Attitudes of 12th Grade Students toward English Language Testing in KRG Public High Schools

Dariya Dilshad Hamad Ameen[1] and Hayder Mohamad Sadiq[2]

[1] Department of English, Soran University Soran, Erbil, Kurdistan Region – F.R. Iraq

[1] Department of English, Soran University Soran, Erbil, Kurdistan Region – F.R. Iraq

ABSTRACT: Communicative language testing relies on the concept of communicative competence, which addresses the four language components, linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence. The KRG educational authorities emphasize the importance of communicative language teaching (CLT) through recent changes to the English curriculum in its K-12 schools. The purpose of this study was to explore if the tests of 12th graders in the KRG schools adhered to the principles of CLT. The study aimed to find out students' attitudes towards the current test formats and content. It also aimed to find if students differed in how they perceived the tests. The study utilized a mock test and a questionnaire for a group of 200 12th graders to collect data and analyze it. The findings revealed that majority of the student participants believed the testing should be improved to be more integrative. There was not a significant correlation in the attitudes and beliefs between students who passed the test and those failed. This study concluded that the testing system should be revised to comply with CLT principles, testing types and content.

KEY WORDS: Testing, CLT, GTM, 12th graders, Test types

1. INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, the primary purpose of the majority of language examinations is to evaluate the candidate's general understanding of the language, including their vocabulary and grammar skills. Tests of communicative language are used to assess a language learner's capacity to engage in conversation or utilize language in everyday contexts. On the basis of communicative competence, communicative tests are created, covering the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Phan, 2008).

Communicative competence or ability to communicate effectively is prerequisites for effective communication. Communication abilities, as defined by Widdowson (1978), are those skills in which the system is realized as usage. These definitions of communicative skills imply that they include not only language competence but also the cognitive and affective components necessary for effective two-way discussion, communication, or discourse. Competence in communicating, on the other hand, has been characterized in a number of ways. To paraphrase Littlewood, "communicative competence" refers to "a degree of mastery of a very considerable range of linguistic and social skills which depend in part on the learners' sensitivity to meaning and appropriacy in language and on his/her ability to develop effective strategies for communicating in the second language." (Littlewood 1981, P. 87)

According to Johnson and K. Marlow (1982, P. 2), communicative competence is "the ability to be appropriate, to know the correct thing to say at the right moment." Communicative competence is "the ability to construct sentences for communicative effect," as defined by Widdowson (1978, P. 1).

From these definitions, it can be deduced that communicative competence is:

• The capacity to use language effectively in a certain social setting;

• The skill of being well-informed at the correct time.

• Proficient command of the language, together with the ability to apply such command in a variety of settings with confidence.

The ability to express ideas in a way that is grammatical, correct, socially accepted, formally possible, and fluent in a given context requires knowledge beyond language competence. The problem this paper argued for was that testing of English language in Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) public high schools did not seem to comply with the standards of CLT testing. Having worked as a high school EFL teacher for 15 years so far, the current researcher noted there was an incompatibility between CLT and assessment of English language in KRG public high schools. Also, as an MA student, the researcher noticed that many undergraduate students face the consequences of this issue as they are unfamiliar with CT systems, as there is an over-reliance on traditional grammar-translation methods: If the English language testing in KRG public high schools is still using traditional grammar-translation methods, it may not be aligned with the principles of CLT, which emphasizes communicative competence over grammatical accuracy.

The objectives of this paper were multi-faceted, aimed at addressing a range of issues related to EFL testing in KRG public high schools. The following were the key objectives of the research: To assess the attitudes of students towards the current EFL testing format and administration in public KRI high schools.

To gather information on the challenges faced by students in the current EFL testing process and identify any areas that need improvement.

To analyze the data collected to determine if the current EFL testing system is effective in assessing the English language proficiency of students. To use the research findings to propose better questions or solutions to the problems surrounding EFL testing in public KRG high schools.

2. Literature Review

The concept of communicative competence (a term coined by linguist Dell Hymes in 1972) grew out of resistance to the concept of linguistic competence introduced by Noam Chomsky. Most scholars now consider linguistic competence to be a *part of* communicative competence. Canale and Swain (1980) identified the following four components of communicative competence:

• **Grammatical competence** includes knowledge of phonology, orthography, vocabulary, word formation and sentence formation.

• **Sociolinguistic competence** includes knowledge of sociocultural rules of use. It is concerned with the learners' ability to handle for example settings, topics, and communicative functions in different sociolinguistic contexts. In addition, it deals with the use of appropriate grammatical forms for different communicative functions in different sociolinguistic contexts.

• **Discourse competence** is related to the learners' mastery of understanding and producing texts in the modes of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It deals with cohesion and coherence in different types of texts.

• **Strategic competence** refers to compensatory strategies in case of grammatical or sociolinguistic or discourse difficulties, such as the use of reference sources, grammatical and lexical paraphrase, requests for repetition, clarification, slower speech, or problems in addressing strangers when unsure of their social status or in finding the right cohesion devices. It is also concerned with such performance factors as coping with the nuisance of background noise or using gap fillers.

Swain (1984) proposed four primary criteria for the construction of communicative tests in language assessment. Firstly, the tests should be relevant; i.e., they should measure the language skills and abilities that are essential for the learner's communicative competence. Secondly, the tests should be authentic; i.e., they should reflect real-life communicative situations and language use, rather than artificial or contrived language tasks. Thirdly, the test tasks should have task validity, which means they should have valid measures of the language abilities being tested. Finally, the tests should have positive washback; i.e., they should positively impact language teaching and learning and not just negatively impact the learners. These criteria highlight the importance of ensuring that language tests are closely

aligned with the goals of communicative language teaching and that they provide a meaningful, relevant, and authentic assessment of learners' language abilities.

