

Evaluating the Efficiency of (EL) Speaking Skills' Acquisition in EFL Classes

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Abstract

In attempt to improve the efficiency in teaching (EL) speaking skills, this empirical study investigates the syllabus of (EL) of (FL) pupils in Secondary schools. It aims at evaluating the efficiency of its quality and quantity in preparing (FL) pupils for English major in the university. Via adopting a corpus-based analysis of 2nd year and 3rd year students' text books and yearly planning of the (FL) course in addition to using the data collection tools including questionnaire, interviews and observation, the results of this study reveals the low quantity and quality of teaching (EL) speaking skills in (FL) stream in secondary school.

Key terms: (EL) Speaking skills- (FL) pupils- Syllabus's quality - Syllabus' quantity.

الملخص

تسعى هذه الدراسة لتقييم مدى نجاعة البرامج المؤطرة الموجهة لتعليم اللغة الانجليزية في الطور الثانوي لتطوير مهارة المحادثة باللغة الانجليزية بشعبة اللغات الأجنبية ومدى فعاليتها في تحضير التلاميذ للتواصل الكلامي عند اختيارهم للتخصص الانجليزية في الجامعة . حيث اعتمدت هذه الدراسة على تحليل نقدي وتقييمي للعدد الساعي الموجه لتدريس هته المهارة من ضمن المهارات الأخرى وعلى تصميم استمارة استبيان موجهة

لأستاذة اللغة الانجليزية في الطور الثانوي لتقييم آراءهم حول المشكل المطروح كما اعتمدت أيضا على الملاحظة و المقابلة مع بعض الأساتذة والتي أجمعت نتائجها على ضعف الكمي والنوعي للمواد المنتقاة لتدريس هته المهارة.
الكلمات مفتاحية: مهارة المحادثة باللغة الانجليزية- تلاميذ اللغات الاجنبية- نوعية البرنامج
- كمية البرنامج

Résume

Le but de cette étude est d' évaluer l'efficacité des programmes d'encadrement pour l'enseignement de la (LA) au le lycée pour développer les compétence oral des élèves des (LE) et son efficacité de préparer les élèves a la communication verbale lors de leurs choix de la spécialité de la (LA) a l'universités. L'étude es basé sur des l'évaluation d' analyses créatiques de nombre horaires dirigé pour enseigner cette compétence parmi d'autres compétences et concevoir un questionnaire sous forme d'un formulaire pour les enseignants d'anglais dans lycée dans le but d'évaluer leurs avis sur le problème a débattre . Elle est basé aussi sur les notes remarques et entretien avec d'autre collègues le tout résulta sur le fait de la médiocrité de la qualité et volume des matières choisi pour enseigner cette compétence.

**Les mots clé : Compétence oral du (LA) - (FL) les élèves de (LE) -
Le Programme.**

Introduction

Since their first encounter with English language (EL) in the educational institutions, Algerian learners seek to improve their level in it so as to score high scores in their studies for passing from one level to another, generally, and succeeding in the BAC exam, in

particular. However, the current level in (EL) is so low in Algerian schools even among (FL) classes where (EL) is considered as one the main subjects in these classes. Whereas, only few numbers of learners achieve an acceptable level in (EL) which is exclusively confined to reading, writing and listening skills. Contrastively, like the rest of their classmates, their speaking skills are so low for enabling them to communicate their basic needs in school setting (i.e. answering questions orally, interacting in group and pair activities, representing a written drafts verbally or acting out a dialogue) that exceeds to their (EL) studies in the university where a high level of oral proficiency is expected from them in all subjects. On this premise, an attempt to investigate the reasons behind the decline of speaking skills among (FL) pupils despite of the consistent efforts of both ministry of education and teachers in improving these skills.

Background

In the last decades, the goals of (EFL) course changed their focus from reading and writing skills into listening and particularly speaking skills; due to, the growing needs for verbal communication skills to keep up with growing needs for the new world. However, English speaking skills are still neglected and devaluated in the teaching syllabus of secondary schools depriving (FL) pupils from meeting their needs in developing an oral proficiency that enable them to follow their higher education in (EL) major. Despite of the current ministerial amendments which added oral expression as an evaluative test that is equally important to the writing examinations during the year speaking skills are still falling behind the other language skills in the course of (EL) in (FL) classes. And this is mainly due to the reluctance of teachers to give it more significance on the expense of reading and writing skills development among their

learners. As some of them express in the interview question that ask them about their point of view about sacrificing speaking and listening skills for the sake of reading and writing due the fact that (FL) pupils are examined wittingly , particularly in BAC exam as the following:

