Mending Students' Speaking Deficiencies in Moroccan EFL Classes

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Abstract
This paper presents an attempt to help students enhance their speaking skills in Moroccan English as a foreign language (EFL) classes. It was observed that students in Moroccan high schools are generally not able to speak their minds out freely and imaginatively in English. This paper studies the causes for students' weak speaking skills in the English language and suggests solutions to mend the situation. An observation of the teaching and learning practices took place in a sample Moroccan high school and interviews as well as questionnaires were administered for the aim of tracing the obstacles students face in their learning process as well as their preferences that they wish to have applied in the speaking sessions. Several speaking activities were tested and proved effective in encouraging students to speak English in class and defeat their shyness and reluctance to express their opinions. These activities are provided in this paper for teachers to use starting from common core classes passing by 1st year Baccalaureate(Bac)and ending with 2nd year Bac (common core being the first year of high school in Morocco and so on) and include watching films and conducting projects in the framework of a cooperative learning. They outline a project of forming good speakers of English in Morocco and maybe elsewhere in the Arab world.

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Moroccan high school EFL teaching, English speaking activities, English speaking obstacles

Introduction

Speaking has always been considered the most essential skill to be mastered along the history of foreign language teaching and learning. The need for mastering the speaking fluency in English has dramatically increased due to globalization and thus the strengthening position of English as a language for international communication. Students of English as a foreign language (EFL) in general consider verbal communication more significant and valuable than knowing how to read and write. The emphasis put on speaking proficiency recently is also the result of the widespread popularity of audio-lingual methodologies in the 1960s, and the communicative competence movement that began in the 1970s.

Observing Moroccan high school students in EFL classes has led to the conclusion that they are extremely reluctant to speak in class. Students did not take part in conversations, avoided eye contact with the teacher, refused suggesting topics to speak about, hardly asked any questions and obviously did not volunteer answers. This paper discusses the findings of a study conducted to investigate the students' perceptions on their English speaking skill development, the hindrances that prevent them from speaking in class and the activities that would help them overcome any obstacle they may encounter while trying to speak English.

To sum up, a problem is observed in Moroccan EFL classrooms: the students' reluctance to speak English in class. The objective is: help those students develop their speaking abilities in English. The tool is: investigating the problem from its roots and suggesting remedies for the situation.

Literature Review

Definition of Teaching Speaking in EFL classes

Speaking as an EFL skill is defined as "students' ability to express themselves orally, coherently, fluently and appropriately in a given meaningful context to serve both transactional and interactional purposed using correct pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary and adopting the pragmatic and discourse rules of the spoken language" (Torky, 2006, p. 30).

On the pedagogical level, teaching speaking manly revolves around a number of skills. Nunan (2003) explains that a correct speech sound patterns of English including word stress, intonation and rhythm patterns are a very important step for learners to master. In addition, Nunan (2003) argues that language fluency is reached through using the right words according to the social setting, audience and subject and by organizing one's thoughts logically and meaningfully and expressing them with few unnatural pauses.

A brief historical background on approaches to teaching speaking

Methods and approaches to teaching languages started emerging in the 1900s. Some achieved wide levels of acceptance and popularity but were then replaced by other methods having more appealing ideas and theories. The Grammar-Translation Method was the first to be introduced in the 19th century. According to this method "understanding literary texts is the primary focus of foreign language study and there is little need for a speaking knowledge of the language…oral work was reduced to a minimum" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Following this came the Direct method in the mid and late 19th century which was a reaction to the previous one and where oral communication was organized around question and answer exchanges between

students and teachers in small intensive classes (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). This method is framed by the certain rules such as demonstrating rather than translating, acting rather than explaining, asking question rather than giving a speech, correcting mistakes rather than imitating them and speaking normally and naturally rather than speaking too slowly, too quickly or too loudly (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Afterwards, in the 1950s appeared the Audio-Lingual Method. This method started as an Army Specialized Training Program and initially aimed at making general learners attain conversational proficiency in a variety of foreign languages (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). It was described as an intensive, oral-based approach to the learning of a foreign language. Finally, in the 1960s, the Communicative Approach made its way to the teaching practices of speaking foreign languages. The principles of communicative language learning as per Richards and Rodgers (2001) include using dialogues to communicate needs and feelings, enhancing the importance of correct pronunciation of words and encouraging learners to interact with other people through through pair and group work, or in their writings.