In line with Swain, Brown (2005) proposed several characteristics for designing effective communicative language tests. Firstly, the tests should be relevant, which means they should assess language abilities that are essential for the learner's communicative competence. Secondly, the tests should be authentic since they should reflect real-life communicative situations and language use, rather than artificial or contrived language tasks. Thirdly, the test should have task validity because they measure the validity of the language abilities being tested. Additionally, the tests should have positive washback; they should positively impact language teaching and learning and not just negatively impacting the learners. The tests should also be communication-focused, implying they should assess the learner's ability to communicate effectively and use language for communicative purposes. The tests should be content-rich, including a variety of rich, meaningful language input, and process-oriented, focusing on the language processes used by the learner rather than just the end product. The tests should also be holistic, providing a comprehensive assessment of the learner's language abilities, and integrative, assessing the integration of the learner's language skills and systems. These characteristics highlight the importance of designing language tests that are closely aligned with the goals of communicative language teaching and that provide meaningful, relevant, and authentic assessment of learners' language abilities.

When it comes to communicative language testing measures, there are a plethora of situations that require more investigation. One of these will be if schools assess students' communicative competence, as questioned Nguyen and Le (2012). The purpose of the investigation was to understand more about some Vietnamese learners who were having difficulty with their language learning skills. Students in each class numbered more than 50, which made it impossible for the teachers to assess their talents as a group. Nguyen and Le (2012) discovered that while teachers could assess students' "linguistic concentration, they were unable to assess students' communicative skills in their classrooms.

Many studies have been conducted to raise awareness among teachers about the necessity of properly testing in the context of this method, and many more are currently underway. The communicative language assessment method, according to Bakhsh (2016), is extremely beneficial for teachers since it allows them to assess their students' language abilities in the context of "actual content-specific tasks and scenarios."

According to Moller (1981), as quoted in Bakhsh (2016), communicative language assessment is a method of evaluating students' ability to use the language to communicate effectively. This assessment focuses on the students' capacity to use the syntactic, semantic, and phonological systems of the language to understand the ideas of others and to express their own ideas clearly. The goal of communicative language assessment is to measure the students' communicative competence, which is their ability to use language effectively for communicative purposes.

Moller's (1981) approach to communicative language assessment emphasizes the importance of evaluating students' language abilities in real-life communicative situations. This approach views language assessment as a means of measuring not just the students' knowledge of the language, but also their ability to use that knowledge in real-life communication. By focusing on the students' ability to use the language for communicative purposes, Moller's approach to communicative language assessment provides a more comprehensive evaluation of their language abilities and supports the development of their overall communicative competence.

The work of Bailey (1998), as cited in Baksh (2016), pointed out that there were four principles that communicative language test developers needed to keep in mind. The first was that test designers needed to distinguish between what they were testing and how test takers reacted when they were asked to use language in various settings. Following that, test creators were responsible for assessing students' performance using scales and standards of assessment that had been developed by the test creators. The second concept was to concentrate on the substance, which came with it the responsibility for carrying out tasks and covering themes. In this sense, the material of the test must be tailored to the age, proficiency, interest, and needs of the students taking it. In addition, the assignments should be linked to what pupils have experienced in real-life circumstances as much as possible.

As regards to types of tests, Hughes (2003) listed the following types of tests for language teachers:

- **Proficiency tests**

  Regardless prior language instruction, proficiency tests are created to gauge a person's proficiency in a language. Therefore, the topics included in a proficiency exam are not determined by the topics or goals of language classes that test-takers may have taken. Instead, they are based on the requirements for what candidates must be able to do in order to be called fluent in the language.

- **Achievement tests**

  Accomplishment assessments have a direct connection to language courses since they are used to measure how successfully individuals, groups, or entire courses have accomplished their goals. They come in two varieties: tests of final achievement and tests of progress.

  Final achievement tests are those given at the conclusion of a semester or year of study. They may be composed and given by educational ministries, official examining committees, or staff members of educational institutions. Language testers disagree on the specifics of this link between the test designs, but it is obvious that the substance of these exams must be tied to the courses with which they are concerned.

- **Diagnostic tests**

  Diagnostic exams are used to pinpoint the strengths and weaknesses of students.

  They are basically designed to determine what learning still needs to occur. This is pretty simple when speaking at a general level. One can be rather sure in our abilities to develop tests that will reveal someone's particular weaknesses, such as speaking a language rather than reading it. In fact, for this use, current proficiency tests frequently suffice.

- **Placement tests**

  As the name implies, placement exams are designed to gather data that will aid in assigning pupils to the stage (or section) of the educational program that is most suitable for their talents. They are typically used to place students in classes of varying levels.

- **Discrete point versus integrative testing**

  Discrete point testing is the process of testing each component separately, one at a time. For instance, this may appear as a list of things, each of which would test a different grammatical structure. Contrarily, integrative testing necessitates that a candidate mix numerous linguistic components in order to complete a task. This could entail composing an essay, taking notes during a lecture, taking dictation, or finishing a cloze passage.

