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Exploring the Impact of Age, Gender and Other Social Variables during EFL Oral Expression Classes: Master One Students at Ibn Khaldoun University as a Sample

A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Foreign Languages in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Master's Degree in Linguistics

Submitted by: **Supervised b**y:

 Miss. BELABBASSI Kheira   Dr. BENABED Ammar

Board of Examiners

Chairman:	Dr. BELARBI Khaled	MCB	Tiaret University
Supervisor:	Dr. BENABED Ammar	MCA	Tiaret University
Examiner:	Mr. TOUBIDA Mustapha	MAA	Tiaret University

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my lovely parents

To my brothers and sisters

To my best friends

To my supervisor

To my great teachers

To all who helped me

Acknowledgements

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CEFR: Common European Framework of Reference

CI: Classroom Interaction

CL: Cooperative Learning

CLT: Communicative Language Teaching

CM: Cours Magistral

EFL: English as a Foreign language

EL: English Language

ELT: English Language Teaching

FL: Foreign Language

MT: Mother Tongue

OE: Oral Expression

TD: Travaux Dirigés

Abstract

The present, twofold descriptive-interpretive study purports itself to explore the impact of age, gender and social variables on the conversational interactions in oral expression classes. It seeks to disclose the possible influence of the demographic variables in oral expression performance. Differently couched, the aim of this research work is to explore to what extent these demographic differences may affect students' engagement in classroom interactions. For the sake of validity, the mixed method of research, i.e., qualitative and quantitative was adopted. In fact, the questionnaire was designed and randomly distributed to Master 1 students, and semi-structured interview was conducted with teachers of English at the department of English at Ibn Khaldoun University-Tiaret. The findings of the exploration reveal that EFL students' reticence during oral expression sessions is mainly due to two reasons, viz., psychological emotions, linguistic deficiencies and stereotypical assumptions. For the first one, anxiety, fearing mistakes making, classmates' negative attitudes and reactions generate students' reluctance towards an effective commitment during EFL oral expression classes. For the second one, the deficiencies in phonological, syntactic and morphological aspects of the target language preclude EFL students' active participation in classroom interactions. For the third one, the stereotypical flimsy assumptions based on differences in age, gender and social status which have developed unfavourable attitudes towards the oral expression teaching unit. All in all, the highlighted causes towards oral expression sessions remain as a serious pitfall trap in front of the materialization of the ultimate objective of communicative approach. Teachers' awareness of the aforementioned hurdles and in effective support are deemed to be urgent and quite necessary to palliate these serious behavioural patterns.

Keywords: Demographic variable, conversational interaction, reticence, psychological emotions, linguistic deficiencies, stereotypical assumptions

General Introduction

General Introduction

Language plays a pivotal role in the development of human ability since it is the major means to communicate effectively in everyday situations. The 20th century witnessed the shift from the focus on teaching methodologies to the focus on the learners and instructional materials leaving a facilitating role to the teacher, who, au fond, represents the fulcrum of education. A great number of learners around the world are strongly motivated to learn English for different purposes. At least English puts learners in touch with more people than any other language, yet, at the same time, learners should be aware that it requires a great deal of efforts to master it, and they may begrudged that effort. Once progress is made, learners feel the pride in their achievements, and savor the communicative power they have at their disposal.

For the sake of an effective communication in English, English Language Learners need to master the four inextricable language skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing in order to achieve a high level of proficiency in sending and receiving the target language in its oral or written forms. Effective communication is the ultimate objective of communicative language teaching. The focus is mainly put on students' appropriate communication via understandable messages. Thus, the approach focuses principally on interactions as both a means and ultimate objective. Assisted by teachers who should play the role of facilitators, providing them with frameworks, patterns and rules, students are supposed to develop their communicative competence. Yet, EFL students encounter difficulties in speaking and writing as productive skills and they consider them as the main skills that should be improved.

