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THEME :

**POOR SPEAKING PERFORMANCE OBSERVED
WITH LEARNERS OF EFL: THE CASE OF
STUDENTS OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF ABOMEY-CALAVI**

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this research work to the Almighty God, the creator of the Earth and the Heavens for his protection and help to understand throughout this research work.

I also dedicate it to my parents for their support of all kinds.

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ABSTRACT

This study has examined the poor speaking performance observed with learners of EFL: the case of students of the English Department of the University of Abomey-Calavi. A convenient sampling procedure was used to select fifty (50) foreign language learners at the English department for the research study. Regression analysis was the major statistical tool that was used to analyze the data from the learners. SPSS was also used for analysis. The research was aimed at knowing the performance of the foreign language learners if they are able to speak the language as against the knowledge they have on it. This was brought to light after collecting data from the University of Abomy-Calavi. From the research, it was determined why they tend to speak poorly as compared to their knowledge they have on the language.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Communication is the process of sending and receiving messages in order to share meanings. The communication process involves two or more people interacting verbally and nonverbally in order to understand each other's feelings, ideas, and attitudes. Sometimes they are said to be engaged in meaning making. In other words, speaker and listener are trying to understand each other. For human communication to take place, one person speaks and the other listens, and then they change places. This is a very simple description of a very complex process. There are six reasons why communication is complex: (1) communication is really more than speaking and listening, (2) communication is transactional, (3) communication involves sharing of meanings, (4) communication depends on feedback, (5) communication is blocked by interference, and (6) communication occurs in a context.

“Talking and eloquence are not the same: to speak, and to speak well, are two things. A fool may talk, but a wise man speaks.” Said BEN JONSON.

Learning a Foreign Language is not an easy task and it takes a lot of practice, a lot of strategies, and a lot of activities to get through the various skills involved. Indeed, there are five fundamental abilities in learning every foreign language: the thinking ability, the Listening-Comprehension ability, the coherent Speaking ability, the Reading-Comprehension ability, and finally, the Writing ability. In every English class, in country, teachers strive to help students work toward the acquisition of these skills.

However, the speaking ability happens to be the most difficult one for most Beninese students at all levels- primary, secondary, and university levels. The reasons for such difficulty in acquiring the speaking ability are numerous and varied, including the fact that students are not often exposed to language practice. Indeed, Benin is a French-speaking country, and added to that, the country has several local languages. Another reason is that besides many other courses taught in Benin schools, foreign languages are not given a very high importance. In most cases, only four hours per week are devoted to the teaching of foreign languages in secondary schools, and in the University, almost every course is given in French.

Fluency in Benin is a major problem for EFL learners in Benin in spite of the numerous education reforms that have been implemented. The latest being the Competency-Based Approach and whose main purpose is to foster oral communicative skills in learners. Actually, the difficulty in speaking or the lack motivation to practice speaking is not inherent to Benin EFL learners alone as it is clearly shown by Kressel (1986):

Most foreign-language students, who must acquire the language in a country in which is not spoken by many of the people in their immediate surroundings, lack both the opportunity and the motivation to use the language in prolonged meaningful speech acts. (In Forum XXIV, 3:33).

Learning English Language and assimilating to global society are synonymous. In this globalized world, labour market becomes very competitive, irrespective to open, or close, where desire to secure a high paid

job requires extra skills such as proficiency in English including academic qualification. From such perspective, those skills are getting priority which enhances individual's communication capacity where the English language has become indispensable for communication in the international arena and no country can afford to ignore it. Knowing the English language uplifts individual's socio-economic status by providing advantages in the labour market, higher education and honour in the society of non-English speaking country like Benin. Of being high demand, services of English language learning are being offered by many, including both private and public institutions. So many people, for this purpose enrolled in English department in their large number, but only few of them really come out to meet the qualifications required by recruiters.

CHAPTER ONE

IDENTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

There can be a variety of reasons behind a learner's decision to learn a foreign language. Similarly, the learner's expectations, aims and purposes can be very different. But practically all foreign language learners, regardless of their age, social and cultural background, or profession, share the same desire: to be able to speak the language. One can hardly prove that they know a foreign language when they cannot use it efficiently in oral communication. Even nowadays, in the age of mass media and electronic communication, the vast majority of verbal information exchange among people takes place through oral communication. Thus of the four basic skills in language learning – listening, reading, writing, speaking – speaking seems to be the most important one in terms of judging a learner's effective ability to use the language.

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

One of the most widespread problems among learners of foreign languages is their considerably lower speaking performance when compared to their passive knowledge. These learners :

- Are not able to express their thoughts and opinions satisfactorily;
- generally use more simplified language which does not match their overall acquired level and often make mistakes and slips;
- speak slowly and less fluently, making frequent pauses and thinking of suitable or correct words;
- are usually very shy and hesitant when it comes to speaking, try to avoid such situations if possible, do not cooperate with the teacher or with their peers;
- respond briefly, often using only one word answers, e.g. "Yes" or "No" ;
- sometimes have nothing to say at all;

In such learners, the poor speaking performance is a big handicap, as it makes their ability to use the language for its most important purpose – the exchange of information – limited. This leads to a frustration and anxiety; seldom do such people lose all love for the language and get

discouraged from further studying. I consider the problems with speaking performance very annoying, partly because of the fact that I experienced them myself and very often wondered what was wrong. Also, I had always wanted to know whether the occurrence of such problems is frequent, or whether I was an exception. That is why I have decided to do my research on a topic entitled “Poor Speaking Performance in Learners of EFL: the case of students of English Department of the University of Abomey-Calavi.

The thesis will be divided into five chapters. In chapter one, we have the identification of the study including its background, objective of the study, statement of the problem, research questions, limitation and delimitation of the study. Chapter two reviews existing literature on EFL learning with particular focus on communication which will be discussed from a broader point of view. Several relevant terms, such as linguistic and communicative competence or performance will be introduced and explained. The importance of building the communicative competence as the base for good language production will be emphasized; I will look at the areas the communicative competence consists of. I will try to give reasons why “knowing grammar and vocabulary” is by far not the only condition for successful oral communication. Next, I will learn something about the distinction between two possible ways in which languages can be approached – from the point of structures and forms, and that both of the two approaches should be incorporated and meaningfully linked in EFL teaching. And finally, I will depict two very different approaches – Communicative language teaching and the lexical approach – and provide arguments why I think that the implementation of them (or at least some of the theories and strategies they suggest) could be beneficial for the improvement of students’ communicative skills. The chapter three consists of the methodology. It consists of the research design, population, sampling technique, research design, instruments used for the study, procedures for data collection and analysis of data collection. Then chapter four consists of data presentation, analysis, and discussion of the main findings individually. I will thus get more concrete ideas whether and how important speaking is for EFL students, what they think about the issue, how frequent the occurrence of “problems with speaking” is and what those problems are. Finally, in chapter five, I will conclude the study with some recommendations following. The appendix contains one sample questionnaire I have used for the survey.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The study aims at finding out the performance of foreign languages learners in terms of speaking the language when compared to their passive knowledge.

The following research objectives will be achieved through this research study.

- To measure the performance of foreign languages learners in terms of speaking the language when compared to their passive knowledge
- To find out whether the learners are able to express their thoughts and opinions satisfactorily;
- to examine if they speak slowly and less fluently, making frequent pauses and thinking of suitable or correct words;
- to determine whether the learners are usually very shy and hesitant when it comes to speaking, try to avoid such situations if possible, do not cooperate with the teacher or with their peers;

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to come out with valid conclusions and recommendations, the researcher will need to research and find out answers to the following questions:

- are the foreign language learners able to speak the language as against the knowledge they acquire on it?
- How important does the learners see the foreign language?
- What influence the learners not to speak the language the way they are taught to speak?

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study will be a useful tool in the hands of the Ministry of Education, educational planners and policy makers. Also, it is envisaged that, the result of this study will help to create an awareness of how teaching and learning of foreign language affects the students. Making an appraisal of the research work and concluding on how worthy of importance it is to undertake this study; it is hoped that the research will seek to outline the strategies that could be put in place for higher performance. Moreover, it will guide foreign language planners to take pragmatic steps in the monitoring and setting universally acceptable strategies for the students to speak the language.