A brief theoretical overview on teaching speaking

One of the most important suggestions of Krashen's Theory of Second Language Acquisition, (1988) is the differentiation between the "learning" and "acquisition" processes. Krashen (1988) pinpoints that "learning" refers to the formal instruction system where the learner is aware of the language rules he/she is learning. This process leads to machine-like production of language where sentences are formed according to the rules learnt. In the context of teaching speaking as an activity in English classes, students' input would be unnatural. On the hand, language "acquisition", according to Krashen (1988) is compared to the way children acquire their mother tongue; i.e. through natural exposure to language in authentic contexts. Acquisition then, refers to the situation where learners subconsciously utter meaningful sentences to convey a certain message and where the communicative act is reinforced rather than the form of the language spoken (Krashen, 1988).

In order to demonstrate the importance of this differentiation of both "learning" and "acquisition" concepts in the classroom context, Krashen (1987) stresses the importance of reducing anxiety in learning environments by addressing issues students are interested in. Therefore, the mechanical drilling students face while studying language activities mainly speaking is highly unadvisable because it puts them in a situation where they are forced to apply rules to a language they were not exposed enough to. This generally leads to immediate and short-term results where the function learnt is quickly forgotten, if not misunderstood by students because it was not associated to any social situation they are familiar with. Supporting that, Krashen (1987) explains that "These methods do not force early production in the second language, but allow students to produce when they are 'ready', recognizing that improvement comes from supplying communicative and comprehensible input, and not from forcing and correcting production" (p.7).

In parallel, Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei and Thurrell (1997) quote Richards (1991) who argued that there were "two major approaches to teaching speaking skills", a direct and indirect approach. The direct approach, Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei and Thurrell (1997) explain, recalls the principles of the Grammar Translation Method and "involves planning a conversational program

around the specific micro-skills, strategies, and processes that are involved in fluent conversation" (p.141) while the indirect method leans more towards the principles of the Communicative Approach "in which conversational competence is seen as the product of engaging learners in conversational interaction" (p.141). In this context, Cabrera and Bazo, (2002) discuss that "in order for any speaking activity to be successful, children need to acknowledge that there is a real reason for asking a question or giving a piece of information" (para. 6). Therefore the activities presented to learners should "provide a reason for speaking, whether this is to play a game or to find out real information about friends in the class" (Cabrera & Bazo, 2002, para. 6).

Teaching speaking in the Moroccan context
The Standards Based Approach recommended for high school teachers in Morocco has been adopted by the Ministry of National Education for the last two decades. It embraces the pillars of the National Charter of Education (which are: the respect of Islamic principles, the Moroccan identity and the cultural heritage) and is based on the principles of the Communicative Approach which suggest that "real communication requires attending to messages and reacting to them appropriately, teaching speaking gives learners a high level of self-confidence, motivation for learning, and an appropriate training for real-life tasks, a lot of speaking takes place in real life; this lends credence to the belief that teaching this skill is not just a fad, but it is a necessity and teaching speaking provides learners with the opportunity to grow as effective world citizens; able to transmit, share and compare ideas, information and cultural patterns of different speakers" (Chaibi, 2006, p. 12)
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According to this approach, Chaibi, (2006) argues that speaking is not taught as an individual skill " a conversation, for example, might lead to writing, listening, reading or a written report or a short presentation" (p. 15) explaining that skill integration enhances learning by encouraging more contextualized practice . Also, it aims at familiarizing learners with such speaking aspects as turn-taking, negotiation of meaning, different levels of formality, stress patterns, rhythm, and intonation, appropriate use of vocabulary and appropriate use of idiomatic expressions (Chaibi, 2006, p. 15). Among the activities stated in the Guidelines to help students develop their speaking skills are "listening to authentic conversations, information gap activities, role plays and simulations, discussions, debates and conversations, short presentations and oral reports" (Chaibi, 2006, p. 16).