Subsequently, our research work endeavors to shed light on the opaque hurdles which preclude students' effective commitment in oral expression classes. In other words, it shall explore from psychological and educational vantage viewpoint the students' deliberate reticence towards oral classes participation. In wide brief, our study is first and foremost both students and teachers oriented in perspective.

Background of the Research

Despite its too much effort demanding, learning a foreign language remains envied by a large population around the world. Algerian EFL learners are compelled to learn foreign languages in general, and English, in particular, if they want to be communicatively competent and able to bridge the gap with others. With its new status, i.e., global, English can

offer to its speakers the possibility to communicate and interact easily with people in all countries of the world. Besides, the mastery of what is entitled as 'global language', learners will have easy access to huge amounts of scientific documents and other sources.

Thus and from this perspective, Algerian learners should strive to acquire English language and gain proficiency. The latter cannot be fully achieved without the mastery of the four skills, especially the productive ones, i.e., writing and speaking. Yet, researches in the field have pointed out the learners' shortcomings at the oral expression. It is acknowledged that language learning success relies principally on classroom interaction. In fact, this interaction does not require learners' physical presence but their mental one too.

Researchers, though highlighting the classroom interaction benefits in EFL classes as fostering the knowledge exchange, creating some sort of sense of belonging among the students and promoting language use and development, the learners' reticence and refutation still persist. Thus, the pertinent question is: What are the most important factors that affect communication in classroom?

Educationalists are highly interested in unearthing the causes of this phenomenon in order to find appropriate solutions that may help achieve effective communication.

Communication is the ultimate objective of EFL learners inside and outside the classroom. Classroom interaction has a great impact on shaping 'the learners communicative competence'. However, interaction may be affected by several factors. In this respect, we have examined the effect of age, gender, and social status on the conversational interaction in oral Expression classroom (OE).

Statement of the Problem

In EFL classroom, learners' participation is very important, and it is not confined only to their physical presence but it is all about their mental heed and attentiveness. EFL learners often face difficulties in classroom turn taking in oral expression session. They sometimes do not have the opportunity to share their ideas or even interact with each other and with their teacher. The same thing is noticed with Master 1 LMD students in EFL classes, who face problems and endure difficulties when they are asked to interact in classroom. Because of the lack of vocabulary, anxiety, inhibition, or being fearful of making mistakes and the like which reduce participation and interaction. So the lack of conversational interaction between students with different cognitive skills creates serious problems in OE class, this may hamper students' oral expression abilities.

Objectives

The present study is undertaken with the purpose to investigate the factors which negatively influence students' oral expression during classroom interaction. The scrutiny will focus on a set of factors which are suspected to be at the origin of such deficiency such as gender, age and social background, and provide some recommendations to reduce the impact of this phenomenon among Master 1 LMD students at the department of English at Ibn Khaldoun university of Tiaret.

Research Questions

To achieve the above objectives, two questions have been asked. The latter are framed and arranged so as to reflect the main topic of the study:

1. What precludes Master 1 students' speaking skill proficiency?

2. What strategies could teachers undertake to mitigate the reticence phenomenon?

Hypotheses

By definition hypotheses are suppositions of the causes and impacts of the phenomenon under investigation. The investigator is required to identify the problem, explore it from its multifarious facets, highlight its worth and eventually suggest at best adequate solutions or recommendations. It worth mentioning that the hypotheses put forward are not true all the time.

The current research counts two hypotheses:

1. Students' reticence could be due to both linguistic deficiencies, psychological factors and some stereotypical assumptions. In fact, these three factors could inhibit students' speaking skill enhancement.

2. Teachers, being the fulcrums of the teaching/learning process, could implement a variety of efficient teaching strategies helping the students overcome these flimsy obstacles, at least if not eradicating them, lessening them to the maximum.

Methodology

Generally speaking, the choice of the research method is determined by the nature of the problem, the purpose of the study and the researcher's objectives.

Educational concerns directly involve individuals learning situations which are in perpetual change. The descriptive-interpretive method seems, in our case, more appropriate to discern all issues and sub-issues in connection with the phenomenon under study.