Before the advent of communicative language testing, students' knowledge of "vocabulary" and "grammar" appeared to be the only things being tested in the classroom (Brown, 2003). Since communicative language testing was introduced in the early 1980s, language testing has taken on a whole new dimension. Following that, test developers using the communicative language method must clarify their expectations in terms of what they expect test takers to do when they use the target language in "particular scenarios," as addressed by the approach (Shimada, 1997; Wesche, 1983). As a result, test developers should construct on-scale and criteria-based assessment processes to quantify the stated characteristics of test takers' performance (Bailey, 1998). Brown (2005) discussed the tasks of communicative language assessment. He emphasized that the design of communicative examinations must include both performance and task-based assessment as essential components. According to Hudson, Norris, and Bonk (2002), the task-based assessment was primarily concerned with evaluating students' abilities to do specific activities and task kinds that were necessary for target language communication.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Questions

1. What are the attitudes of grade 12 students toward the final test of English language in KRG public high schools?
2. What is the relationship between high performing and low performing students' attitudes toward the final test of English language in KRG public high schools?

3.2 Participants

The number of the participants in this study was 200 students from two schools in Soran, a city located north of Erbil in Iraq. One hundred students came from a public high school, the other 100 came from a private one. All the participants were 12th grade students. The majority of the participants were in the 12th grade for the first year, with a few for the second year. By second year, it is meant the students were studying the 12th grade subjects for the second time—they failed in English or other subjects in the previous year. A few students failed in the previous year on purpose to achieve higher grades to be admitted to more advanced colleges.

The age of the students ranged between 17-20 years. The gender of the participants was mixed between male and female. However, age and gender were not variables in this study. The research questions focused on students' attitudes, their achievement on the test, and correlation between higher and lower performing students.

3.3 Instruments

This study utilized two instruments to achieve the aims of this research. The first instrument was a mock test of English for 12th grade students and the second was a questionnaire. Students in high schools in Kurdistan Region take a unified final test of all subjects they study in the 12th grade. The test is prepared by KRG Ministry of Education. The tests determine students' grades and colleges they can be admitted to after high school. The tests are very competitive, so students across Kurdistan Region spend a considerable amount of time and efforts preparing for the test. For the main purpose of this study, the final examination of English provided by the KRG Ministry of Education was used to investigate whether it adheres to the principles of CLT.

The test consisted of 15 multiple-choice items taken from exam of English. The items were taken from the actual final examinations of English for high school students in Kurdistan Region-Iraq. The items were taken from 2021-2022, 2020-2021, and 2019-2020 academic years. Based on their answers on the test, the researcher divided the students into two categories; namely, those who passed the test and those who failed the test. The criterion for passing was answering eight items correctly. Lower than eight items was considered a failure.

3.4 Data Collection

The researcher took permission from two schools to gather 200 12th graders and administered the Mock Test and the questionnaire. The students were seated in a large hall and the researcher entered and explained the mechanisms for answering both instrument items. First, the researcher clarified for the students that the test consisted of 15 items, taken from prior years' final test sheets. The researcher read each item and waited until all students had answered before moving to the next item.

Having completed the administration of the Mock Test, the researcher then handed over a copy of the questionnaire for each student and provided instructions on how to fill it. The researcher explained to the participants that then after they had gained the sense of a real test, it was time to provide their views on the test format and content. The researcher then read each item in Kurdish and English and waited until the students had chosen an option for the item before moving to the next item. After about two hours, the administration of the Mock Test and student questionnaire was completed.

3.5 Data Analysis

The researcher coded the Mock Test answers and questionnaire answers into SPSS to analyze them quantitatively. First, the researcher divided the students into two groups: those who achieved eight correct answers and above, and those who scored less than eight answers. The first group were the pass group and the second group, the failed or lower proficiency students. The researcher then obtained a table for each item of the questionnaire to analyze the most and least frequent answers in addition to a commentary on each table. Following that, the researcher ran a correlation test between the two groups of students and their average responses to the questionnaire to answer the second research question about possible differences in the attitudes of the two groups.

4. Analysis and Findings

This section presents the findings of the questionnaire regarding students' attitudes toward the current test of English in KRG public high schools. It also presents the answer to the second research question about possible differences in

students' attitudes and their performance on the mock test. The first part of this section gives a table for each questionnaire item, description of the results, followed by an analysis on the item statement and results.

4.1 Questionnaire Finding

Students' answers to the questionnaire items varied to some extent, with the majority agreeing with the statements. However, item 20 drew more 'disagree and strongly disagree' responses from the participants. The item was opposite in nature to the other 19 items, and that disparity could be the reason why the answers were different from the rest of the questionnaire. Presented below is a table for each item, the statement atop the table, and frequency and percentage for each answer. Under the able, there is a description of the findings for each statement and a brief analysis of the results for each table.

Q1: Final examination questions obligate me to memorize vocabulary without examples

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	7	3.5
Disagree	11	5.5
Neutral	41	20.5
Agree	70	35.0
Strongly Agree	71	35.5
Total	200	100.0

Table 1 displays the findings for the initial item of the Questionnaire, which asked about the impact of final exams on vocabulary memorization. The results reveal that the majority of the students, totaling 70.5% (35.5% strongly agree and 35% agree), believe that the final exams require them to memorize vocabulary without examples. On the other hand, only 18 students (8% total, 3.5% strongly disagree, and 5.5% disagree) opposed the statement. The difficulty in memorizing vocabulary without context is noted, as not all the students are able to retain the words. The final exam questions typically assess vocabulary by asking for the meaning of words in isolation or within a simple sentence.

Q2: Final exam questions force me to memorize the sound symbols and examples

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	7	3.5
Disagree	11	5.5
Neutral	15	7.5
Agree	49	24.5
Strongly Agree	118	59.0
Total	200	100.0

Table 2 presents the results of the second item on the questionnaire, which asks whether final exams encourage the students to memorize sound symbols and examples. The results indicate that the majority of students, 83.5% (59.0% strongly agree and 24.5% agree), felt that the examinations prompt them to memorize these elements. Only 18 students, 8.0% (3.5% strongly disagree and 5.5% disagree), disagree with this statement. However, simply memorizing the sound symbols and examples may not lead to long-term retention and it would be better to use audio recordings for studying sounds so that students can learn to read words even after university.