As a matter of fact, the Standards based Approach does not focus on one skill at the expense of the others (like the case for the Grammar Translation Method and Audio-Lingualism), but rather makes all skills integrative in the sense that by teaching one skill, the other ones are taught as well either implicitly or explicitly. It is learner-centered where the teacher is just a facilitator and an interested listener. Supposedly, this approach should frame the teaching practices of EFL in Moroccan high schools.

Methodology
Participants
The participants selected for this study were 40 Moroccan high school students from both art and science streams and studying English as a foreign language (French being the first foreign language taught in Morocco). All participants are native Arabs and belong to the three

high school study levels: Common Core, First Year Baccalaureate and Second Year Baccalaureate. Before that, those participants had never studied English in their primary or secondary schools except some who claim having studied it "vaguely" in the last year of secondary school right before the Common Core level. The students were selected randomly to complete questionnaires and their participation was voluntary.

Tools of the study

This study is based on two main activities: observation and a questionnaire. Concerning observation, it relied on two types of observations: 1. Passive observation based on carefully watching students interact in EFL classes 2. Active observation based on directly asking students about the problem at hand and how they felt about it. It is also based on conducting interviews with students and administrating a questionnaire to help get a detailed analysis of the problem.

The questionnaire investigates the reasons behind the students' reluctance to speak and their say in the matter. It was administered to obtain quantitative input in order to determine the students' perceptions on their EFL speaking development. The questions were written in Arabic as they targeted mainly the low achievers. The respondents were around 40 students randomly selected from the 1st year and 2nd year Baccalaureate. The seven questions included in the questionnaire can be divided into three categories. The first concentrates on students' perceptions on the subject. The second centers on the reasons behind their reluctance to speak (reasons related to the teacher, the textbook and themselves as well). The last one aims at knowing the students' preferences in terms of ways of teaching, activities, topics, etc. that would make them willing and eager to speak in class. As for the Common Core students, it was too early to assess their level of achievement in EFL so their contribution was helping the researcher form a general picture on how English is taught and perceived at its very early stage through observation and interviews.

Data collection

The researcher visited students in their English classes and explained the goal behind the research. Questionnaires were distributed to each of the participants willing to contribute to this study. The researcher is an English teacher so the participants she chose where mainly students from classes she teaches or had already taught.

Case study

Investigation

How Students Feel About English as a School Subject

The first observation of students' behaviors in class towards the activity of speaking was the obvious unwillingness to speak and lack of care towards the subject. The questionnaire administered to those students and the interviews conducted with them showed that 99% of students actually do realize the importance of English and the mastery of its speaking skill for their future careers and higher studies. The choices given for the question "what does the English language represent for you?" in the questionnaire were:

1.   Just like any other school subject
2.   An important skill for my future career
3.   A worthless school burden

Among these 99% of students, one third admit that their level in English is too weak, that they hardly understand the teacher and cannot interact with her and two thirds say that their level in English is average; that they can understand what the teacher says but cannot respond or interact. The choices given for the question of "how do you evaluate your level in English?" were:

1.   Very weak: I hardly understand the teacher and I can't answer her.
2.   Average: I can understand what the teacher says but I can't give my feedback.
3.   Good: I understand what my teacher says and I answer her fluently.

On the other hand, very few declared that they were good and fluent. In numbers, 5 out of 40 students chose the third statement.

These findings say one thing: if the majority of students were aware of the importance of English as a speaking skill in their lives, it would not make any sense to conclude that they were unwilling to learn it and not interested in it as a subject for no reason. Also, if most of them were average to weak in terms of mastery of the language and its speaking skill, then it had to be something else hindering them from being good speakers.

The reasons behind the students' unwillingness to speak in class
During the observation stage, many phenomena were taking place in the classroom. Sometimes, a student is really willing to speak his mind out about a certain topic but feels failed by their words and end up babbling in English or talking in Arabic which is highly unacceptable in class. Other times, some students have the right answer but utter it very shyly and quietly hoping that it will not be heard and checking their sides to see whether their answer was noticed. At times, students are uninterested in subject taught. They do not pay attention to the teacher. They do not care about the topic of the activity and are not even aware of what they are supposed to learn and produce. As a result, they resort to either mischief as a form of expressing boredom or to disclosure for fear of being asked to speak. These intriguing data helped gather a number of possible reasons that pushed students away from participating in oral activities. These reasons, as included in the questionnaire are as follows:

1.   The complexity of the textbook.
2.   The topics of the textbook are not interesting for students.
3.   The teacher adopts a boring way of teaching and does not make efforts in looking for interesting material.
4.   Lack of self confidence and fear of error and of others' mocking remarks.
5.   The teacher speaks in a strange language and does not provide enough clarifications.
6.   The absence of a warm and close relationship between students and the teacher.
7.   The students do not have enough vocabulary to express their ideas.

