabulary	20%	30%	40%	10%	0%
5	Pronunciation	40%	20%	30%	10 %	0 %
6	Knowledge of Computer	10 %	20 %	50 %	10 %	0 %

Table 3 contains an overall summary of responses reflecting the participants' prior knowledge and perceptions of their speaking abilities. The data given in Table 3 shows the individual responses of the participants in the study. According to the table, participants A, B, D, and E responded that their current English speaking ability is low, and that 40% of the participants had low speaking ability, 30% were at an intermediate level, 20% had high knowledge of their current English language skills, and only 10% perceived very high English language skills. Furthermore, according to the data, 30% of participants said their knowledge of English stress is low, 40% said their knowledge of English stress is intermediate, 10% said their knowledge of English stress is high, and 10% said their knowledge of English stress pattern is very high. In response to the statement, 60% of the participants said their English syllable knowledge is low, 20% said their English syllable knowledge is intermediate, 20% said their English syllable knowledge is high, and 0% said their English syllable knowledge is very high or native-like. The data show the participants' responses to the statement about vocabulary level, which is important for speaking, that 20% have a low vocabulary level, 30% have an intermediate vocabulary level, 30% have a high vocabulary level, and 10% have a very high vocabulary level. In response to the statement about their pronunciation ability in English, 40% of participants replied that their pronunciation in English is low, 20% replied that their pronunciation in English is intermediate, 30% responded that their pronunciation in English is high, and 0% responded that their existing pronunciation is very high or native-like. Moreover, computer skills are important for doing well in the IELTS test, so a question was included about the IT skills of the participants. In response to the statement, the data also shows that in response to the statement about existing knowledge of computer skills, 10% of participants responded that IT skills are low, 20% of participants are intermediate, 60% of participants have high computer skills, and 10% of participants have very high computer skills. The above table highlights the perceptions of the participants about their existing knowledge of English speaking and the important knowledge like syllables, stress, and vocabulary that is necessary for good and advanced level speaking in English. The above data gives us the exact situation of the IELTS test takers, their existing knowledge, and the level at which they are speaking English.

Perception towards IELTS Speaking Test Experience

Table 4
Perception towards IELTS Speaking Experience

Themes	Perception about IELTS Familiarity				
	Agree	Strong Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Speaking Test experience was good	A,I,J	C,D,E,F,G	0	B	H
IELTS Speaking Environment was conducive	C,D,H,B	A,J,I,,E,F,G	0	0	0
Good Acquaintance to IELTS Speaking	A,B	E,F,G,H	0	C,D,J	I
Motivations of IELTS speaking were good	C,D	A,I,J,E,F,G	0	B	H
Technology for speaking was good	H,B	C,D,E,F,G	0	I,,J	A

The data given in Table 4 shows the IELTS test takers' familiarity with the test. The data shows that the participants A, I, and J were having a good experience with IELTS, and the participants C, D, E, F, and G strongly agreed with the statement that they had a good experience with the speaking test. The data shows that no participant disagreed with the statement. Only one participant (B) disagreed with the statement that the test experience was good. The statistics also show that participant H strongly disagreed with the statement that her speaking test experience was good. The data shows that in response to the statement about the conducive environment for the IELTS speaking test, participants C, D, H, and B agreed, and participants C, D, E, F, and G strongly agreed with the statement that the environment was conducive for the speaking test. In addition, the data shows that no participant had a neutral or disagreeable view about the conducive environment. Furthermore, in response to the statement about prior acquaintance with IELTS, A and B participants agreed, E, F, G, and H strongly agreed, no participant had neutral views, C, D, and J disagreed, and I strongly disagreed. In response to the statement about IELTS motivations, participants C and D agreed, and participants A, I, J, E, F, and G strongly agreed that there were good motivations for IELTS. In addition, in response to the statement that the technology for speaking was good, the participants H and B agreed, the participants C, D, E, F, and G strongly agreed, no participant had neutral views, the participants I and J disagreed, and the participant A strongly disagreed with the statement. The above table presents the perceptions of the IELTS test takers who had taken the test, and the data shows that they have variations in their perceptions towards the environment of the speaking test. The data is also given in Table 5, showing statistical differences:

Table 5
Statistical % towards IELTS Speaking Experience

Themes	% of Perception about IELTS Familiarity				
	Agree	Strong Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Speaking Test experience was good	30%	50 %	0 %	10 %	10 %
IELTS Speaking Environment was conducive	40 %	60 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Good Acquaintance to IELTS Speaking	20 %	40 %	0 %	30 %	10 %
Motivations of IELTS speaking were good	20 %	60%	0 %	10 %	10 %
Technology for speaking was good	20 %	50 %	0 %	20 %	10 %