Q3: It would be better if we answer pronunciation questions while listening to audio recording

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	8	4.0
Disagree	4	2.0
Neutral	8	4.0
Agree	37	18.5
Strongly Agree	143	71.5
Total	200	100.0

Table 3 displays the results for the third item of the questionnaire, which asks if it would be better to answer pronunciation questions while listening to an audio recording. The results show that 89% of students (71.5% strongly agree and 18.5% agree) believe that using an audio recording in the final exam is beneficial. Only 14 students (6% - 4.0% strongly disagree and 2.0% disagree) disagree with this statement. Utilizing an audio system can improve a speaker's pronunciation, tone, and inflection, and aid in comprehension. The use of amplification and audible instructions also leads to increased attention and better understanding for the students.

Q4: It would be better if we listen to English conversation and answer questions about meaning of expressions.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	1	0.5
Disagree	3	1.5
Neutral	13	6.5
Agree	68	34.0
Strongly Agree	115	57.5
Total	200	100.0

Table 4 presents the results of the fourth item on the questionnaire, which asks whether it would be better for students to listen to English conversations and answer questions about the meaning of expressions. The results show that 91.5% of students (57.5% strongly agree and 34.0% agree) believed that would be better to listen to conversations and answer questions about the meaning of expressions. Only 8 students (8% - 0.5% strongly disagree, 1.5% disagree, and 6.5% neutral) had a different opinion. Conversations provide context that stand-alone questions do not and therefore offer a better opportunity for students to understand words in context.

Q4: It would be better if the passages were longer with more information to allow us to think better about answers

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	1	0.5
Disagree	7	3.5
Neutral	26	13.0
Agree	62	31.0
Strongly Agree	104	52.0

Total	200	100.0

Table 5 displays the results of the fifth item on the questionnaire, which asks if it is better for passages to be longer with more information to allow for better thinking about answers. The results show that 83.0% of students (52.0% strongly agree and 31.0% agree) believe that longer passages with more information allow for better thinking and answering of questions. Only 17 students (17% - 0.5% strongly disagree, 3.5% disagree, and 13.0% neutral) have a different opinion. Longer passages provide more information and details about events and characters, allowing questions to focus on content rather than grammar points, thus leading to more accurate and efficient answers.

Q6: It would be better if the questions discuss daily conversations.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	1	0.5
Disagree	5	2.5
Neutral	16	8.0
Agree	48	24.0
Strongly Agree	130	65.0
Total	200	100.0

Table 6 shows the results of the sixth item of the questionnaire, which asks if it is better if the questions discuss daily conversations. The results indicate that 99.0% of students (65.0% strongly agree and 34.0% agree) believe that it is better to have questions that discuss daily conversations. Only 11 students (11% - 0.5% strongly disagree, 2.5% disagree, and 8.5% neutral) have a different opinion. Talking to people provides social support and helps to put things into perspective. Conversing with friends, coworkers, and family members can aid in developing resilience and managing better in situations that don't go as planned.

Q7: It would be better if we have the option to respond to invitations, requests, and offers using our own expression

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	6	3.0
Disagree	12	6.0
Neutral	42	21.0
Agree	60	30.0
Strongly Agree	80	40.0
Total	200	100.0

Table 7 shows the results of the seventh item of the questionnaire, which asks if it would be better to have the option to respond to invitations, requests, and offers using one's own expression. 70.0% of students (40.0% strongly agree and 30.0% agree) believe that having this option is beneficial. Only 30.0% of students (3.0% strongly disagree, 6.0% disagree, and 21.0% neutral) have a different opinion. The ability to respond to invitations, requests, and offers demonstrates the student's understanding and usage of these expressions in real-life situations, and also helps to differentiate between students who have a better language proficiency.

Q8: I believe multiple choice questions should be based on meaning instead of grammar alone.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	24	12.0
Disagree	26	13.0
Neutral	62	31.0
Agree	40	20.0
Strongly Agree	48	24.0
Total	200	100.0

Table (8) displays the results for the eighth item of the Questionnaire, which posed the question, "Should multiple choice questions be based on meaning instead of grammar alone?" The results reveal that 31.0 percent of the students were neutral on the matter, while 24.0 percent strongly agreed and 20.0 percent agreed that multiple choice questions should be based on meaning instead of grammar. Only 12.0 percent and 13.0 percent strongly disagreed and disagreed, respectively. In grade 12 final exams, questions often focus on grammar, causing students to memorize grammar rules for the sake of obtaining marks instead of understanding meaning. However, most standardized tests prioritize meaning, as they aim to determine if the students are proficient in speaking and understanding the language.

Q9: Some questions should ask us to identify and correct errors.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	20	10.0
Disagree	25	12.5
Neutral	47	23.5
Agree	60	30.0
Strongly Agree	48	24.0
Total	200	100.0

Table (9) displays the results for the ninth item of the Questionnaire, which posed the question "Should some questions ask us to identify and correct errors?" The results show that a majority of the students (30.0 percent agreed, 24.0 percent strongly agreed, and 23.5 percent were neutral) agreed that there should be questions that focus on identifying and correcting errors. Only a small portion of the students (10.0 percent strongly disagreed and 12.5 percent disagreed) were against the idea. Recognizing and fixing errors is crucial in learning English as it helps improve language skills and produce accurate English. Error correction plays a vital role in keeping students on track for proper English production.