Research Tools

To conduct this study, we used the quantitative and qualitative data collection method as appropriate method or way of analyzing the information gathered within this research. We have designed a questionnaire and distributed it to students. And an interview conducted with teachers .The students' questionnaire consists of sixteen (16) questions. The questions take different forms like close-ended questions, where the students are supposed to choose "yes" or," no" answers with the justification of their choice, multiple choice questions, where the students are asked to pick out the appropriate answer from a number of choices, except for the last question which is open-ended question that requires students to give their own answers and justify them.

While the interview directed to teachers of M1 students at Ibn KhaldounTiaret University, comprises twelve (12) multi-form questions. It aims at investigating the teachers' perception of the issue under study, especially what regards the effects of age, gender, and social status on EFL classroom interaction. The teacher's interview was intended for 05teachers.

Delimitation of the Study

This study is primarily about an exploration of the factors precluding MA 1 students' oral expression. We heed fully intend to study a sample of MA 1 students and their teachers in the department of English at Ibn Khaldoun University of Tiaret. The spaciotemporal dimension and participants' background would certainly influence to a certain extent perceptions vis-à-vis the phenomenon under survey.

Significance of the Study

We intend to make this study informative in its scope so as to enable both teachers, students and all stakeholders, concerned by educational issues draw benefits from its outcomes and seriously take in charge such issues. Also, the findings of this study will try to shed light on the causes of students' poor participation in EFL classes at Ibn Khaldoun University in order to help teachers be aware of the factors that lead to non-participation in the class so that they can cope with this problem. Furthermore, the findings could enable teachers to develop approaches and practices for working with EFL students. Finally, they

could help educators in developing the future curriculum by taking into consideration the psycholinguistic factors and stereotypical assumptions into account.

 The operational definition of terms

Speaking: According to oxford dictionary speaking is "to express or communicate opinions, ideas, and feelings etc. speaking is considered as talking includes the activities in the part of the speaker as psychological (articulator) and physical (acoustic) stages" The Oxford Dictionary(1987).

Interaction or Turn-taking: The engagement of learners with their teacher and their mates through speech during oral communication lessons in EFL classes.

Teacher: is the leader of classroom who provides the learners with knowledge, and motivate them to interact with each other effectively.

Learner: is a person who gets knowledge and support from his teacher to interact in oral expression session .

Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation is structured in a way that attempts to mirror the issue under enquiry as well as the methodology adopted. The body of the draft consists of three main chapters.

Chapter one presents the theoretical part, dealing with the literature review and the conceptual framework for this study. It includes two main sections; speaking skill and classroom interaction, and the associated factors of age, gender differences, and social status.

Chapter two deals with the context of the study, status of the English language in Algeria, secondary school education, educational and tertiary reforms; objectives, tenets and expected outcomes, the objective of English language teaching, the new roles assigned to teachers and learners, the BMD system, and the modular structure.

Chapter three is mainly concerned with the fieldwork. It includes a detailed description of the research design, the participants, and the selected research tools, besides and in-depth analysis and interpretation of the data gathered from both teachers' and students' questionnaire.

Chapter One

Literature Review

Effects of Age, Gender and Social

Variables on Speaking Skill and Classroom

interaction

Chapter one

Literature Review

Effects of Age, Gender and Social Variables on Speaking Skill and Classroom

Interaction

Section One: Speaking Skill and Classroom Interaction

Introduction

 I.1.**Speaking Skill**

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Introduction

Language being an essential tool of communication enables people to express themselves with a great precision. Through it, people think and communicate with others in multifarious discourse contexts, to express their ideas, intentions, hopes, deceptions, besides transferring cultural indixes and to know about others' ideas as well. In fact, language can be used to share information with others, and to persuade or otherwise affect them with ones viewpoints and decisions. Doing so, speaker's covert thought are transferred into overt and explicit acts to hearers.