***Teacher Khadija I.:** Trans. (Yes for me and with a complete honesty, I do the same thing with BAC classes. I focus excessively on reading and writing instead of speaking or listening because the ultimate objective is to pass the BAC exam successfully ...and how pupils will pass inshaa Allah (if may Allah will) ? Via developing reading and writing more than anything. it's alright to think that speaking and listening improve language level of pupils! But since the final exam is 100% about reading and writing then I have to go with the follow. Speaking and pronunciation are a foregone conclusion, the same as listening that acquired and interpreted through gestures, body language and gists.)*

***Teacher Zineb K. :** Well, since they are FL pupils, they have to be involved in writing & reading drills better than peaking coz the more they exposed to some written inputs to read, the more they get linguistic outputs to be used in written tasks even in the spoken ones. But in my opinion, it is better first to teach them speaking skills first to master the bases of the language then reading and speaking..."*

***Teacher Nedjma K. :** "As for my humble opinion about this subject, I think that Listening and speaking are being ignored by the ministry itself since the pupils spend more than three years studying these skills for them to be examined in writing and reading. Besides, there are no authentic situations in which the pupils may practice these skills(*

listening and speaking) in real life. So, for these reason I believe that yes it is more important to focus on writing and reading skill than listening and speaking. I am not stating that the latter should be removed completely though, simply that writing and Reading should get the lion's share.”

***Teacher Souheila C.:** As far as I am concerned, yes because as teachers we have to motivate our pps to read more about FL eg short stories ... as motivation (pps must summarize them) in other words the cannot write a sentence if they don't read this concerning (reading and writing)for me the are really important compared with the other skills as pps listen to the teacher a nd videos they acquire FL but they are not able to speak FL more fluently and accurately. that's why we have to motivate our pps to read as you have said the will be examined in bac exams writingly.”*

Whereas other teachers express their willingness to emphasize speaking along with listening, as they believe it is the learners window towards the literacy skills. Like it has been expressed clearly by one of the interviewed teachers who said that for here, no ! it is not because the only way to teach writing is teaching them firstly speaking along with listening. Similarly, another interviewed teacher said that teaching speaking along with listening is more important than writing and reading because pupils need to speak English correctly and fluently. If they pronounce and practice it correctly, they do not face problems when they write and read it.

Contrastively, in the questionnaire shows the reluctance of English teachers in teaching speaking skills lessons, as only 02 participants out of 32 teachers were willing to choose speaking lesson as confirmation

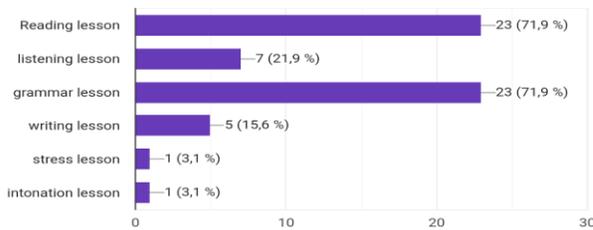


Figure I. Language skills and points of language that are proffered by English teachers in (FL) classes.

However, Due to their choice of (FL) streams in the second year of Secondary school studies, (FL) pupils aim at follow an academic studies and a professional career, which falls within: Arabic, English, French, German, Spanish . And due to the widespread spread of (EL) as a language of globalization, there is no doubt that a large group of them prefer it among the rest of the pre-mentioned languages. Accordingly, English departments in Algerian universities receive huge numbers of (FL) pupils as an (EFL) students yearly. However, the majority of them seem to have the same types of difficulties when it comes to speaking adequately, fluently and appropriately in the (TL). Eventually, the question arises here is why (FL) pupils are not able to acquire (EL) speaking skills more effectively and efficiently through their (EL) lessons in secondary school. This recession in these skills raises the question about the efficiency of the current teaching practices in improving (EFL) students' speaking skills and meeting their needs for mastering an oral proficiency in English language. Eventually, this empirical research study is concerned with investigating the reasons behind this decline on the hope of finding an alternatives ways to improve the acquisition of English speaking skills in among (FL) pupils.

The findings of this study contribute to the benefit of EL course and lessons of (FL) pupils in order to develop their speaking skills to meet an oral proficiency classes considering the fact that English speaking is of great importance in their evaluation and future studies in the university. Thus, these increasing demands for competent (FL) pupil speakers justifies the needs for more effective and qualified didactical means for better speaking skills in (FL) classes. Hence, the findings of this article will attempt to draw the attention toward the issues and the weaknesses of the current (ELT) practices in secondary school on the hope for amending it.

Methods

Research Question

To what extent the current teaching practices that is addressed for (FL) streams help in developing pupils' (EL) speaking skills.