Q10: Some questions should ask for ordering words in a correct sentence.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	13	6.5
Disagree	24	12.0

Neutral	50	25.0
Agree	66	33.0
Strongly Agree	47	23.5
Total	200	100.0

Table (10) displays the results for the tenth item in the Questionnaire, which stated "Some questions should ask to arrange words into a grammatically correct sentence." The results show that the majority of students, 33.0 percent, agreed, 25.0 percent were neutral, and 23.5 percent strongly agreed that this type of question should be included. Only a small percentage of students, 6.5 percent and 12.0 percent, respectively, disagreed or strongly disagreed. Word order is a crucial aspect of language, including English, as it plays a significant role in determining the intended meaning of a sentence. The standard sentence structure in English is subject-verb-object (SVO), and it's essential to remember that a sentence must have a subject and a predicate, with the subject coming first. However, certain sentence forms, such as imperative and interrogative sentences, may have different structures.

Q11: I like to see questions that require students change a sentence without changing the meaning.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	17	8.5
Disagree	27	13.5
Neutral	33	16.5
Agree	65	32.5
Strongly Agree	58	29.0
Total	200	100.0

Table 11 displays the results of the 11th item in the Questionnaire, which asked "I like to see questions that require students to rephrase sentences without altering their meaning." The findings show that a majority (32.5% agreed, 29.0% strongly agreed, and 16.5% were neutral) of students favored such questions, while a minority (8.5% disagreed and 13.5% strongly disagreed) did not.

This highlights the versatility of English speakers in their use of various words and expressions, allowing for effective communication, learning, and the development of fluent language skills. As such, anyone seeking to improve their English-speaking abilities should incorporate multiple strategies and focus on frequently used phrases, as these are easier to memorize and recall than individual words.

Q12: Some of the questions do not give enough information to allow us to think about the appropriate answer.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	3	1.5
Disagree	3	1.5
Neutral	22	11.0

Agree	34	17.0
Strongly Agree	138	69.0
Total	200	100.0

Table 12 displays the results of the 12th item in the Questionnaire, which asked "Some of the questions don't provide enough information to make an informed decision." The findings indicate that a majority (69.0% strongly agree, 17.0% agree, and 11.0% were neutral) of students felt that some questions lacked sufficient information to determine an appropriate answer. Only a small percentage (1.5% disagreed and 1.5% strongly disagreed) felt otherwise.

Grade 12 students identified that a lack of information in some questions made it difficult to determine the correct answer, as there may be multiple possibilities. However, this also highlights the importance of covering the entire curricula, as without complete knowledge, it becomes challenging to answer questions accurately, even for good English speakers.

Q13: It would better to see fewer individual questions and more passages about various topics because a single passage is like lottery; your answers would be wrong if you are not familiar with the topic.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	8	4.0
Disagree	3	1.5
Neutral	18	9.0
Agree	59	29.5
Strongly Agree	112	56.0
Total	200	100.0

Table 13 presents the results of the 13th item in the Questionnaire, which stated "It's better to have fewer individual questions and more passages covering various topics, as a single passage is unpredictable if the student is unfamiliar with the topic." A majority of students (56.0% strongly agree, 29.5% agree) concurred with this statement, while a small minority (1.5% disagreed, 4.0% strongly disagreed, and 9.0% were neutral) did not.

Examining final exams, it is evident that there is usually only one passage per question paper, which is inadequate for evaluating students' speaking abilities. When a grade 12 student is not familiar with the topic, answering one question can be like playing the lottery. However, having access to more passages on diverse subjects would enable students to respond better.

Q14: It is better to ask about word meaning in passage than to define it with a single sentence.

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	4	2.0
Neutral	22	11.0
Agree	59	29.5
Strongly Agree	115	57.5

Total	200	100.0

Table 14 displays the results of the 14th item in the Questionnaire, which asked "It's better to ask about word meaning within a passage rather than defining it in a single sentence." A majority of students (57.0% strongly agree, 29.5% agree) agreed with this statement, while a small minority (2.0% strongly disagreed, 11.0% disagreed) did not.

Grade 12 students wereF expected to have a good understanding of words and their meanings. However, without using the words in context, such as in a passage, it can be challenging to determine the correct answer. Hence, asking about the meaning of words within a passage is considered a better approach.

Q15: I think one part of the final exam should require writing about different topics.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	82	41.0
Disagree	46	23.0
Neutral	31	15.5
Agree	24	12.0
Strongly Agree	17	8.5
Total	200	100.0

Table 15 shows the results for the 15th item of the Questionnaire, which asked "Should a portion of the final exam require writing about different topics?" The majority of the students (41.0% strongly disagreed, 23.0% disagreed) did not support having a writing section in the final exam, while a small percentage (8.5% strongly agree, 12.0% agree, 15.5% neutral) did.

Including a writing section in the final exam can provide a more comprehensive evaluation of students' abilities. However, this table suggests that many grade 12 students are against the idea. This could become a disadvantage for them when applying to universities, as writing skills are an important aspect of education.