These statements were given to students who were asked to classify them from the most to least relevant reasons behind their reluctance to speak. 99% of students agreed that their major and primary hindrance to speak in class was the penury of English vocabulary in their cognitive repertoire. They all agreed that they, sometimes, understand and like the topic of the lesson but are unable to speak about it simply because they do not have the words to do so

In order to understand why students lack the necessary vocabulary to make meaningful interactions, an observation of the teaching practices vis a vis speaking took place among Common Core students. It was observed that little or no room was given to oral activities at that stage of language learning. Most students argued that they study English in the traditional way following the course of the textbook and seldom have the opportunity to speak in class. It was also observed that the textbook at the level of Common Core (and the other two levels for that matter) was overloaded with material and lessons to be taught; that their volume was too big for a nine-month-long period of time. As a result of that and of the Ministry of Education's instructions to teachers to finish the textbook within the school year, teachers find themselves between caring for their students' needs and abiding by the ministry's instructions. Very often, they resort to the second option.

The second most significant reason hindering students' effective oral participation was chosen to be "Lack of self-confidence and fear of error and of others' mocking remarks". It is known that adolescents are more sensitive to people's remarks than people at any other stage of life. They are in the phase of personality development and anything that is likely to shake that would be a red line to them. It is also understood that students shun speaking to avoid any situation that would cause embarrassment and hence make them lose face in front of their comrades.

The next most relevant reasons behind the students' reluctance to speak chosen equally by the great majority are: "The complexity of the textbook", "the topics of the textbook are not interesting for students" and "the teacher adopts a boring way of teaching and does not make efforts in looking for interesting material". These three statements are related to the textbook and its adaptation by the teacher to meet the needs and interests of the students. The latter judged some parts of the textbook challenging and uninteresting and argued that the teacher adds to the matter by the boring way they teach the lessons and their indifference towards students' needs and interests.

Finally, students chose "the teacher speaks in a strange language and does not provide enough clarifications" and "the absence of a warm and close relationship between students and the teacher" as the last most significant hindrances for their participation in speaking activities. These components show the role of the teacher in making the learning process smooth and enjoyable for students.

The questionnaire administrated also included a blank space for students to express their minds on the reasons hindering their oral fluency; their answers were the following:
1.   Some students learn English in the last year of secondary school and some don't which makes the latter weak relatively.
2.   Students do not value a language called "second foreign language" and do not make efforts to learn it. (noting that French is the first foreign language in Moroccan schools)
3.   The textbook is outdated and does not tackle contemporary issues.

The teacher's role in helping students speak in class
The learning process is a matter of giving and taking. This section investigates how students view the roles and duties of their teacher in enabling them to improve in English and

mainly in their oral proficiency. A list of six duties was provided to students who were asked to order them from most to least important. The findings were the following:
According to students, the teacher should:

1.   Design lessons that relate to the interests and lives of adolescents.
2.   Adopt fun activities in class.
3.   Talk less and give a chance for students to speak and discuss.
4.   Give extra marks to motivate students and reward good answers.
5.   Be patient and accept students' mistakes.
6.   Give sufficient time for the students to think and not suppress them.

The student's role in improving their speaking skills

As for the students' awareness on their duties towards their learning process, the findings have shown that they are unexpectedly mature and sensible about their duties and obligations in their learning process. They classified their duties as follows:
According to students, they should:

1.   Do their homework as instructed by the teacher.
2.   Participate in class activities and give them attention.
3.   Not be afraid of making mistakes.
4.   Practice English outside of class.
5.   Prepare projects and present them in class.
6.   Trust their teacher and accept their remarks.