The data given in Table 5 shows the IELTS test takers' familiarity with the test. According to the data, 30% of the participants had good IELTS experience, and 50% strongly agreed with the statement that they had good speaking test experience. The data shows that no participant disagreed with the statement. Only 10 percent of participants disagreed with the statement that the test experience was good. The statistics also show that 10 percent of participants strongly disagreed with the statement that their speaking test experience was good. According to the data, 40% of participants agreed with the statement about a conducive environment for the IELTS speaking test, and 50% strongly agreed. In addition, the data shows that no participant had a neutral or disagreeable view about the conducive environment. Furthermore, in response to the statement about prior acquaintance with IELTS, 20 percent of participants agreed, 40 percent strongly agreed, no participant had neutral views, 30 percent of participants disagreed that they had prior IELTS acquaintance, and one participant strongly disagreed that he had a good acquaintance with IELTS. In response to the statement about IELTS motivations, the participants agreed, with 60% strongly agreeing that there were good IELTS motivations. In addition, in response to the statement, "The technology for speaking was good. The data shows that 30% of the participants had good experience with IELTS, and 50% strongly agreed with the statement that they had good experience with the speaking test. The data shows that no participant disagreed with the statement. Only 10 percent of participants disagreed with the statement that the test experience was good. The statistics also show that 10 percent of participants strongly disagreed with the statement that their speaking test experience was good. The data shows that in response to the statement about a conducive environment for the IELTS

speaking test, 40 percent of participants agreed, and 50 percent strongly agreed with the statement that the environment was conducive for the speaking test. In addition, the data shows that no participant had a neutral or disagreeable view about the conducive environment. Furthermore, in response to the statement about prior acquaintance with IELTS, 20 percent of participants agreed, 40 percent strongly agreed, no participant had neutral views, 30 percent of participants disagreed that they had prior IELTS acquaintance, and one participant strongly disagreed that he had a good acquaintance with IELTS. In response to the statement about the motivations towards IELTS, the participants agreed, with 60% strongly agreeing that there were good motivations towards IELTS. In addition, in response to the statement, "The technology for speaking was good," 20% of participants agreed, 50% of participants strongly agreed, no participant had neutral views, the participants disagreed, and the participant strongly disagreed with the statement. The above table presents the perceptions of the IELTS test takers who had taken the test, and the data shows that they have variations in their perceptions towards the environment of the speaking test.

Perception towards IELTS Speaking Test Time

Table 6
Perception towards IELTS Speaking Time

Themes	Perception about IELTS Speaking Time				
	Agree	Strong Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Speaking Test time was good enough for discussion on topic	A,B	C,D,E,F,G,H,I,	0	0	J
IELTS Speaking duration was enough to respond appropriately	C	A,B,D,E,F,G,H,I	0	0	J

The data given in Table 6 shows the perceptions of IELTS test takers who had taken the test at the time of the speaking section. The data shows that the participants A and B agreed with the statement that speaking test time was good enough for topic discussion. Furthermore, participants C, D, E, F, G, H, and I strongly agreed with the statement that the allotted time for topic discussion was sufficient; no participant had neutral or negative feelings about the statement; however, participant J disagreed with the statement that the allotted time was sufficient for discussion. Furthermore, the data shows that the participants agreed with the statement that speaking duration was good enough for responding appropriately. Furthermore, participants A, B, D, E, F, G, H, and I strongly agreed with the statement that the time allotted for answering the questions was adequate. The responses of the participants show that the IELTS speaking section was practical and economical enough to speak and discuss the topic.

Table 7
% of Perception towards IELTS Speaking Time

Themes	Perception about IELTS Speaking Time %				
	Agree	Strong Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Speaking Test time was good enough for discussion on topic	20%	70%	0%	0%	10%
IELTS Speaking duration was enough to respond appropriately	10%	80%	0%	0%	10%

The data given in Table 7 shows t% of the perceptions of IELTS test takers who had taken the test at the time of the speaking section. The data shows that 20% of the participants agreed with the statement that speaking test time was good enough for topic discussion. Furthermore, 70% of participants strongly agreed with the statement that the allotted time for topic discussion was sufficient; no participant had a neutral or negative perception of the statement; however, 10% of participants disagreed with the statement that the allotted time for discussion was sufficient. Furthermore, the data shows that 10% of participants agreed

with the statement that speaking duration was good enough for responding appropriately. In addition, 80% of participants strongly agreed with the statement that allotting enough time to respond to the questions was enough. The responses of the participants show that the IELTS speaking section was practical and economical enough to speak and discuss the topic.