Finally, the findings of the study will provide database for further research work.

1.6 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study was limited to poor speaking performance observed with learners of foreign language. There are a number of factors that undermine the study of foreign language, but few is mentioned of the poor speaking performance. The study was limited to selected learners of the English department of the university of abomey-calavi.

1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study also has the following limitations:

- **Financial constraints** - this poses difficulty in interviewing so many learners.
- **Time** - because the study was undertaken within a very short time.

1.8 OVERVIEW OF THE OTHER CHAPTERS

The study is divided into five chapters. **The first chapter** consists of the identification of the study, the objective of the study, statement of the problem, research questions, and limitations of the study. **Chapter 2** reviews existing literature I came across and read while searching to successfully meet the target of this research work, that is poor speaking performance and necessary competence. **Chapter 3** consists of the methodology. The methodology consists of the research design, population, sampling technique, research design, instruments used for the study, procedures for data collection and analysis of data collection. Then **Chapter 4** consists of data presentation, analysis, and discussion of the main findings. Finally, **Chapter 5** concludes the study with summary, conclusion and some recommendation to compensate to the lack of the learners of English as a Foreign Language.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 LANGUAGE OR COMMUNICATION

As I have already mentioned in the introduction, different learners can have different reasons for learning a foreign language. Some of them might want to increase their confidence by the decision to start learning the language, others might need to keep their brains fit, and quite a number of learners may only want to fill their free time productively. It is also no exception to hear reasons such as learning the language because of strong liking for it or for the nation in which the language is spoken, the desire to be able to understand foreign language texts or TV programs, as well as pointing out the fact that learning a foreign language is simply “in fashion” and it would be embarrassing to stand aside.

Somehow or other, one might notice that all these reasons appear to be rather “nonproductive“, “passive“, not expecting too much active production of language. This does not mean that any of them could be labeled as insufficient, or inappropriate. Whatever reason for learning a person has, it is well founded. Nevertheless, there can be little doubt that those people who want to learn English so as to be only passively acquainted with it are in the minority. Most of the learners wish to be capable of using English actively for communication.

Communication is unexceptionably the most common and significant function of any language. That is exactly why languages came to existence – people have always felt the need to express themselves and to set up communication among each other. It was the need to communicate that led to the invention and development of languages – not the existence of languages that led to communication. These entire facts together break down one of the most tragically myths in language teaching: The goal of teaching a language is not the language itself it is efficient communication in the language. Unless we are linguists, the focus of our interest is not the system of language as such. We want to master the system in order to be able to make use of all of its potential to communicate information. The language only serves as a means, and an instrument which enables us to carry out various acts of communication. Thus, if we go into small details, the terms “learning (or teaching) a foreign language“ are inaccurate in terms of how they reflect the process they signify. Instead, they should be “learning (teaching) how to communicate in a foreign language“.

In his article about teaching languages for communication, Allwright introduces a fundamental question, which all EFL teachers should ask themselves before they actually start

teaching somebody. The question is: “Are we teaching language (for communication), or are we teaching communication (via language)?” (Allwright, as quoted in Brumfit and Johnson 167). Not having read the previous paragraph, the reader would probably, without any

hesitation, go for the first option. Based on what has been said, however, they may be at least uncertain. Allwright goes on to present the relationship between communication and language, or more precisely, communicative competence and linguistic competence, using the following diagram:

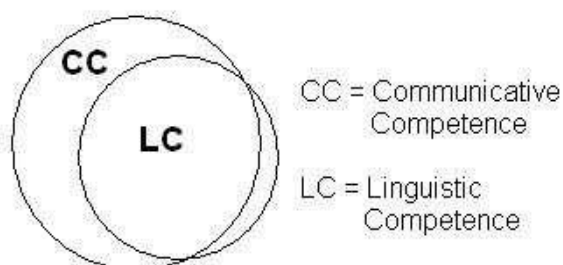


Figure 1: The Relationship between CC and LC, according to Allwright

The implication from the diagram would be that communicative competence is clearly a broader term than linguistic competence. Allwright says that “some areas of linguistic competence are essentially irrelevant to communicative competence but [...] in general, linguistic competence is a part of communicative competence. “ (Allwright, as quoted in Brumfit and Johnson 168). As a result of that, teaching for linguistic competence would mean ignoring quite a large area of communicative competence, whereas teaching for communicative competence means that all but only a small part of the total area will be catered for (Allwright, as quoted in Brumfit and Johnson 169).

If the whole message Allwright had in mind was to be put into more simple words, we could say that communicative competence is almost completely based on, and thus involves, linguistic competence. This is not true when put vice versa, though. Knowledge of language in itself, however advanced, is of little use when the speaker does not know how to operate with it so as to put their ideas and intentions across. Newmark demonstrates this on a model situation in which a learner is perfectly acquainted with the structures of language, but still, does not know how to ask a stranger in the street to get his cigarette lit. The way how to do it, as Newmark suggests, is to ask: Do you have a light? or Got a match? The two mentioned sentences are what a native speaker would probably say when they were confronted with such a situation. However, the learner, unaware of the way how it is “normally done“, might as well go for some other constructions, e.g. Do you have a fire? Do you have illumination? Or Are you a match’s owner? Which are not used in the given context (Newmark, as quoted in

Brumfit 161).

Now that we have become conscious of the importance of teaching English for communication, the conception of communicative competence will be discussed. We will also look at what factors the competence comprises, and finally, suggest the anticipated outcome of teaching communicative English – that is, what skills and abilities a “communicatively competent” student should have.

2.2. COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCES

A number of learners of English who admit “having certain problems with their spoken performance” complain that somehow, they cannot “put their passive knowledge into the active use of language.” Some of them might have been learning English for many years, so insufficient knowledge of grammar and limited range of vocabulary are not always to be blamed for such state of affairs. According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (or CEFR), learners at level B2, which is upper intermediate, should already be able to “interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party” (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, as quoted in Wikipedia). For such learners, it should be possible to put the intended meaning across in virtually all standard situations (“standard” means here such situations in which standard, everyday English is used and no special language required). Yet obviously, reality is very often far from the ideal state described in the CEFR. Despite the fact that the learners know enough language required for fulfilling the desired communicative act, they are very often unable to perform it once the situation takes place. To find out more why this is so, we have to learn something about the distinction between competence and performance.

2.2.1 Competence versus performance

In linguistics, the term competence is used to describe the learner’s capacity to produce a language. That is, a complex of all language the learner is familiar with, and therefore should potentially be able to use. Another term, performance, denotes the production of actual utterances as a result of certain psychological processes (de Kort and Leerdam, as quoted in Scha). The first one to have introduced them was an American linguist N. Chomsky, who defined them in the following paragraph:

Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker listener, in a completely homogeneous speech communication, who knows its (the speech community's) language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and

interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of this language in actual performance. (1965:3)

Later on, some linguists started to criticize Chomsky's restricted notion of competence. One of them, D. H. Hymes argued that in Chomsky's conception competence does not mean anything else than the knowledge of grammar of the foreign language. Hymes suggests that competence, however, should be viewed as "the overall underlying knowledge of the language system", not just "grammatical competence" (as quoted in Brumfit 13). Rather he brings in the term communicative competence and goes on to give an account of four sectors, of which the knowledge of grammar is one. Hymes calls this first sector possibility and explains that it is concerned with whether a certain structure is grammatically correct or not. Another sector deals with feasibility. A sentence can be grammatically correct, but not feasible – this being so, the addressee would have problems decoding the message or, eventually, they would not understand it at all. Appropriateness to the context is the third sector. Part of the learner's communicative competence should be also the awareness of what is appropriate in which situation. And lastly, the aspect whether or not something is in fact done plays an important role in the learner's competence, as they should know whether an utterance they want to use normally occurs, whether or not it is in fact used (for better illustration of this, see the part depicting Newmark's model situation in chapter 2) (Hymes, as quoted in Brumfit 14).