The activities that would help students participate and speak in class

The questionnaire included a section where students could suggest the topics and activities that interest them and that would make them eager to learn and speak in class. Among these were:

Topics:
1.   Tackling issues related to Morocco such as: history, culture and traditions…
2.   Using and teaching Information and Communication Technologies (ICT).
3.   Sensitization on social issues.
4.   Sports.
5.   Sciences.
6.   Communication in a globalized world.

Activities:
1.   Adopting simple discussion activities in class where all students get to give their opinion about a certain subject.
2.   Having drama/theater clubs.
3.   Having lessons explained on visual aids through pictures and videos instead of writing on the board and giving a lecture.

In general most students agreed that the topics discussed in class should be updated and should relate directly to their daily lives and areas of interests. Also, students obviously need

entertainment while learning English. They seem to have had enough with the traditional way of teaching and want some innovation and some liveliness in their class. On the other hand, in order to support the previous ideas, students were asked to classify some classroom activities from most interesting to least interesting and the list was ordered by the majority as follows:

1-   Having games and competitions during class.
2-   Watching films in English and discussing their themes.
3-   Presenting projects by students and discussing them in class.
4-   Listening to English songs and studying their lyrics.

Results of the study
Remedies to help students improve their speaking skills
     The investigation has led to shape a general picture of the teaching and learning situation in Moroccan high schools. The speaking activity should be an integral part of teaching at all levels of high school. Students will be able to speak when they are taught so. If, for example, the first lesson is on greeting and introducing oneself, students can easily perform and even make up small dialogues greeting each other and using the different expressions accordingly. Vocabulary is better understood and more effectively when practiced in authentic situations. Among the speaking activities appropriate to the common core level are:

Giving real-life speaking patterns to students: Native speakers of English have a natural flow, emphasizing certain words and running others together. Students should drill these patterns in practice in the classroom as often as possible in order to be acquainted with the English language as spoken by natives.

Teaching functional lessons in group scenarios: For example, the teacher chooses one topic, like restaurant language, and the many possible dialogues and vocabulary that could occur in such a setting. Then students role-play with each other to practice. The teacher constantly makes changes in the scenario to help students acquainted with different situations in real life. This activity includes language items like "restaurant language, asking for help, asking for/giving directions…."

Find Someone Who: This activity consists of giving the students a checklist which they use as they walk around the room trying to find a person who has a certain characteristic. When, for example, students find "someone who has been abroad" or "someone who was born at home," they write that person's name on their checklist and move on to the next person. The goal is to meet and talk to as many people as possible within the time limit in order to put one name by each of the characteristics. This game or activity allows students to break the ice between each other and do some constructive chatting. The noise will be inevitable but the teacher should bare in mind what is called a "healthy noise" atmosphere and tolerate some disorder as students will be moving around looking for answers. It is also a nice opportunity for student to let out all the stress and excess energy they have and which they are likely to use as disturbance in a traditional course of teaching.

Describing a Picture: This one consists of giving students one picture and having them describe it. For this activity, students can form groups and each group is given a different picture.

Students discuss the picture with their groups, and then a spokesperson for each group describes the picture to the whole class. This activity fosters the creativity and imagination of the learners and their public speaking skills.

Act it out: This one is both very constructive and funny. The activity consists of giving students pieces of papers with words or statements. Each student chooses a piece of paper and without showing it to their classmates; they act it out and make students guess that word or situation. This activity does not only reinforce the vocabulary items they have learnt but also makes them develop their critical thinking abilities and memory activation. This activity is excellent for making students talk and expand their English vocabulary by describing the acting going on.

Find out who: This activity is quite similar to the previous one, except that this one is mainly concerned with describing people. Students are required to choose a card where a name of a famous person is written. Students find out the name of that person by asking questions and the student holding the card can only answer "yes" or "no". This activity is excellent for entertaining students and for enriching their background knowledge about famous figures. The teacher can choose to give them figures they know everything about like pop stars, actors and other figures most of them don't know but should like famous people in the fields of science, history, politics, etc. This activity is really good for helping students master the ways for describing people. Adjectives like "tall, short, blond, brunette, big eyes, hazel eyes, straight nose, curly hair…" will no longer be confusing for them as they are the basics of the English language.