Sub Questions

1. Is the current syllabus efficient in developing (EL) speaking skills of (FL) pupils?
2. Is the timing distribution sufficient for developing speaking skills through (EL) course?
3. Is the quality of (EL) speaking lessons adequate for developing an oral proficiency among (FL) pupils ?

Participants

Thirty three participants were recruited through The Algerian Secondary School Teachers' group twenty four of them are local colleagues' teachers in El-Oued Willya. Each participant was provided with digital forums' questionnaire that contains seven

questions in attempt to determine the efficiency of the current teaching syllabus in developing (EL) speaking skills of the (FL) pupils via collecting teachers’ opinions about its effectiveness in helping them to improve their speaking skills.

Materials

This empirical research field study investigates the available documents of teaching (FL) classes including the student’s book of 2nd year and 3rd year levels in addition to the yearly planning distribution of (FL) classes’ lessons during each year.

Procedures

Basically, this study will be based on the analysis and description of the collected data through the means of observations, interviews and questionnaires of the participants including both teachers and their learners. Both Testing of samples and the population and analyzing the data of the research is interpreted by the means of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies.

Statistical Analysis

In order to determine the quantity of speaking skills lessons, that are addressed to (FL) classes, and its quality, a statistical analysis has been conducted through the means of combative and mathematical analysis of both the yearly planning distributions and the (EL) syllabus’s giving the following results:

Results

Class	Skills	Timing
2nd (FL)	Writing skills	21h&45min
	Reading skills	19h&30min

	Listening skills			6h&30min
	Speaking skills	<i>Sounds and spelling</i>	51.85%	8h
		<i>Stress</i>	37.03%	
		<i>Intonation</i>	11.11%	
Extra			19h&15min	
3 rd (FL)	Writing skills			32h
	Reading skills			25h
	Listening skills			27h
	Speaking skills	<i>Sound and spelling</i>	44.44%	8h
		<i>Stress</i>	55.55%	
	Extra			16h

Table I. A quantitative and qualitative illustration to (EL) speaking skills in (FL) 2nd year and 3rd year classes.

Similarly the results of the questionnaire that were answered by the participants record in the following table:

Questions	Answers	Percentage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is the current syllabus efficient in developing FL pupils' speaking skills 	yes	24.2%
	no	75.8%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How would you describe the quantity of EL speaking lessons in their teaching program? 	Sufficient	9.1%
	Insufficient	90.9%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is the time devoted for teaching speaking skills in the yearly 	More than enough	3.5%

planningfor developing an oral competence among them?	Enough	12.1%
	Not enough	84.4%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How would you describe the quality of EL speaking lessons in their teaching program? 	high	3.1%
	average	63.6%
	low	33.3%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How would you normally teach them EL speaking 	Indirectly: I follow the book which introduce speaking in listening and speaking lessons and acting out dialogue tasks	69.7%
	Directly: I devote a whole oral lesson plan for teaching speaking skill (i.e pronunciation) where my pupils can be an oral activities and assessed accordingly.	30.3%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What lessons would you/ did you choose in your CAPES ? 	Reading	72.7%
	Listening	21.2%
	Grammar	72.7%
	Writing	15.2%
	Stress	3%
	Intonation	3%

Table I. The questionnaires'

statistical results.

Discussion

Basically, the teaching of (EL) speaking skills, in Secondary school syllabus and programs, is introduced implicitly through listening lessons that gives a secondary importance to speaking during this session as only (1/3) of it devoted to speaking skills' teaching. Moreover, only pronunciation inputs (i.e. word stress, sentence stress and intonation) are introduced to (FL) pupils whose outputs are evaluated, assessed and practiced writhingly. Similarly, acting out dialogues activities are not performed due to the teaching orientations toward literacy skills for the sake of the examination approaches in Secondary schools. Even though 63.6% of teachers describe the quality of speaking in English programs as an average while only 3.1 % of them consider it as low quality like it is illustrated in (graphic II.).

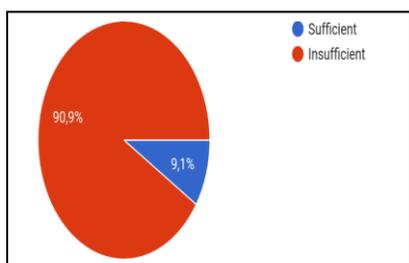


Figure II. A qualitative analysis to speaking skills in (FL) program.