2.2.2 Competence as the base for speaking

When a speaker of any language, whether the language is their first or second speaks the language, their performance results from their competence. The rightness of Hymes's broader conception of competence can be proved when we consider the question of what qualities make people good speakers. Presumably, the use of correct, appropriate and easily comprehensible language comes to our mind in the first place. People, who often have to search for words, make a lot of pauses, slips and false starters, frequently use fillers, e.g. err or you know, often go for inappropriate words and awkward constructions, and can hardly earn being labeled skillful speakers. Nonetheless, the perfect use of language is not always the condition for holding the attention and interest of the audience. Seldom can the somehow lower quality of the formal aspect of speech be compensated by the content. Thus a number of other features of the speaker play a role, e.g. their intelligence and general knowledge, expertise in the area the speaker is talking about, originality, inventiveness, characteristic style, wittiness, ability to improvise and speak off the cuff, politeness and the awareness of what is appropriate and what not, familiarity with realia and current issues etc.

Not only should a competent speaker know how to form meaningful sentences, but they also

need to take into consideration the effect they want their utterance to take on the addressee. Do they want them to listen carefully, make them laugh; feel sorry, happy, embarrassed or sympathetic? Would they like to appease them, convince them of something, and raise curiosity? Do they wish to sound sincere, sweet, ironic, warning or angry? Is it necessary to be polite and not to impose? Or, on the other hand, would it be more effective to speak to the point immediately? Also, a good speaker cannot do without knowing how to start a conversation politely, maintain it, participate evenly, respond appropriately to what the other person says, agree and, if necessary, disagree in a good manner, and, of course, end it.

Each of the cases mentioned above requires a specific use of vocabulary and structures, as well as pronunciation. We are all aware of how sometimes even small nuances concerning the selection of words, the stylistic form and also the tone of voice can affect the way how the addressee construes the message. How many misunderstandings could be avoided if people were given the opportunity to say something once again, in a better way, and at the same time “erase” the former utterance. Unfortunately, it is generally known that words once spoken cannot be taken back, so it would not be wise for them always to rely on the possibility to correct them. Thereby the more successful strategies a speaker has developed to deal in various situations, the more chances are that they will be able to address the others the way they intend (and do so at the first attempt). These strategies cannot come into existence by chance – they develop from the range and quality of the speaker’s communicative competence.

2.2.3. Building the communicative competence

Once a teacher is aware that the communicative competence consists not only of linguistic knowledge, but depends also on various personal, social, cultural and strategic factors, they will very probably realize that teaching for better communicative competence must be approached in a broader sense than it usually is. Of course, the better the linguistic competence is, the more easily and comfortably, as well as more precisely and sophisticatedly, can the speakers express themselves. That is why the constant improving of the linguistic competence is crucial and cannot be overshadowed by focusing on the other mentioned factors (let alone neglected because of the same reason). Yet none of the elements contributing to good communicative competence ought to be looked over, as the presence of blind spots or inaccuracies within any of them negatively affects the person’s overall speaking performance. Dealing with all of the elements thoroughly, together with concentration on the interrelations among them, will help fill the gaps in the learner’s communicative competence and link the individual factors that it consists of. By doing so, not only will we contribute to increasing the competence in general, but also to its better “solidity”.

2.3 STRUCTURAL AND FUNCTIONAL VIEWS OF LANGUAGE

Depending on whether we analyze language with regard to its structures, or functions, two different views can be distinguished. These are the structural view and the functional view of language.

2.3.1. Structural view

According to the structural view of language, language is seen as “a system of structurally related elements for the transmission of meaning” (SIL International). These elements can be phonological units, grammatical units and operations, and lexical units. The aim of the structural view is to master these elements and their acceptable structural relations. In other words, the structural view of language seeks the knowledge of what is possible and acceptable in the language. For instance, the sentence: I have been to France three times. is acceptable English, whereas: I was in France three times. is not acceptable. Even though the latter would be understood by a native speaker as well, from the point of view of grammar it is not correct because the past simple tense is not used in reference to events that happened in the past and when the time is not specified. Similarly, the following sentence: I in France have been three times would indeed be apprehended by a native speaker of English, though it is not correct because of wrong word order. The awareness of how the language items are structured prevents from producing grammatically and syntactically wrong English. It ensures that the form of the language a speaker produces is proper.

Some of the approaches concerned with the structural view of language are the Audio lingual method, Total Physical Response, or the Silent Way (SIL International). The structural view is also the focus of all grammar oriented approaches to foreign language teaching.

2.3.2 Functional view

By contrast, the functional view of language deals with how the structures (or forms) can be used to perform various communicative functions; that is, how meaning can be expressed using the structures in language and what language functions can linguistic forms fulfill. The equation between linguistic forms and communicative functions does not always apply. In a number of cases, forms and functions differ and we speak about so called indirect speech acts. Consider the following example: the sentence Could you be quiet? is interrogative in form but it can fulfill the function of a question (whether the addressee would be at all able to be quiet), or a directive (telling the person to be quiet). If the addresser of the utterance wants to ask the person to be quiet, they can tell them so in a variety of ways, e.g. saying Could you be quiet?, Be quiet!, It would be nice if you were quiet. etc. Thus, one form can deliver more communicative functions, and one function can be delivered by a variety of forms

(Widdowson, as quoted in Brumfit 119). As long as a speaker of foreign language is aware of how the forms and functions can be related, they can communicate the desired meaning effectively by “inserting” the meaning into the form.

The most popular approaches building upon the functional view of language are Communicative Language Teaching, (will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5), or TaskBased Language Learning.

2.4 RELATING FORMS TO MEANINGS

Both the structural and the functional view play their irreplaceable role in EFL teaching. This means that both of them should be incorporated in teaching and some reasonable balance between them should be reached. Problems arise whenever the balance is deflected, which in the vast majority of cases means that the structural view is favored and the latter looked over. Not do teachers of English think that it is quite enough to teach their students the correct forms through tens of grammatical rules, and the rest – that is, the spontaneous production of meaningful language will come automatically as a result of the fact that they provided the students with as much grammar as possible. This, in my opinion, is a radical mistake. Overrelying on the structural view of language and at the same time ignoring the functional aspects causes that students taught in such a way become walking dictionaries and grammar reference books, but totally unproductive in their speaking. I will try to explain why.

Very often, teaching grammar means nothing more than bringing restrictions. Students are presented new grammar by being told things like: This is said this way, but be careful not to use it with that. There are also several exceptions from this rule which modify the rule somehow; and sometimes, the rule is not valid at all...I guess that it is not difficult to imagine what impact this must have on such student who suffers from not being sure how to say something. Having been told rules like that, they will probably not say anything at all, for their limited potential to produce language has been even more limited. By discussing that I do not want to say that grammar should not be taught. As I have already suggested in the very first sentence of this chapter, neither of the two views of language should be neglected. Evidently, it is extremely difficult trying to imagine how only functions could be taught and forms not, as functions are dependent on forms. Nevertheless, by the same logic, how can somebody believe that dogmatic clinging to structures without the emphasis on how they can be related to various meanings must be good enough an approach to guarantee exquisite language production? That is why the functional view of language ought to be given higher prominence. And I am not worried that this would be at the expense of grammar knowledge – to the contrary, it would support the structural view in that the overall students’ performance would improve a big deal.

2.5 COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), also known as the Communicative Approach, is an approach to ESL teaching that emphasizes the importance of learning the language for communication and interaction. It originates in Britain in the 1960's as a response to the rising criticism of Situational Language Teaching, the principles of which are practicing the language in various situational events and concentration on its forms and structures (Richards and Rogers). By contrast, Communicative Language Teaching accentuates the "functional and communicative potential of language." (Richards and Rogers 64) More specifically, learners are taught to become proficient in communication and giving meaning, rather than master the forms of language, e.g. grammar or pronunciation.

At the beginning of this chapter, I have explained that there is a distinction between two different views of language structural and functional. According to Littlewood, "the structural view of language concentrates on the grammatical system, describing ways in which linguistic items can be combined" (1981: 1). When related to EFL teaching, this could be interpreted as teaching the learners how to say something correctly and/or acceptably. There is of course nothing wrong with this view and it does not collide with CLT. In some cases, for example in Littlewood's conception of precommunicative activities, the implementation of purely structural view of language is fully justified. He claims that it gives the learners perfect control over linguistic forms, so that later they do not have to worry about the structure and can concentrate solely on the meaning. (1981: 89) However, we already know that the structure does not necessarily have to correspond with the meaning (as discussed in subchapter 4.2). That is why the functional view of language is promoted in CLT – that is, how to perform the desired communicative act in the most natural, comprehensible and correct way.