For first year and second year Baccalaureate, speaking activities should be a bit more challenging like:

Solve the Mystery/ Finish the Story: Here, the teacher presents to students a story without an end. The story stops at the peak point of its developing events and students are asked to give different endings according to their own interpretations. This speaking activity can give amazing results as students are given a limitless sphere of creativity and imagination. They can give any ending they like. They are free to make their own stories. This may be one of the rare activities where students are not bound to any rules. This activity helps students revive their old vocabulary and learn a new one. Their cognition is totally activated as they put themselves in the shoes of the characters and make up the ending they want to see happening. They live the story. This method is better adopted in a reading session where students are asked to create an end to the story (a very short one) and unleash their "hilarious" imaginations.

Have your say: This activity is similar to the previous one, it is also done mainly after the reading or listening session. Students are asked to give their personal standpoint about the topic in hand. This type of discussion generally revolves around the question "Are you for or against? Why?"- Needless to mention that the topic should be interesting to students and within their reach. This activity is particularly interesting because it results in opposite standpoints. The discussion usually heats up and most students become eager to make their points clear and more convincing than their mates'. The teacher's role is to stand back, listen and monitor the discussion by making students respect the principles of turn-taking and listening to their fellow classmates. This activity enhances students' :

1. Vocabulary,
2. Self-confidence by standing in front of others and daring to contradict them and make them adhere to their position,
3. Public speaking skills by getting rid of the stage fright from the attention they get when they are speaking in front of people,
4. Tolerance towards each other's opinions,
5. Awareness that there is no such a thing as a right or wrong opinion and that we are all different and see things differently according to our own perspectives,
6. Understanding of the principles of a sophisticated discussion where people listen to what the speaker says and wait for their turn vs. the primitive chaotic debate where everybody talks and no one listens and all end up fighting over who's right and who's wrong and
7. Learning from each other's background knowledge and experiences.

Watching films and documentaries: In this activity, the teacher carefully selects films and documentaries that meet certain criteria related to students' preferences and the educational goals and objectives. First of all, the film should have a clear objective (informing about a scientific or natural phenomenon, promoting a certain ideology, etc.). This activity should activate the students' schemata and enrich their background knowledge. In addition to that, this activity should aim to help students develop their critical thinking and maturate their perception of the world. This activity makes students learn implicitly new functions of language and thus develop their speaking skills by developing their repertoire of words and expressions. Also, by watching films and documentaries, students are exposed to authentic language as used by the native speakers and thus correct any pronunciation mistakes they might have. Students are required in this activity to react to the information presented. The best way to make as many students work as possible is to form groups of mixed abilities and have them come up with a general synthesis, addition, reaction, etc. to the film under study. The idea generated from each group will be presented by a spokesperson of that group in front of the whole class, who, in turn, will react to it.

Projects: This is the most popular form of oral activities in Moroccan high schools. Unfortunately, different teachers of the English language confirmed that this activity takes place only twice to three times a year (if it does). It takes a considerable amount of time from students in preparing it and from the teacher in monitoring the course of its preparation. Although it is a great way of making students autonomous learners, it is only doable a few times a year and cannot be relied upon as a regular speaking activity. However, this activity can be made simple and have all students participate in it. The idea is for the teacher to present the 10 topics (of the English language textbook adopted in Morocco) at the beginning of the year and ask students to form ten groups each of which takes a topic and makes a project about it. At the beginning of each unit, the group concerned presents the theme and explains it to their friends who debate it among themselves. As explained, the project can be as simple as a number of pictures and explanations on the topic in hand but with a deep understanding of its ideas and underlying messages.

Finally, it is important to point out that even with the application of such activities in a speaking lesson, motivation is the key to make students develop their speaking skills. This motivation can be either verbal; in the form of encouragement or praising or in the form of

giving pluses (+1,+2) where students who perform well or invest efforts during the session are rewarded. This can have a significant impact on their speaking performances.

Assessing the effectiveness of the suggested remedies

It is important to note first that the success of such activities depends mainly on the students' willingness to give them a try. These activities are simple and within their reach and they respond to all the criteria described for an interesting lesson and a motivating teacher. So, these activities are addressing those students whose English speaking skills are weak and who want them to improve. The assessment of the fruitfulness of those activities is done according to the same category of students.