Q16: Final exam question forms have forced to pay more attention to the syllabus and worry about grades without reading outside sources.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	5	2.5
Disagree	4	2.0
Neutral	9	4.5
Agree	20	10.0
Strongly Agree	162	81.0
Total	200	100.0

Table (16) presents the results for the sixteenth item of the Questionnaire, which asked about the influence of final exam question forms on students. The results show that the majority of students (81.0 percent strongly agree, 10.0 percent agree) feel that the exam questions force them to focus more on the syllabus and worry about grades, rather than reading outside sources. However, only a small number of participants (2.0 percent disagree, 2.5 percent strongly disagree, and 4.5 percent neutral) felt otherwise. This is because good grades are highly valued by top colleges and universities, and so grade 12 students in Kurdistan prioritize achieving high marks. As a result, they concentrate more on the material taught in their school textbooks rather than on reading materials that contribute to developing their world knowledge.

Q17: Some of the questions are vague and confuse students because they ask about a sound or word with one simple sentence without giving a direct or indirect hint or indication.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	6	3.0
Disagree	5	2.5
Neutral	14	7.0
Agree	54	27.0
Strongly Agree	121	60.5
Total	200	100.0

Table (17) depicts the results for the seventeenth item of the questionnaire, which stated "Some questions are vague and create confusion as they only ask about a sound or word with a single sentence without offering a direct or indirect clue." The results indicate that the majority (60.5% strongly agree, 27.0% agree) of students agreed that some of the questions are unclear and confusing. Only a small number (2.5% disagree, 3.0% strongly disagree, and 7.0% neutral) of participants disagreed. According to the grade 12 students, some questions are confusing because students do not have the necessary background knowledge to make an educated guess. Typically, standardized exams provide clear or indirect hints to help students carefully consider the questions and arrive at an answer quickly.

Q18: Some of the questions ask for very minor details; we should think where the answer is in the textbook.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	2	1.0
Disagree	4	2.0
Neutral	11	5.5
Agree	43	21.5
Strongly Agree	140	70.0
Total	200	100.0

The results of the eighteenth item of the Questionnaire indicate that a majority of students (70.0%) strongly agree and 21.5% agree that the questions in the final exam ask for very minor details and students are forced to think where the answer is in the textbook. Only a small percentage of students (1.0% strongly disagree, 2.0% disagree and 5.5% neutral)

disagree with this statement. The students find it challenging to memorize every detail in the textbook and are often surprised when they are asked questions about minor details.

Q19: I spend most of the exam time trying to understand the questions.

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	3	1.5
Neutral	17	8.5
Agree	44	22.0
Strongly Agree	136	68.0
Total	200	100.0

Table 19 displays the outcome for the 19th item in the Questionnaire, which inquired about the amount of time spent in an attempt to comprehend the exam questions. The results reveal that the majority of students, 90% (68% strongly agree and 22% agree), reported spending a significant portion of their exam time understanding the questions. However, a small minority of 9.5% (1.5% strongly disagree, 8.5% disagree or neutral) felt otherwise.

It is crucial for exam questions to be straightforward and easy to comprehend for students, as they have limited time to answer them. However, many grade 12 students face difficulties with questions, largely due to their complexity and limited time to understand them.

Q20: I have learned English enough in the 12th grade to be able to study in English in university.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	130	65.0
Disagree	45	22.5
Neutral	10	5.0
Agree	5	2.5
Strongly Agree	10	5.0
Total	200	100.0

Table 20 displays the results for the 20th item of the Questionnaire, which sought to gauge students' perception of their proficiency in English. The majority, 90% (68% strongly agree and 22% agree), reported feeling confident in their English skills, while a minority of 9.5% (1.5% strongly disagree, 8.5% disagree or neutral) held a different view.

Each year, many grade 12 students are admitted to universities, but they often struggle with the language, despite good or poor grades in English exams. The problem arises because they have relied on memorization rather than making a concerted effort to learn the language, leading to difficulties speaking it even if they have high grades in English.

4.2 Relation between the mock test results and students' attitudes

To answer the second study question, the researcher first administered a mock test of English. The mock test consisted of 15 multiple-choice questions that were taken from three previous years' examination sheets. The researcher divided the 200 participants into two groups according to their results on the test. The first group consisted of 44 students.

Students in this group received 8 and more correct answers out of 15 questions. The second group comprised 156 students who received lower than 8 correct answers. The researcher named the first group the Pass Group and the second the Fail Group. The aim of the second research question was to find any possible correlation between the test results for each group and their attitudes toward the test. In other words, the aim was to find if the Pass Group had different attitudes toward the test than the Fail Group. A Mann-Whitney test was run to find out if the two groups differed in their attitudes. The results showed no correlation between the two groups' attitudes and their performance on the mock test.

Mann-Whitney Test

Students' Performance on the Mock Test	
answer	N
Eight and above Correct Answers	44
Less than 8 Correct Answers	156
Total	200

Correlation Test between Attitudes of Students who Passed the test and those who failed	
	Students' Attitudes
Mann-Whitney U	3320.500
Z	-0.329
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.742

a. Grouping Variable: answer

The results of the statistical test indicated no significant correlation between the Pass Group and the Fail Group with their performance on the mock test. This means that both groups' attitudes were the same toward the English test in KRG public high schools. Moreover, it was not only the Fail Group who believed that the test of English was not communicative but the Pass Group also supported this belief. In other words, the results meant that the Fail Group were not only complaining about the English test; rather, they believed that the English test needed to be improved. This belief was augmented by the results of the correlation test, which indicated that the Pass Group had also the same attitude toward the English test.

The researcher focused on this question because it was common to hear that only lower performing students opposed the current test of English language in KRG public high schools. Based on 15 years of experience, the researcher often heard the argument that higher performing students did not have any concerns about the test of English in KRG public high schools. The findings strongly refuted such arguments against lower performing students.