It is not easy to define what exactly it means to incorporate CLT in language teaching, since it does not represent any explicit method. Rather we speak about an approach, or a framework, that, though there are clear objectives and several guidelines, leaves a lot of space for the teacher to adapt their own methods. One of the basic features of the approach might be activating the available language in various tasks and "learning by doing" – that is, practicing the communicative and social interactive functions of language to become more advanced, natural and flexible in producing them. Howatt in his distinction between a "strong" and a "weak» version of CLT claims:

There is in a sense, a 'strong' version of the communicative approach and a 'weak' version of it. The weak version which has become more or less standard practice in the last ten years, stresses the importance of providing learners with

opportunities to use their English for communicative purposes and, characteristically, attempts to integrate such activities into a wider program of language teaching... The ‘strong’ version of communicative teaching, on the other hand, advances the claim that language is acquired through communication, so that it is not merely a question of activating an existing but inert knowledge of the language, but of stimulating the development of the language system itself. If the former could be described as ‘learning to use’ English, the latter entails ‘using English to learn it. (1984: 279)

The activities used in CLT are based rather on communication and cooperation among students than on dialogues between the teacher and a student. The role of the teacher in CLT is less dominant – they become the facilitator and monitor in the class, not the only “almighty authority“. Usually, students are made communicate from the very beginning, not after any silent period. Pair work and, perhaps more often, group work is practiced so as to ensure more intensive and even participation. Fluency is focused more than accuracy and making mistakes is seen as part of the learning process. High attention is paid to the careful contextualization of language (Miguel Bengoa Elt).

As it is with any other approach, CLT has its supporters, as well as opponents. The arguments for the approach are that the learners are taught to become communicatively competent, flexible and creative speakers. Such learners should not get scared when they “are taken by surprise“ by other speakers of English. They should also be able to vary the language according to current situations without much effort.

On the other hand, the critics of CLT warn against overusing the approach. They point out that students cannot be given total freedom in saying what they want because the language syllabi prescribe what grammar and lexis is to be learnt at a particular stage of the course. Also, they worry that the learners “may be tempted to simply memorize certain phrases which prove to be useful in recurring communicative situations without, however, learning to creatively construct new grammatical forms that might serve their speech intentions better”

2.6 LEXICAL APPROACHES

2.6.1 Lexical chunks

According to the Lexical Approach to EFL teaching, language consists of grammaticalized lexis, not lexicalized grammar. In other words, language is to a high degree made of stretches of speech which are often referred to as lexical chunks. These are fixed or common expressions containing two or more words which can be often found together. Where there are two or more lexical words which are commonly used together, we speak about collocations,

which are a subset of lexical chunks.

There are a lot of types of lexical chunks. They can be everyday expressions, e.g. greetings and valedictions (hi there, nice to see you, how do you do, see you later, have fun, take care), exclamations (oh my God!, how interesting!, what a mess!) etc. Some examples of collocations can be various combinations of an adjective plus a noun (sunny weather, high voltage, Merry Christmas), an adverb plus an adjective (totally exhausted, densely populated, relatively small), two nouns (sense of humor, letter of complaint, man of action), an adverb plus a verb (answer briefly, go quickly, kill accidentally) and other. But we should not forget to mention that some expressions which can commonly be found in conversations, e.g. question tags (will you?, isn't it?, all right?), responses expressing that we (don't) feel or do the same (so do I, neither do I, I do, I don't), formulae of courtesy (excuse me, thanks a lot, you're welcome, let me please..., be so kind...), expressions used to politely agree or disagree (you're right, I think so, I couldn't agree more, you're right but..., that's not the way I see it, that's not true), interrupt the other speaker (if you just let me finish, to finish my point, I'm sorry to jump in) or show emotions (poor you!, oh dear!, glad to hear that!), are also lexical chunks. Such stretches of language have an enormous value in communication in a (foreign) language.

Supporters of the Lexical Approach point out that hardly any stretches of language we produce are fully "innovational" and that in a majority of cases we build on memorized, more or less modified lexical patterns. Lewis says that "language consists of chunks which, when combined, produce continuous coherent text" (1997: 7). That is why the Lexical Approach stands in opposition to grammar-oriented approaches and objects to the widespread opinion that it is good knowledge of grammar which, together with a good range of vocabulary, is the most crucial condition for successful communication in English.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter contains the methodology used for the study. It describes the various methods, procedures and techniques the researcher employed in collecting and analyzing data for the study.

The methodology is discussed under the following topics; population and sample size, sampling techniques, research design, instruments used for the study, procedures for data collection, and analysis of data collection.

3.1. POPULATION AND SAMPLE SIZE

The population under study consists of some learners of English language at English department of the University of abomey-calavi. Due to time and financial constraints, the study was limited to a sample size of fifty (50) learners.

3.2 SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

Stratified sampling was used in selecting the respondents for the study. Fifty (50) learners were selected randomly from the department's records. The reason for the stratified random sampling was to ensure that the sample size obtained were learners of the English language who were also studying at the university.

Sequential sampling technique was employed to obtain adequate information about the subject. As a result, two (2) lecturers and one (1) teaching assistant were interviewed.

One half of the respondents were first and second year students (first cycle), the second half were the third and fourth year students. The third and fourth year students (second cycle) were in their last year of their studies, which means that they were about taking the final exam in a few months. The first and second year students were from two different classes – postsecondary daily students (20 hours a week) and. All the respondents had been learning English for at least 5 years.

There were, of course, quite expressive differences among the three different courses of English concerning the intensity and way of teaching, the differences in age of the learners and their motivations etc. Although these differences undoubtedly determine the level of

speaking of the students, I decided to choose the participants for the research sample purely according to the level they officially achieved, as I wanted the research sample to be more varied and represent more the differences between students from different institutions.

The achieved level of the students was mostly intermediate (First and second year students and some of the third year students). Some of the third year students were already upper intermediate, whereas some still pre-intermediate. I decided to choose intermediate students for my survey because the level should already be sufficient for some level of fluent speaking. Also, the third and fourth year students were finishing their compulsory study of English, so I wanted to know what their speaking performance would be at that stage.

Again, the two lecturers and the teaching assistant were teachers of the English language at the university. They were chosen because of their long time experience in the field.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design is the specific data analysis techniques or methods that researchers use. Operational research design was used in the data collection and analysis, and finding out the answers concerning the current status of the subject. These comprised observation of facts, formulation of hypothesis, collection and classification of data, interpretation of data, formulation of theories, application of facts and predictions. Since human behavior is difficult and cannot be predicted, it makes the results of the research at times not to be applicable to the population.

3.4 INSTRUMENT USED FOR THE STUDY

The instruments employed were interview, questionnaire and documentary in the process of collecting data.

For maximum response, respondents were briefed about the purpose of the research. The respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality and agreed on a reasonable time and the method by which questionnaires were to be returned.

3.4.1 Questionnaire

Fifty (50) students were asked to fill in a questionnaire. The questionnaire contained thirteen (13) questions, most of which were of multiple choices type. In some of them, the respondents were allowed to choose more than one answer. Also, they were allowed to answer some questions in their own words whenever they felt that none of the suggested options was

corresponding. The questionnaires were anonymous and there was no time limit for filling them in. I enclose one sample questionnaire in the appendix.

The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section was aimed at the respondent's general self evaluation and feedback, as well as their goals and priorities in foreign language learning. The second part focused on speaking only; the respondents were asked to reflect on their speaking performance, write whether they felt they had any problems with it, try to characterize the problems, think about the causes of them and, last but not the least, also about the possible solutions.

3.4.2 Interview

This took the form of conversation, where questions were posed to respondents. Thus, there was face-to-face interaction between the researcher and the respondents. The respondents in this study were targeted at the lecturers and the teaching assistants. Questions that were in line with the objective of the study were asked at random. This flexibility gave the researcher more room for clarification of questions and answers.