Some of the above mentioned activities worked like magic. When the researcher adopted the activity of teaching **"functional practice in group scenarios"** with the Common Core classes, students showed great enthusiasm and enjoyment. For them, it was a break during class where they were able to talk to their friends and imagine situations and make up dialogues to present to their classmates. For the researcher, it was a very effective speaking activity where she could teach them how to work collaboratively and use their imagination freely and enhance their communicative skills. They were also exposed to a lot of listening in order to awaken their senses on the correct pronunciation of English words. Easy real life conversations were chosen in order to get them accustomed with the daily used language like "asking for directions, asking for help in a cloths shop, making phone calls…" The activity of **Act it Out** was also performed with Common Core students. They loved the activity and learnt a lot from it. For example, when the researcher adopted this activity in class, one student chose a card with "restaurant", the student started acting that he was eating then the other students kept uttering words like "breakfast, diner, lunch, bread, kitchen, meal, snack…." Until the word "restaurant" was found. This activity is easy, effortless and does not require any special equipment.

For the First and Second Bac students, the researcher applied different speaking activities such as "solve the mystery/ finish the Story, have your say, watching films and documentaries". The researcher also tried the "project" activity with 2nd year BAC students who showed great confidence to speak in front of their friends and even assertively give the floor for questions. The audience gave great attention to their friends and reacted to their presentations. The use of such oral activities showed how much students had to say. Even though many of them lacked the necessary vocabulary to talk, they were all motivated to participate and have their voice heard.

To sum up, this research does not pretend that through implementing those activities, students will become proficient speakers of English; it only highlights the motivating factors for students to consider speaking English in their EFL classes and fight their fear and resentfulness towards the activity. Those suggested activities form parts of a long term project where the teacher helps their students from Common Core classes until 2nd year BAC to become proficient speakers. This research also dismissed the common thought that students do not care about English as EFL in Morocco and confirmed their willingness and interest in learning the subject effectively.

Conclusion

As mentioned earlier, the activities suggested outline a project of forming good speakers of English. It is a long term project that starts from the very early stages of language learning. It supports the objectives of the Moroccan National Charter of Education in forming effective, self-confident speakers of English ready to face a globalized world by the time they graduate from high school. Finally, this research is made to emphasize the idea that the time has come to make a shift in the Moroccan teaching system and to give students more priority and attention and let them contribute on what they want to learn. It is high time teachers stopped treating students as buckets to be filled up with knowledge and expected to ruminate that knowledge.

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Appendix

The questionnaire administered is as follows (the original being the Arabic one):

Questionnaire on the topic 'SPEAKING IN ENGLISH

I am conducting a research on students' speaking skills in Moroccan EFL classrooms and I would like to know your opinions on the matter in order to improve the teaching and learning practices of the English language :

Gender :……………

Age :………………..

stream :……………..

lever :…………….

What does the English language represent for you

1. Just a school subject
2. An important language for my future career
3. A useless school burden

How do you assess your level in English

1. very weak : I barely understand the teacher
2. Average : I understand but I can't speak
3. very good : I understand the teacher and I can answer her

Order in degree of importance the causes for students' lack of attention towards speaking activities

1. The complexity of the textbook
2. Uninteresting topics in the textbooks
3. Boring teacher
4. Lack of self confidence
5. Lack of explanations from teachers
6. Lack of friendly ties between teachers and students
7. Students' weak language competences
8. Others :……………………………………………………………………

Mention some classroom activities that you think might help you improve your speaking skills

1. Listening to songs in the English language and studying their lyrics
2. Watching movies in English and discussing their topics
3. Playing educational games in class
4. Giving presentation by students and discussing them in class
5. Others:………………………………………………………………………..

Order in degree of importance: To help me improve my speaking skills,

The teacher should:

1. Speak less and encourage students to speak more
2. Be patient and accept students' mistakes
3. Include fun activities in her teaching
4. Design lessons that tackle teens' interests
5. Give enough time to students to think before speaking and not suppress their freedom of speech
6. Give bonuses (extra marks) for students' efforts to motivate them.
7. Others:……………………………………………………………………………

The student should:

1. Participate and be interested in classroom activities
2. Not be shy or scared of mistakes
3. Abide by the instructions of the teacher
4. Give presentations in class
5. Trust the teacher and accept her comments and recommendations
6. Practice English outside the classroom
7. Others:…………………………………………………………………………………..