Perception towards Tasks of Speaking

Table 8
Perception towards Speaking Tasks

Tasks	Perception Towards IELTS Speaking Tasks				
	Agree	Strong Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Given situation for speaking was easy	A,B	C,D,E,F,G,I	0	H	0
The general questions about myself were easy	C	A,B,D,E,F,G,H	0	I	0
Tasks on Cards were easy to speak	E,F	A,B,C,D,G,H,I	0	0	0
Discussion Topic was easy	B	A,C,D,E,F,G,H,I	0	0	0
Discussion topic was familiar	J	A,B,C,D,E,F	0	G,H,I	0

The data given in Table 8 shows the perceptions of the IELTS test takers who had taken the test. The data shows that the participants A and B agreed with the statement that given the situation, speaking was easy; the participants C, D, E, F, G, and J strongly agreed with the statement; no participant had neutral views towards the statement; only the participant H disagreed with the statement; and no participant strongly disagreed. Moreover, the data shows that the participant C agreed that the general questions about myself were easy, the participants A, B, D, E, F, G, and H strongly agreed with the statement, the participant I disagreed with the statement, and no participant was neutral or strongly disagreed with the statement. In response to the statement, the discussion topic was easy. The participant B agreed, the participants A, C, D, E, F, G, H, and I strongly agreed, and no participant was neutral, disagreed, or strongly disagreed with the statement. In addition, the participant J agreed with the statement that the topic was familiar; the participants A, B, C, D, E, and F strongly agreed with the familiarity statement of the topic; no participant was neutral; however, the participants G, H, and J disagreed with the familiarity statement of the topic.

Table 9
% of Perception towards Speaking Tasks

Tasks	% of Perception Towards IELTS Speaking Tasks				
	Agree	Strong Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Given situation for speaking was easy	20%	60%	0%	10%	0%
The general questions about myself were easy	10%	70%	0%	10%	0%
Tasks on Cards were easy to speak	20%	70%	0%	0%	0%
Discussion Topic was easy	10%	80%	0%	0%	0%
Discussion topic was familiar	10%	60%	0%	30%	0%

The data given in Table 9 shows the perceptions of the IELTS test takers who had taken the test. The data shows that 20% of participants agreed with the statement that given situations for speaking were easy, 60% of participants strongly agreed with the statement, no participant had neutral views towards the statement, and only 10% of participants disagreed with the statement, but no participant strongly disagreed. Moreover, the data shows that 10% of participants agreed that the general questions about myself were easy, 70% strongly agreed with the statement, 10% disagreed with the statement, and no participant was neutral or strongly disagreed with the statement. In response to the

statement, the discussion topic was easy: 10% of participants agreed, 80% agreed strongly, and no participant disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. In addition, 10% of participants agreed with the statement that the topic was familiar, 60% strongly agreed with the familiarity statement of the topic, no participant was neutral, and 30% disagreed with the familiarity statement of the topic.

Perception towards Test Score

Table 10
Perception towards Speaking Score

Speaking Score	Perception Towards IELTS Speaking Test Score				
	Agree	Strongly Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Speaking Score is below expected score	A,B,C	D,E,F	0	G,H,I,J	0
Speaking Score is above expected score	0	A,B,C,D,E,F	0	0	0
Speaking test score is according to my expectation	0	G,H,I,J	0	A,B,C	D,E,F
Speaking score represents my current speaking level	A,B,C	C,D,E,F,G,H	0	I, J	0

The information in Table 10 reflects the attitudes of IELTS test takers toward their speaking score. According to the data, participants A, B, and C agreed with the statement that the speaking score was lower than expected; participants D, E, and F strongly agreed; and participants G, H, I, and J disagreed. The participants A, B, C, D, E, and F strongly agreed with the statement that the speaking score is above the expected score. In addition, the participants G, H, I, and J strongly agreed with the statement that the speaking score was according to their expectation; the participants A, B, and C disagreed; and the participants D, E, and F strongly disagreed. Participants A, B, and C agreed to the statement that my speaking score represents my current speaking level; participants C, D, E, F, G, and H strongly agreed; and participants I and J disagreed. No participant remained neutral or disagreed with the statement.

Table 11
% of Perception towards Speaking Score

Speaking Score	Perception Towards IELTS Speaking Test Score				
	Agree	Strongly Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Speaking Score is below expected score	30%	30%	0	40%	0
Speaking Score is above expected score	0	60%	0	0	0
Speaking test score is according to my expectation	0	40%	0	30%	30%
Speaking score represents my current speaking level	30%	60%	0	20%	0

The data in Table 11 depicts IELTS test takers' attitudes toward their speaking score. According to the data, 30% of participants agreed with the statement that speaking score is lower than expected; 30% strongly agreed; and 40% disagreed. 60% of participants strongly agreed with the statement that the speaking score is above the expected score. Furthermore, 40% of participants strongly agreed with the statement that the speaking score was as expected, 30% disagreed, and 30% strongly disagreed. In response to the statement, my speaking score represents my current speaking level: 30% of participants agreed, 60% strongly agreed, and 20% disagreed. No participant remained neutral or disagreed with the statement.