3.5 PROCEDURES FOR DATA COLLECTION

The data collection for the study was in two phases. The first phase was mainly interviews which were directed to the lecturers and the teaching assistants. Here the main aims and objectives of the study were made clear to the respondents, relevant and sensitive questions which needed immediate responds were asked.

The second phase was solely questionnaires which were giving to a cross section of first cycle and second cycle learners. The aim was to allow them to air out their views on paper so as to heighten self-expression in order to get variety of opinions.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

The data for research objectives were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) program and the Microsoft Excel package. The analyzed data was presented with the aid of figures and graphs. According to Saunders et al (2009), the use of tables and graphs in presenting findings of data analysis enable the easy understanding of the findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter consists of data analysis and the interpretation of all the findings of the research.

The answers to the questions will be dealt with stepwise.

4.2 QUESTION ONE

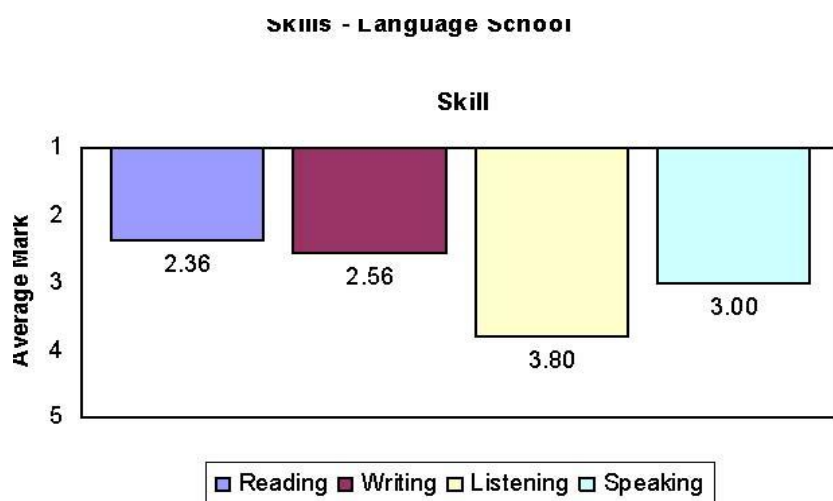
How would you evaluate yourself? Give marks (1 = the best mark – 5 = the worst mark) to each of the four basic skills in language learning (reading, writing, listening, speaking).

The respondents were asked to evaluate themselves in how they felt they were competent at each of the four basic skills in EFL learning – that is, reading, writing, listening and speaking. They were asked to use marks as if they were at school, from 1 = excellent competence to 5 = poor competence. Through this question I wanted to find out about the respondents' self-evaluation of each of the four skills. I was most interested in speaking, of course, concretely in what place would speaking be at, but also in how it would compare to the other three skills, whether there would be any expressive gaps among the skills.

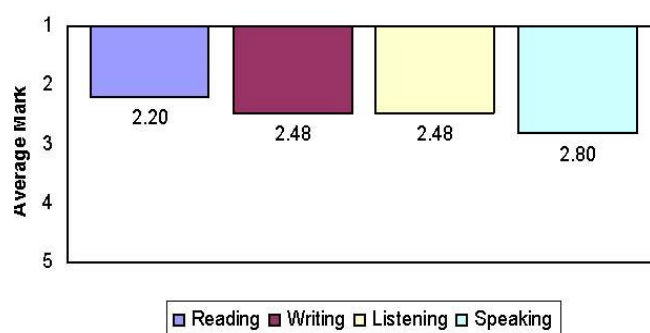
4.2 RESULTS ONE

With regards to the fact that there were considerable differences between the answers of respondents from EFL learners, I divided the results into three categories – first cycle respondents, second cycle respondents and then all respondents together. The number below each of the columns represents the average of all marks given to the skill. The higher the mark (and the column) is, the worse the respondents perceive themselves to be at that particular skill. The skills are not ordered according to the positions they got to. First of all, the two graphs showing the differences in answers between first cycle and second cycle students:

Graph 1: First cycle Skills of respondents



Graph 2: Second cycle skills

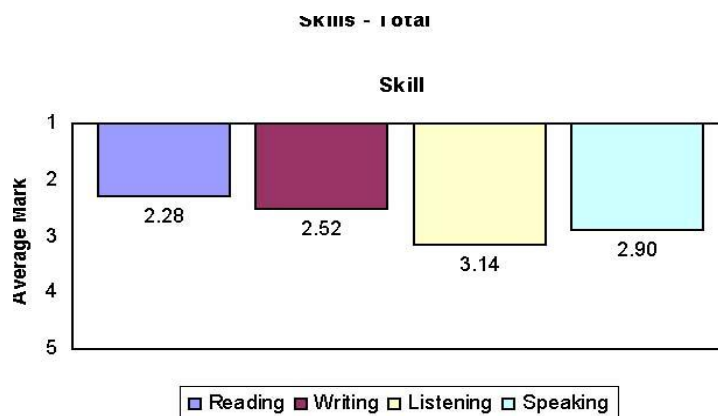


As we can see, the least problematic skill for students of both groups is in their opinion reading, closely followed by writing and, in the case of second cycle students, also listening, which earned exactly the same evaluation there. Quite surprisingly, in the case of first cycle students, the position of listening was completely different, as it, with its average of 3,8, clearly “earned” the label of the most problematic skill of all.

Speaking, represented by the light blue column, got to the last but one position in the first case and in the latter case to the last. This verifies the presumption that students seem to rate speaking among more challenging skills.

Below graph indicates the total results of skills for respondents:

Graph 3: Skills total for the respondents



4.3. QUESTION TWO

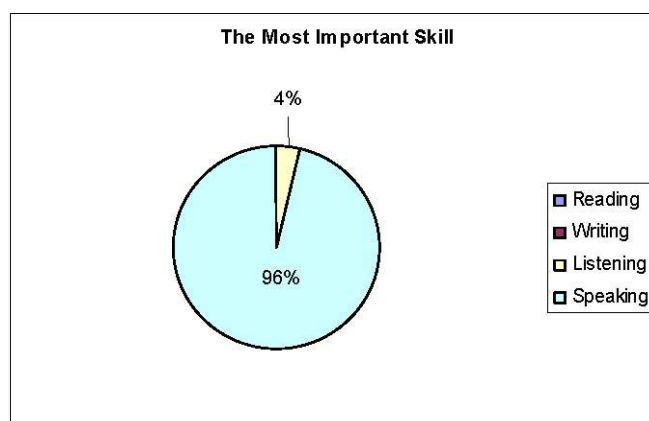
Order the basic skills in ELF learning according to their importance for you. Use numbers 1 to 4, where 1 = the most important – 4 = the less important.

Here, the respondents were asked to order the four basic skills in EFL learning according to their importance for them as students of English. They were supposed to use numbers 1 to 4, going from 1 = the most important skill, to 4 = the less important. Similarly as it was with the previous question, I wanted to know more about the four skills, of which I was particularly concerned with the students' opinions about the importance of speaking. Nonetheless, I wanted to compare the positions of the other three skills as well.

4.4 RESULTS TWO

When considering my attitudes about the prominent importance of good speaking for almost all students of English, it will probably be no surprise if I say that I had expected the vast majority of the respondents to mark speaking as the most important skill. However, I must admit that I had not expected the results to be so striking and unequivocal. Speaking never got worse mark than 2 and only 4% of the respondents put it to the second position after listening. The rest, that is 96%, clearly expressed that speaking and oral communication was paramount for them.

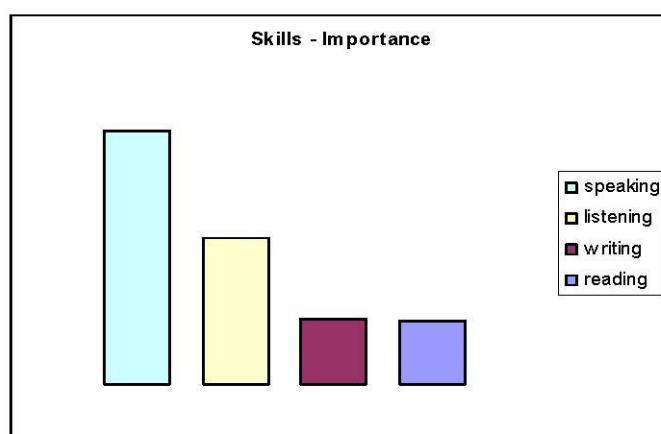
Graph 4: The most important skill



The above graph shows the average from marks the skills received, ordered from the most important skill to the less. I would only like to remind you here that unlike in the previous question where the students were asked to evaluate themselves using the full scale of marks (1 to 5), here the worst possible mark was 4. (1 = the most important skill, 4 = the less important skill). That means, the smaller the number (and the shorter the column) is, the more important the students find that skill.