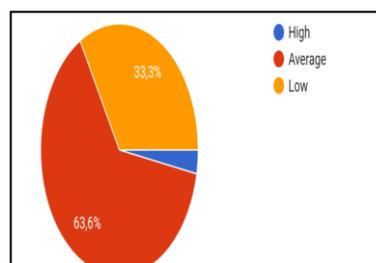


Figure II. A qualitative analysis to speaking skills in (FL) program.

Contrastively, the vast majority of them (i.e. 99.09%) agree on the insufficient quantity of (EL) speaking skills in the teaching programs of (FL) classes. Similarly, the analytical comparative study to the (EL) syllabus and the yearly planning for 2nd and 3rd year (FL)

programs so as to determine the numbers of hours that are assigned to teach speaking in comparison the rest of the language skills, as the results are recorded as the following:

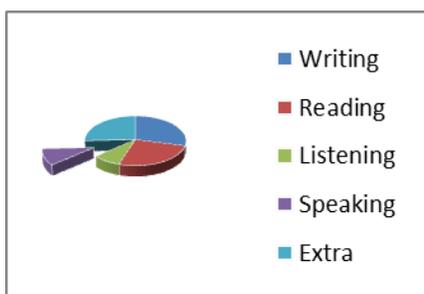


Figure IV. The quantity of (EL) speaking lessons in 2nd year (FL)

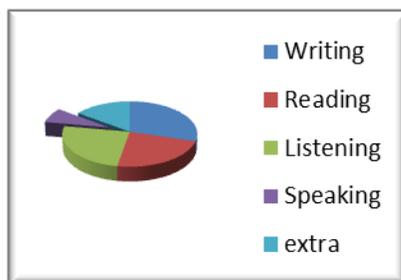


Figure IV. The quantity of (EL) speaking lessons in 3rd

And even though (84.4%) of the teachers declare that Is the time devoted for teaching speaking skills in the yearly planning is not enough for developing an oral competence among (FL) pupils, only (30.3%) of the total number of them teach spear directly in separate lesson form listening. Thereupon, it is fair to say that the practice of (ELT) in secondary school that is addressed for (FL) streams are neither efficient nor effective in developing pupils' (EL) speaking skills by the end of English course for four main reason:

1. The inefficiency of the current syllabus efficient in developing (EL) speaking skills of (FL) pupils.
2. The timing distribution is insufficient for developing speaking skills through (EL) course.
3. The low quality of (EL) speaking lessons that are inadequate for developing an oral proficiency among (FL) pupils.
4. The practices of (EL) teachers in (ELT) including their decisions , lesson's planning and attitudes towards speaking.

Accordingly, on the basis of the findings of this empirical research as well as my personal observation, evaluations and experience as an (EL) teacher of (FL) classes, this article can be concluded with the following suggested recommendations for the (ELT) practice in (FL) classes – which are characterized with few numbers of pupils and their desire in learning (EL) English where both teaching and learning environment is suitable for developing speaking skills more effectively and efficiently– that can create more opportunities and amend the low quality and quantity of the teaching practice of speaking in these classes.

Recommendations

1. Improving the quantity and the quality of (EL) speaking lessons in the syllabus of (FL) classes;
2. Planning an effective and efficient oral lessons for
 - Teaching speaking separately from listening;
 - Making all the activities and practices orally instead of written form;
 - Encouraging students to act out their produced dialogues with emphasize on the prosodic feature of their utterances.
3. Increasing the timing of speaking skills lessons on the expense of listening lessons
4. Raising awareness about the importance of speaking skills for teachers and students alike through oral assessment and expressions' tests.

Conclusion

In summary, we can conclude that the low level of speaking proficiency that our English students are suffering from is due to the inefficiency and weaknesses that are attributed to their secondary

school's experience with (EL). And this is, like it has been stated in the findings of this study, because of the absence of suitable environment and opportunities which contribute to enhance the acquisition of speaking skills both qualitatively and quantitatively. In addition to their focus on focus on writing and reading skills that enables them to pass the exams successfully.

In summary, in order to prepare (FL) pupils for a successful academic (EL) academic studies and professional career in (EL), (EL) lessons ought to be invested to the maximum in improving the speaking skills. As, it is through verbal communication, they are taught and learn in the university. Not to mention the fact of the absence of any explicit teaching of speaking skills (except for phonetic classes that emphasizes the theoretical aspects of (EL) phonology rather than its practical aspects) in their academic subject leaving students (i.e. (FL) graduated pupils) to their previous experiences with the oral language. And as it has been shown before, these experiences are sufficient to cope with the oral sessions which require a high quality and quantity of speaking skills. Consequently, this disqualification in speaking lessons cause the emergence of emergence of the current common issues that are witnessed in the universities recently in speaking skills.

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