5   Conclusion

This paper attempted to evaluate English language testing for 12th graders in KRG public high schools. The findings revealed that the testing format and content do not comply with the principles of communicative language testing, as there is over reliance on GTM method for teaching and learning as well as stand-alone sentences that ask for grammatical points such as subject-verb agreement and use of correct tense forms. The sample of this study consisted of 200 twelve grade students form two schools, who were given a mock test of 15 questions to distinguish between those who passed and those who failed the test. Forty-four students passed the test and 156 failed. The researcher ran

a correlation test to find if the two groups had a different attitude towards the exam items. Results revealed there was no statistical significance between them; therefore, the researcher concluded that there was no difference in the attitude between those who passed and those who failed the test. In other words, students in this study strongly recommended changes to the current English Testing for 12 graders in the KRG high schools.

References

1. Bachman, L. F., & Palmer, A. S. (1996). *Language testing in practice: Designing and developing useful language tests* (Vol. 1). Oxford University Press.
2. Bailey, K. M. (1998). *Learning about language assessment: Dilemmas, decisions, and directions*. Pacific Grove, CA: Heinle & Heinle.
3. Bakhsh, S. A. (2016). Testing communicative language skills of the speaking test in [an] EFL classroom at King Abdulaziz University. *International Journal of Educational Investigations*, 3(6), 112-120.
4. Bakhsh, S. A. (2016). Testing communicative language skills of the speaking test in [an] EFL classroom at King Abdulaziz University. *International Journal of Educational Investigations*, 3(6), 112-120.
5. Brown, H. D., & Abeywickrama, P. (2010). *Language assessment: Principles and classroom practices* (Vol. 10). White Plains, NY: Pearson Education.
6. Brown, J. D. (1995). *The elements of language curriculum: A systematic approach to program development*. Heinle & Heinle Publishers, 20 Park Plaza, Boston, MA 02116.
7. Brown, J. D. (2005). *Testing in language programs: a comprehensive guide to English language assessment*. McGraw-Hill College.
8. Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied linguistics*, 1(1), 1-47.
9. Fulcher, G., & Davidson, F. (2007). *Language testing and assessment*. London and New York: Routledge.
10. Hughes, A. (2003). *Testing for language teachers*. Cambridge university press.
11. Hymes, D. (1972). On communicative competence. *sociolinguistics*, 269293, 269-293.
12. Littlewood, W., William, L., & Swan, M. (1981). *Communicative language teaching: An introduction*. Cambridge university press.
13. Morrow, K., & Johnson, K. (Eds.). (1981). *Communication in the classroom: Applications and methods for a communicative approach* (p. 70). Longman.
14. Nguyen, C., & Le, D. (2013). Communicative Language Testing: Do School Tests Measure Students' Communicative Competence? *In FLLT Conference Proceedings.*
15. Nguyen, C., & Le, D. (2013). Communicative Language Testing: Do School Tests Measure Students'
16. Norris, J. M., Brown, J. D., Hudson, T. D., & Bonk, W. (2002). Examinee abilities and task difficulty in task-based second language performance assessment. *Language Testing*, 19(4), 395-418.
17. Phan, S. (2008). Communicative language testing. *TESOL Professional Development*, 6(1), 3-10.
18. Savignon, S. J. (1991). Communicative language teaching: State of the art. *TESOL quarterly*, 25(2), 261-278.
19. Shimada, K. (1997). Communicative language testing: Principles and problems. *English Review*, (12), 3-24.
20. Swain, M. (1984). Teaching and Testing Communicatively. *TESL Talk*, 15, 7-18.
21. Wesche, M. B. (1983). Communicative testing in a second language. *The modern language journal*, 67(1), 41-55.
22. Widdowson, H. G. (1978). *Teaching language as communication*. Oxford university press.

Appendix A: Mock Test

Part (A): Please circle one option for each of the following items:

1. The underlined letter and letters in the word .. .. are sounded as ....and... A- us<u>e</u>le<u>ss</u>, / s/,/s/ B- di<u>s</u>a<u>st</u>er,/z/,/z/ C- <u>s</u>tudio<u>s</u>, /z/,/s/ D- di<u>sc</u>u<u>ss</u>. /z/,/3/.

2. Choose the correct word for this definition: "right for a certain purpose, person or situation. A- prefer B- suitable C- specialize D- interactive

3. The word .... has two different noun forms, but the opposite of the word decrease is .... A- produce / increase B-act/low C- decide / high D- produce / appear

4. Why are you going so slowly.?......................... your new car yet? A- Did you use to drive B- Didn't you used to driving C- Have you got used to drive D- Haven't you got used to driving

5. The Corona Virus is............................. lot of people die every day. A- the region where B. the reason why C- the place when D- the season why

6. Which one expresses Certainty and Passive? A- Photos must be taken during the test. B- Her hair may be cut by the barber. C- The audience must have being interested in it. D- He can't have be bitten by a snake.

7. Have the electrics .... by the electrician yet? No, but they................... now. A- been changed / are being changed B- been changed / are been changed. C- being changed / are changing. D- been changed / are going to being changed.