The second graph shows the positions of skills. I would only like to remind you here that the students were told to order the skills, using marks from 1 = the most important, to 4 = the less important.

Graph 5: The importance of skills



The average marks were 1.04 for speaking, 2.30 for listening, 3.24 for writing and 3.26 for

reading. As I have already written, speaking became without any doubts the clear winner in terms of the importance for the students. With listening in the second position, it seems that students give priority to the two “audio“ skills. By contrast, it is not possible to proclaim the loser in this battle because the two remaining skills scored almost exactly the same average numbers.

4.5 QUESTIONS FIVE, SIX, SEVEN AND EIGHT

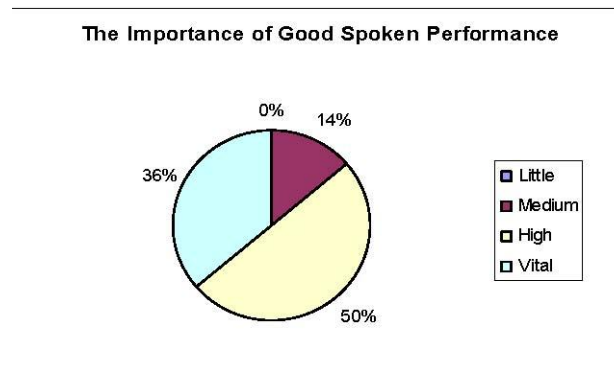
How important is for you the ability to express yourself and communicate in English?
To what extent is the overall quality of your speaking performance important for you?
To what extent is the grammatical correctness of your speaking performance important for you? What level of speaking performance would you like to achieve eventually?

The next four questions concentrated on speaking only. The purpose of them was to find out how valuable the good communicative competence was for the respondents as English speakers (question 5), how important they found the overall quality of their spoken performance (6), and in particular its grammatical correctness (7). Last but not least, I also asked them to provide the level of spoken performance they would like to achieve one day (8). These questions were multiple-choice and the respondents could choose from 4 or 5 options the one that suited them the best. I expected from the data collected from these four questions to suggest to what extent, if at all, students of English care about their speaking. I also wanted to know the respondents' goals in learning spoken English, since I am convinced that the teachers should know some of them and to a certain degree adjust their approach according to them. If an individual does not demand anything else than just to be able to converse a bit with the locals when on holiday, it is quite different from the situation when somebody plans to live and work in a foreign country. Undoubtedly, in the former case the person will be happy if they say anything at all and the addressee catches the message, while in the latter such level would definitely not be satisfactory.

4.6 RESULTS THREE

I will be dealing with the four questions together, for they are at a high degree interconnected. Here are the results of question 5, in which the respondents were to indicate the importance of good spoken performance for them. They could choose one from four options, which were: it is of little, medium, high, or vital importance.

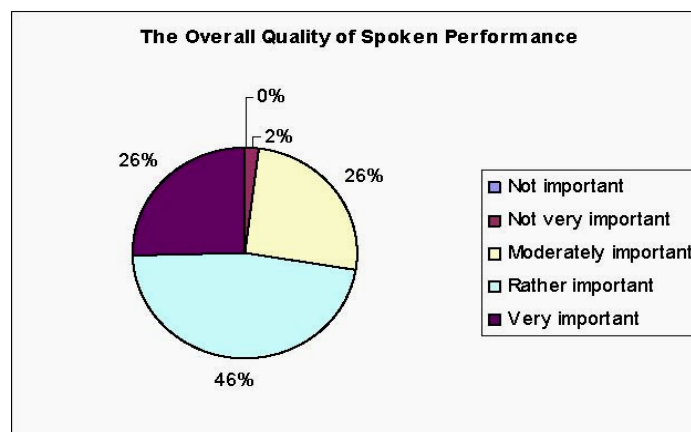
Graph 6: The importance of good spoken performance.



As we can see, more than 4/5 of the respondents, exactly 86%, labelled the good spoken performance as at least highly important. Roughly only one in seven considered it to be of medium importance, while no one considered the spoken performance to be only little important.

In the next question, they were to express how important was for them the overall good quality of their spoken performance. This once, there was offered five options to choose from, namely: not at all, not very, moderately, rather, and very important. The results were as follows:

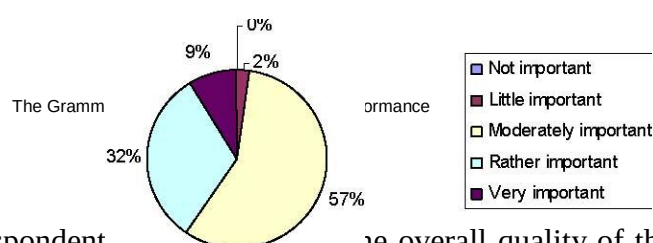
Graph 7: The importance of the overall quality of spoken performance.



The most respondents, almost one half, considered the fact whether their spoken performance was in general of good quality to be rather important. One fourth of them found it moderately important and the same number very important. We can thus see that 98% of all the respondents do care about the good quality of their speaking, whereas only 2% do not pay any particular attention to it. No one marked the fact whether their speaking was good as completely unimportant.

I was particularly interested in whether and to what degree the respondents cared about the grammatical correctness of their speaking. Some people tend not to be much concerned with the grammatical correctness of what they say. On the other hand, some worry about grammar so much that it almost inhibits them from saying anything at all. Therefore I was interested in whether there would be any differences between questions 6 and 7 in terms of percentage distributions. The difference can be spotted immediately:

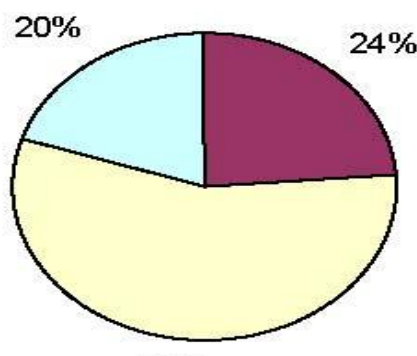
Graph 8: The importance of the grammatical correctness of spoken performance.



While one respondent finds the overall quality of their speaking very important, only one in ten is equally concerned with the grammatical correctness. But the biggest shift took place in the yellow field. When compared to the overall quality, twice as many students find the grammatical accuracy only moderately important.

Finally, the students were asked to state what their desired level of spoken performance was – that is, what level would they like to achieve one day. They were given four options: to be able to “communicate somehow“, to be able to speak without much effort, to be able to speak at a good level and without any problems, and to be able to speak at an excellent level:

Graph 9: The desired level of spoken performance.



3/4 of them expressed the wish to become very competent speakers. One in five even wanted

to be proficient one day.

To summarize the findings from questions 5, 6, 7 and 8, it could be said that students do realize the importance of speaking in EFL learning in the vast majority of cases. They are very much concerned with the overall quality of their spoken performance but considerably less anxious about its grammatical accuracy. In my opinion, this discrepancy agrees with the presumptions stated in the theoretical part of my thesis – that is, the good knowledge of grammar, especially if it is not supported by sufficient knowledge in the other areas which the communicative competence consists of, does not automatically ensure good language production. Also, it would vindicate the generally accepted assumption that most students would prefer speaking a lot at the price of occasional inaccuracy to speaking a little, though 100% correctly.