Suggest some topics that you wish to study in the English class:

1. ……………………………………………………….
2. ………………………………………………
3. …………………………………………………………
4. ………………………………………………

<u>استطلاع للرأي في موضوع'التحدث باللغة الانجليزية'</u>

في إطار البحث التربوي الذي أشتغل عليه' يسعدني أن أتعرف على أرائكم بشأن جودة التعليم الخاصة بالتعبير الشفوي(L'expression orale) في اللغة الانجليزية وذلك حرصاً على تطوير خدمة التعليم في هذه المادة وتحسين مستوى التلاميذ في التعبير عن أرائهم بهذه اللغة:

الجنس :.............

السن:...............

الشعبة:.....................

المستوى :......................

○ ماذا تمثل لك اللغة الانجليزية ؟

❖ مجرد مادة دراسية

❖ لغة ضرورية في مستقبلي المهني

❖ عبء دراسي بدون جدوى

○ كيف تقيم مدى تمكنك من اللغة الانجليزية ؟

❖ ضعيف جدا: بالكاد أفهم الأستاذ ولا أستطيع الجواب

❖ متوسط: أفهم الأستاذ لكن أجد صعوبة في الإجابة

❖ جيد: أفهم الأستاذ وأجيبه بتمكن

○ رتب حسب الأهمية' ما سبب عدم انتباه التلاميذ داخل الفصل وعدم مشاركتهم في الأنشطة التعبيرية في القسم

❖ صعوبة المقرر

❖ مواضيع المقرر المدرسي لا تتماشى مع اهتمامات التلاميذ

❖ الأستاذ يلقي الدرس بطريقة مملة و لا يبذل جهدا في البحث عن مواضيع مشوقة

❖ عدم الثقة في النفس والخوف من الخطأ ومن استهزاء الزملاء

❖ يتكلم الأستاذ بلغة غير مفهومة ولا يقدم التوضيحات الكافية حول الأنشطة

❖ عدم وجود علاقة ودية بين الأستاذ والتلاميذ

❖ عدم امتلاك التلميذ للمهارة اللغوية الكافية للتعبير عن أفكاره

❖   أخر:...
......

○   أذكر أنشطة القسم التي تعتقد أنها ستساعدك في تقوية مهاراتك اللغوية في الانجليزية:
❖   الاستماع إلى مقاطع موسيقية انجليزية ودراسة كلماتها
❖   مشاهدة أفلام باللغة الانجليزية ومناقشة مواضيعها
❖   القيام بألعاب ومسابقات تربوية باللغة الانجليزية داخل الفصل
❖   انجاز عروض من طرف التلاميذ وتقديمها ومناقشتها داخل الفصل
❖   أخر:...
....
....

○   رتب حسب الأهمية' من أجل تحسين مهاراتك اللغوية في الانجليزية' يجب على الأستاذ أن:
❖   يتكلم أقل ويترك للتلاميذ فرصة الكلام والمناقشة
❖   يتحلى بالصبر ويتقبل أخطاء التلاميذ اللغوية
❖   يقوم بنشاطات مرحة في القسم
❖   يصمم دروس تهتم بقضايا التلاميذ وحياة المراهقين
❖   يمنح للتلميذ الوقت الكافي للتفكير ولا يقمع حرية تعبيره
❖   يمنح للتلاميذ نقط إضافية للتحفيز والتشجيع مقابل مجهودات وإجابات استثنائية
❖   أخر:...
....

○   ويجب على التلميذ أن:
❖   يشارك في الأنشطة الدراسية ويعيرها اهتمامه
❖   لا يخجل ولا يخاف من الخطأ
❖   يقوم بواجباته حسب تعليمات الأستاذ
❖   يحضر عروض ويقدمها أمام زملائه
❖   يثق في أستاذه ويتقبل تعليقات وتعقيبات الأخير
❖   يستغل أي فرصة خارج القسم لممارسة اللغة الانجليزية
❖   أخر:...
....

○   أذكر بعض المواضيع التي تود أن تدرسها في قسم اللغة الانجليزية
❖   ....
❖   ....
❖   ....
❖   ....