Perception towards IELTS Speaking Test Washback

Table 12
Perception towards Speaking test Washback

Speaking Score	Perception Towards IELTS Speaking Test Washback				
	Agree	Strongly Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The speaking test helped me to improve my pronunciation	F	A,B,C,D,G,H,I,J	0	E	0
The IELTS speaking test helped me in identifying my speaking problems	A,B,F	C,D,E,F,G,H,I,J	0	0	0
Speaking test encouraged me speak in English	C,D,E	A,B,F,G,H,I,J	0	0	0

The data given in Table 12 shows the perception of the IELTS test takers who had taken the test toward speaking washback. The data shows that the participant F agreed with the statement that "The speaking test helped me to improve my pronunciation." The participants A, B, C, D, G, H, I, and J strongly agreed with the statement; however, the participant E disagreed with the statement about improvement in pronunciation due to the IELTS speaking test. Moreover, data also shows that the participants A, B, and F agreed with the statement that the speaking test helped them in the identification of speaking errors, and the participants C, D, E, F, G, H, I, and J strongly agreed with the statement that speaking helped in the identification of pronunciation errors. Participants C, D, and E agreed with the statement "Speaking test encouraged me to speak in English," whereas participants A, B, F, G, H, I, and J strongly agreed with the statement. The data also shows that no participants remained neutral or disagreed with the third statement. The percentile score of the responses is given in Table 13 below.

Table 13
%age of. Perception towards Speaking test Washback

Speaking Score	% of Perception Towards IELTS Speaking Test Washback				
	Agree	Strongly Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The speaking test helped me to improve my pronunciation	10%	80%	0%	10%	0%
The IELTS speaking test helped me in identifying my speaking problems	30%	70%	0%	0%	0%
Speaking test encouraged me speak in English	30%	70%	0%	0%	0%

The data given in Table 13 shows the perception of the IELTS test takers who had taken the test towards speaking washback. The data shows that 10% of participants agreed with the statement that the speaking test helped me to improve my pronunciation, and 80% strongly agreed with the statement; however, 10% of participants disagreed with the statement about improvement in pronunciation due to the IELTS speaking test. Moreover, data also shows that 30% of participants agreed with the statement that the speaking test helped them in the identification of speaking errors, and 70% strongly agreed with the statement that speaking helped in the identification of pronunciation errors. In response to the statement "Speaking test encouraged me to speak in English," 30% of participants agreed, and 70% strongly agreed. The data also shows that no participants remained neutral or disagreed with the third statement.

Conclusion

The study's goal was to discover IELTS test takers' attitudes toward speaking. The data analysis shows that the participants had interesting perceptions towards the speaking test environment, the speaking test tasks, the washback of the speaking test, the speaking score, and the time of the test. The analysis of the data shows that the IELTS test takers have different opinions about the environment of the speaking test, as discussed in 7.1. Most of the IELTS test takers who had taken the test agreed or strongly agreed with the fact that the IELTS speaking test environment was conducive and the topic of the speaking and discussion was familiar to the participants. Furthermore, test takers who had taken the test said that the warm-up questions and tasks on the cards were simple. In addition, the analysis of the data shows that test takers were comfortable with the overall speaking environment. Furthermore, the IELTS test takers who had taken the tests reflected on the speaking time and said that the time of speaking and discussion was good enough to talk and respond, which makes the speaking test practical and economical. Data analysis also shows that the IELTS speaking test had proficiency and social washback on the test takers who had taken the test, and the test takers not only worked towards proficiency improvement in speaking but also focused on pronunciation after taking the speaking test. Moreover, data also shows that some participants who took the IELTS test argued that discussion tasks during speaking were impractical, although the majority of the test takers perceived the tasks as practical and close to real-life experiences. The results of the study are aligned with Rasti's (2009) study, in which she states that the IELTS speaking test measures the proficiency of the test takers in communication and their arguing ability. In conclusion, the study shows that IELTS test takers have positive perceptions towards the practicality, reliability, authenticity, and washback of the speaking test, and the majority of the participants in the study responded in positive manners towards the speaking test environment, speaking test tasks, washback of the speaking test, speaking score, and time of the test. The study is limited to the speaking test only; in the future, other skills in IELTS can be further explored in depth to generalise the results.

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