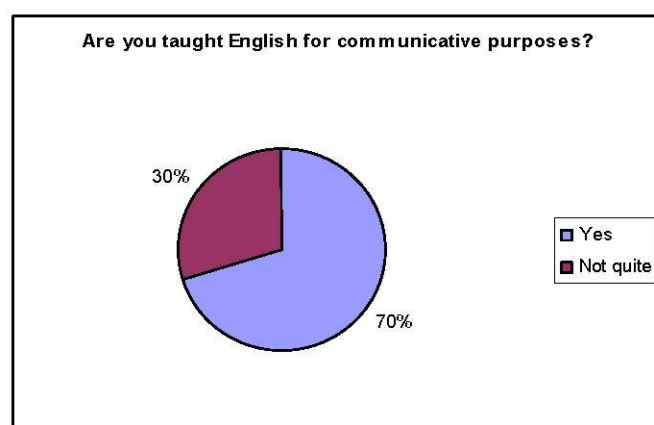
4.7 QUESTION NINE

Do you think that you are taught communicative English? If not, specify what you would change.

Starting with question 9 I approach the pivotal part of my survey. The purpose of this question was to reveal whether the respondents thought they were taught English so as to be able to use it for oral communication. They were asked to tick either yes or not quite. In case they thought that they were not, they were supposed to specify what could have been improved.

4.8 RESULTS FOUR

Graph 10: English for communicative purposes



Graph 10: English for communicative purposes.

It is worth mentioning that the results from the First Cycle and the second Cycle were

practically identical. 70% of the respondents believed they are taught communicative English, which would definitely be a pleasant discovery if the rest were not so critical in giving reasons why they did not think so. The most frequently mentioned reason was that there should be more STT (student talking time) in the lessons. The respondents demanded more conversation (6 respondents), more exercises based on conversation (4 respondents), one even expressed their wish to be asked to give more oral presentations. Also, some wished to be provided with more vocabulary in the lessons (3 respondents). One student complained about too many students in the class, another one blamed the way of teaching the language in general, but unfortunately did not provide more specific answer, and one student would appreciate more contact with native speakers. And finally, I dare to quote one particular answer, which was probably the most radical of all:

I learn 'scholastic English', which is totally useless in life. After all, I would appreciate having any reasons to communicate with the teacher...

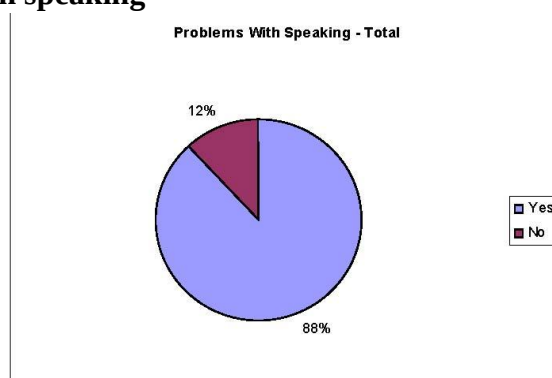
4.9 QUESTION TEN

Do you face any problems when speaking English?

The last four questions were aimed at low speaking performance, its possible causes and ideas how the performance could possibly be improved. First and foremost, I needed to find out how many of the respondents felt they had "any problems" with their speaking. With regards to the fact that the question could possibly sound ambiguous and unclear, I provided several examples such as: your speaking is not as good as you would wish, you have often problems to express yourself, speak continuously, maintain conversation, you frequently have to search for the right word or make quite a lot of mistakes. The respondents could choose between yes and no.

4.10 RESULTS FIVE

Graph 11: Problems with speaking



Graph 11: Problems with speaking.

Almost 90% of the respondents admit having certain problems when speaking English. The results from first and second cycle varied. It was no surprise to learn that the students from second cycle “did slightly better” – here, the ratio was 84% yes to 16% no, whereas in the first year and second year, 92% to 8%. These findings could perhaps be accredited to the fact that second cycle sometimes put more emphasis on communicative activities so that the students have more opportunities to practice speaking and become both more competent and confident. However, the overall outcome could be interpreted in only one possible way – the presence of problems with speaking is really very frequent and students are well aware of them.

4.11 QUESTION ELEVEN

If you feel you have any problems when speaking, specify them.

Quite obviously, there would be little point in just learning about the percentages and not looking for each individual’s characterization of the problem. That is why the respondents were asked to briefly describe their difficulties in case they went for the answer yes in question 10.

4.12 RESULTS SIX

Since it is difficult to make statistics from open questions because there are no two or more answers which would be completely the same, I will quote some of the responses:

I make a lot of mistakes and often do not know how to say what I want, even though I know it theoretically.

I very often search for words and think how to construct sentences.

[...] I can’t speak because in the lessons we belabor the same again and again – topics, which can hardly be used in everyday speaking.

Limited vocabulary → problems to express what I want

Whenever I speak English, I cannot think of suitable words. I do not experience this problem when I write in English.

I am ashamed of my pronunciation.

It would be better if I had more time to think in advance. Also, when I speak within myself, it is O.K.

too many students, too little space for those who are bad at speaking...

I am inhibited and nervous.

Inability to think and react so quickly;

4.13 QUESTION TWELVE

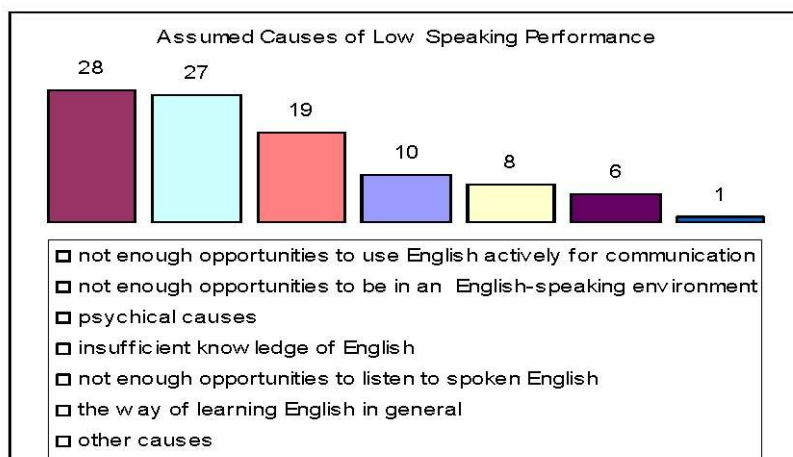
If you feel you have any problems when speaking, what do you think might be the cause(s) of them?

Once the respondents have described the problems they struggle with when speaking, I asked them to reflect on the possible causes of the problems. Unlike in 11, in this question again they were offered several options to choose from. They could mark as many options as they wanted, not just one, or write their own ideas in case of need. The options offered were: insufficient knowledge of English, not enough opportunities to use English actively for communication, not enough opportunities to listen to spoken English, not enough opportunities to be in an English speaking environment, the way of learning English in general, psychical causes (inhibition, nervousity, incommunicativeness, fear of saying something incorrectly etc.) and other causes – please, describe them. Similarly as question 11, this question was to be answered only by those respondents who admitted having any problems with speaking and matched yes in 10. Still, it could be said that among the most frequently mentioned “symptoms“ were the usage of less advanced vocabulary, grammatical inaccuracy, inability to be prompt in responding and low speaking performance or even silence because of inhibition.

4.14 RESULTS SEVEN

The graph below presents the results. The individual causes are ordered from the most frequently mentioned to the least. I would like to remind that the respondents were allowed to tick more than just one possibility, which in the majority of cases they did. The number above each of the columns represents the total number of “votes“the corresponding cause received.

Graph 12: Some of the causes of low speaking performance



Graph 12: Some of the causes of low speaking performance.

To sum up, we can see that the students would mostly appreciate having more opportunities to use their English for communication and also take advantage of being more often in an English speaking environment. The third most “popular” were various psychological causes. By the way, the combination of these three options was also the most common answer. As for the last column representing other causes than those offered, only one respondent marked the option and stated that they thought they did not study hard enough.