1	Final exam questions obligate me to memorize vocabulary without examples	پرسیارەکانی وەزاری ناچارم دەکات کە پێناسەی ووشەکان بەبێ نموونە لەبەر بکەم
2	Final exam questions force me to memorize the sound symbols and examples	پرسیارەکانی وەزاری ناچارم دەکات دەنگەکان لەگەل رەمزەکان و نموونە ئەزبەر بکەم
3	It would be better if we answer pronunciation questions while listening to audio recordings	باشتردەبێت ئەگەر لە تاقیکردنەوە گوێ لە تۆماری دەنگی بگرین بۆ پرسیاری دەنگەکان
4	It would be better if we listen to English conversation and answer questions about meaning of expressions	باشتر دەبێت ئەگەر گوێ بگرین لە گفتوگۆی ئینگلیزی لە پسیاری مانای ووشەکان
5	It would be better if the passages were longer with more information to allow us to think better about answers	باشتر دەبێت ئەگەر پاسجەکان درێژتر بێت و زانیاری زیاتر بدات بۆ ئەوەی باشتر بیربکەینەوە لە وەلامەکەی
6	It would be better if the questions discuss daily conversations	باشتر دەبێت ئەگەر پسیارەکان لەسەر گفتوگۆی رۆژانە بێت
7	It would be better if we have the option to respond to invitation, requests, and offers using our own expressions	باشتر دەبێت ئەگەر وەلامی داواتکردن و داواکاری و ئۆفەر بە گوێرەی زانیاری خۆمان بدەینەوە
8	I believe multiple choice questions should be based on meaning instead of grammar alone	پسیارەکان و هەلبژاردنەکان پێویستە پەیوەست بێت بە مانا نەوەك رێزمان
9	Some questions should ask us to identify and correct errors	پێویستە هەندئ لە پسیارەکان داوای دیاریکردنی هەلەکان بکات لەگەل وەلامی راست بۆ هەلەکان
10	Some questions should ask for ordering words in a correct sentence	هەندئ پسیار پێویستە داوای رێزکردنی وشەکان بکات لە رستەیەکی واتادار
11	I like to see questions that require students change a sentence without changing the meaning	هەندئ پسیار پێوستە داوای گۆرینی رستەکان بکات بە بێ گۆرینی مانای رستەکە
12	The questions do not give enough information to allow us to think about the appropriate answer	پسیارەکان زانیاری پێویستی لەگەل نیە بۆ ئەوەی بتوانین بیرمان بۆ وەلامی گونجاو بچێت
13	It would better to see fewer individual questions and more passages about various topics because a single passage is like lottery; your answers would be wrong if you are not familiar with the topic	باشتر دەبێت ئەگەر لە جیاتی رستەی تاك تاك زیاتر لە یەك پاسج هەبێت لەسەر بابەتی جیاواز لەبەر ئەوەی یەك پاسج وەكو یاری بەخت وایە ئەگەر ئاشنای بابەتەکە نەبی وەلامەکان هەلە دەبێت
14	It would be to better to ask about word meaning in passage than to define it with a single sentence	زانینی واتای ووشەکان لە پاسج باشترە لەوەی بەیەك رستە پێناسەی بکات
15	I think one part of the final exam should require writing about different topics	پێم باشە یەکێك لە بەشەکانی تاقیکردنەوەی کۆتایی لەسەر نوسین بێت لەسەر بابەتی جیاواز
16	Final exam question forms have forced to pay more attention to the syllabus and worry about grades without reading outside sources	شێوازی پرسیارەکانی وەزاری ناچاری کردوم تەنها گرنگی بە مەنهەج بدەم و بیر لە نمرە بکەمەوە بەدوای سەرچاوەی دەرەکی نەگەرێم بۆ وانەی ئینگلیزی
17	Final exam questions are vague and confuse students because they ask about a sound or word with one simple sentence without giving a direct or indirect hint or indication	پسیارەکانی کۆتایی نارونن و سەر لە قوتابی دەشێوێنێ چونکە پرسیار لە یەك دەنگ یان ووشە دەکات بە یەك رستەی سادە بەبێ پێدانی نیشانە یان ئاماژەیەکی راستەوخۆ یان ناراستەوخۆ

18	The questions ask for very minor details; we should think where the answer is in the textbook	پسیارەکان شتی زۆر وورد داوا دەکات و دەبێ بیر بکەینەوە وەڵامەکەی لە کوێی مەنهەج ھەیە
19	I spend most of the exam time trying to understand the questions	زۆربەی کاتی تاقیکردنەوەکە لە تێگەیشتن لە پسیارەکان سەرف دەکەم
20	I have learned English enough in the 12th grade to be able to study in English in university	من ئەوەندە ئینگلیزی فێربووم لە پۆلی ١٢ تا بتوانم لە زانکۆی بە ئینگلیزی بخوێنم

8. Choose the correct (verb / adjective / noun). A. woods / fashionable / waste B. build / chemist / beauty C. explore / width / pollute D. civilize / central / speech

9. The students seemed sad. .... A. The teacher might have dismissed them. B. They can't got full marks. C. The teacher might have punish them. D. They must to get bad results.

10. Give them an additional discount, or .... A. they will signing the contract. B. the contract won't be signed. C. they won't paid all the money in time. D. the agreement would be cancel.

11. Which one of the underlined words is grammatically true? A. This is the more interesting story he has ever read. B. How long have your friend been in Italy? C. In the old days, Carla worn a lot of bright colors, D. The dinner is being served at the hotel now.

12. (The inn is too dangerous for them to stay.) To express the same meaning, we say .... A-The inn is not safety enough for them to stay. B-The inn is not enough safe for them to staved. C-The inn is not safe enough for them to stay. D-The inn doesn't safe enough for them to stay.

13. The opposite of the word (created) is .... and the synonym of the word for nothing) is .... A-collapsed / for example B-succeeded / for instance C-destroyed / for free D-constructed / not for free

14. Choose the right (two-word nouns). A- ski exchange B- health care C- weapons of change D- passport departure

15. Which one is the correct formal speech. A-People believe that he is talented. B-They was think that she was pretty. C-it is said he has a map. D-it is hoped that the corona virus would disappear soon.