4.15 QUESTION THIRTEEN

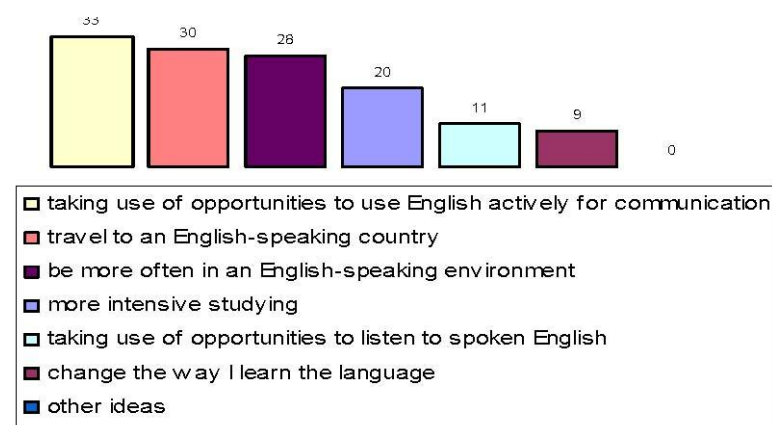
If you feel you have any problems when speaking, how do you think the problems could be overcome (or minimized)?

The last question of the survey sought suggestions on how the problems with speaking (if the respondent admitted having any) could be overcome, or at least minimized. Again, the respondents were offered several options and they could tick more than just one. If they felt that none of the options expressed their opinions, they were welcome to provide their own ideas. The solutions suggested were as follows: more intensive studying, change the way I learn the language, taking use of opportunities to use English actively for communication, taking use of opportunities to listen to spoken English, be more often in an English speaking environment, travel to an English speaking country and other ideas – please, specify them.

4.16 RESULTS EIGHT

Similarly as in question 14, the graph below shows the numbers of ticks received.

Graph 13: Suggested Solutions of Low Speaking Performance



Graph 13: Suggested solutions.

The respondents think that the best way to fight with poor or unsatisfactory speaking performance is to practice it. Almost the same number of them also believe that the problem can be solved if they travel to a country where English is spoken as the mother tongue. Only slightly less think that being exposed to and having to use English in an English Speaking country environment would help. Not a few students admitted that more intensive studying would also be beneficial. And finally, some considered listening to spoken English important, while several would completely change the way of learning the language.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE STUDY

5.1 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The findings from the survey presented in the previous chapter are neither revolutionary, nor very surprising. Even though some details and numbers are quite remarkable, the survey as whole does not make any ‘epochal discoveries.’ The results bring some of the most common problems and difficulties the students struggle with, as well as some valuable feedback and suggestions for possible improvements. In general, it could be said that students do realize the importance of good speaking and communication both in EFL learning and in everyday life. They seem to be well aware of the fact that knowing English means (among other factors, of course) being able to speak. It is also evident that most of the students would not want to reconcile with being only passive speakers of English. This is undoubtedly encouraging news.

On the other hand, though, nine students in ten are either unsatisfied with their speaking, or not confident enough speakers. Even if we take into consideration that a lot of learners of foreign languages are too critical when assessing themselves, this fact is- without exaggeration, alarming. No matter what the teacher who teaches such a student thinks, no matter what the objective quality of the student’s real performance is that is to say one of the primary goals of language teaching should be making the learner competent and also confident speaker. The students most often complained of having to search for the right words or use of grammar, but also of inhibition, uncertainty and bad pronunciation. A number of them would appreciate having more opportunities to speak. And quite a number have problems with spontaneity and reacting instantly, which could be accredited to lack of rehearsal opportunities.

5.2 RECOMMENDATION

From the findings of this study, the frequency of occurrence of various problems with speaking proves that by far not every student who feels that they do not speak well can be labeled as neurotic, sheepish, lazy, or not having enough talent. I do not want to blame anybody for such a state of affairs and I am not saying that the system of teaching is wrong either. In regard to this, I have classified my recommendations into four points as followed:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS TO SCHOOL AUTHORITIES

They have a role to play in the fluency of EFL learners of the Faculty of Art in General and Foreign Languages Department in particular. Already, many programs are on the ground for use in order to help improving the very area concerned by the EFL learners such as:

- Human Resources training before being sent on the field of Teaching;
- Making available the appropriate infrastructures needed;

2. RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENGLISH TEACHERS

It would be advisable for at least some teachers of English to reflect on the outcome of the survey and then also on the way they teach. They could then ask themselves several questions such as:

- ‘‘Do I encourage my students to speak?
- Do I make them feel confident and willing to express themselves?
- Do I provide them with enough opportunities to speak and converse?
- Do I focus on communicative English sufficiently?
- Does teaching English in my opinion mean more than just teaching them vocabulary and grammars so that they are able to fill in various exercises and pass the tests?
- Do I care about how they perceive their speaking and do my best to help them deal with their problems?’’

Also teachers of English as Foreign Language should do it kindly to bring in some videos and movies acted from home country of language.

And I think that the task of us as (future) language teachers is to persuade them of and act according to that significance, not assign speaking anyhow lower importance or even pretend that it does not have to be practiced much in the classroom.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS TO LEARNERS OF EFL

Of course, the way the teacher approaches teaching matters a lot but the students themselves control the learning process and are responsible for their progress. It is up to them to make the best of all opportunities to improve their language skills. There is no doubt that if a learner wants to become a better speaker than they are, they cannot rely only on what they acquire in the classroom. A lightly motivated, goal seeking and independent learner- which is probably the dream of all language teachers- will need to prove to themselves whenever possible that

they are really able to communicate efficiently and at a fair level. But their motivation and effort should result from the awareness of the significance of good speaking and oral communication. Students learning foreign language should have a platform where they can learn from students in the language originated country.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS TO LEARNERS' PARENTS

As far as parents are concerned, they should help their children with all the necessary needs for them to fulfill their academic goals in order to fit for Job requirement.

Perhaps the findings will be of some benefits for both the teachers and the students, at least in that they will realize that speaking and its practicing in language learning cannot be underestimated or skimmed on, and that building and improving one's communicative competence in EFL learning is definitely worth every effort.

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APENDIX - QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE STUDY

Questionnaire intended to the students of the English department

1- How would you evaluate yourself? Give marks : 1= best mark

		Reading	Writing	Listening	Speaking
1	Best				
2	Good				
3	fair				
4	Bad				
5	worst				

2- Order the basic skills in EFL learning according to their importance for you

mark	Reading	Writing	Listening	Speaking
5				
4				
3				
2				
1				

3- How would you evaluate yourself? Give marks (1 = the best mark – 5 = the worst mark) to each of the four basic skills in language learning (reading, writing, listening, speaking).

4- Order the basic skills in ELF learning according to their importance for you. Use numbers 1 to 4, going from 1 = the most important – 4 = the least important.

5- How important is for you the ability to express yourself and communicate in English?

- it is of little importance

- it is of a medium importance

- it is of a high importance

- it is of a vital importance.

6- To what extent is the overall quality of your speaking performance important for you?

- not at all ☐

- not very ☐

- Moderately rather ☐

- very important ☐

7- To what extent is the grammatical correctness of your speaking performance important for you?

8- What level of speaking performance would you like to achieve eventually?

Choose from the list bellow with an X:

☐ To be able to communicate somehow

☐ To be able to speak without much effort

☐ To be able to speak at a good level and without any problems

☐ To be able to speak at an excellent level

9- Do you think that you are taught communicative English?

Yes/not quite ☐

If not, specify what you would choose:

10- Do you face any problems when speaking English?

Yes/No

11- If you feel you have any problems when speaking, specify then:

- Your speaking is not as you would wish ☐
- You have often problems to express yourself, ☐
- You have often problems to speak continuously ☐
- You have often problems to maintain conversation ☐
- You frequently have to search for the right word or make a lot of mistakes ☐

12- If you feel you have any problems when speaking, what do you think might be the cause of them?

- In sufficient knowledge of English ☐
- Not enough opportunities to use actively English for communication ☐
- Not enough opportunities to listen to spoken English ☐
- Not enough opportunities to be in an English-Speaking environment ☐
- The way of learning English in general, psychical causes (inhibition, nervousity, incommunicativeness, fear of saying something incorrectly, etc) ☐
- Other causes, please describe them ☐

13- If you feel you have any problems when speaking, how do you think the problems could be overcome (mineralized)?

Tick yes or no:

- More intensive studying ☐
- Change the way I study the language ☐
- Taking use of opportunities to use English actively for communication ☐
- Taking use of opportunities to listen to spoken English ☐
- Be more often in an English environment ☐
- Travel to an English speaking country ☐
- Other ideas, please, specify them ☐