Over the last decades, English has gained much field with regard to other competitive languages. In fact, it is known as being a global language dominating all spheres of life, viz., technological, economic, political, diplomatic, etc. Dictated by the requirements of Globalization, world countries become interdependent on a global language which facilitates communication among nations. Thus, learning English has become a compulsory asset for humans' and capitals mobility. Owing to its importance, English language has been integrated in different curricula since the middle school education in the Algerian system. Thus, eventually the need to equip Algerian EFL learners with effective speaking skills, as the most important means of communication, has imposed itself with insistence to ease learners' integration in the information-driven society.

Speaking is at the heart of any foreign language learning. It is incumbent to EFL teachers to render students capable of communicating effectively through oral and/or written forms and their ability to use the target language for communicative purposes. That is why Oral Expression teaching unit is one of the syllabus fundamental units that is intended to create suitable environments for learners to express themselves easily and freely. However, EFL learners face difficulties to voice out their thoughts and take turns at speaking in oral discussions.

The forthcoming chapter deals with the founding principles relating to speaking skills and the importance of interaction in OE sessions, and also discusses how the intersections between the factors such as age, gender and social status may affect interaction. It is split up into three sections; the first section deals with the nature of speaking skill, the second one includes a succinct definition of classroom conversational interaction, its types and principles. The third one covers the pretended effects of age, gender differences and social status on the interactive situations during EFL classes.

I.1.1. Speaking Skills

The speaking skills, when mastered, permit to the learners to convey their messages in a passionate, thoughtful and convincing manner. They also help to assure that one will not be misunderstood by the addressees. Speaking among the other language skills seems to be axiomatically the most both pivotal and topical skill since the process mixes both learning and applying at the same time. Thus, foreign language learners find it difficult to use the target language and interact appropriately.

I.1.1.1. Speaking Skill Nature and Significance

Speaking is a fundamental skill that EFL learners must master among other skills to be able to communicate competently. In other words, it remains a crucial part of the FL learning and teaching. It is also considered as a complex process for it requires the integration of a set of interrelated components to convey messages such as verbal involving linguistic components as sounds, graphemes, forms, functions, and syntax, paralinguistic components, including tone, stress, pitch, volume and speed of delivery, and non-verbal symbols or extra-linguistic aspects such as gestures, facial expressions, movements and proxemics.

Hedge (2000: 261) states that: *"speaking is a skill by which people are judged while their impressions are being formed"*. It means that speaking is an important skill because it has given more interest in both languages and it reflects the speaker's personality and thoughts when they come to express themselves. Differently couched, the expressed thoughts mirror the speaker's intentions, thus allowing the hearer to discover and judge him. It is via speaking and communicating that learning and thinking develop and progress.

In English language teaching and learning, speaking as a basic skill deserves to be practiced to reach an acceptable extent of mastery so as to render language learners effective communicators for purposes of inform, persuade or entertain recipients. But, it is difficult for foreign language learners to perfectly master such a skill, because effective oral communication requires the ability to use the language uninterruptedly and appropriately in multifarious social interactions. Actually, much more focus is to be devoted to this skill so as to render English language learners (henceforth ELL) capable of interacting easily in authentic situations of life. The attainment of such proficiency in conversing should imperatively go through the appropriate acquisition of syntactic, morphological and phonological rules of the target language so as to be fluent and accurate; a daunting objective to be utterly reached. Luoma (2004: 1) [1] argues that "speaking in a foreign language is very

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[1] Luama, S. (2004). Assessing Speaking. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

difficult and competence in speaking takes a long time to develop." Yet, for the sake of the mastery of such skill, some constituents are fundamentally important to manipulate.

I.1.2. Speaking Skill Constituents

Being regarded as a daunting task, speaking a second or foreign language fluently and accurately, requires the knowledge and mastery of some constituents which are compulsory for its enhancement. Harmer (2001) mentions these constituents which refer to the language features that learners should have knowledge about, in addition to the processes of the language and information in the same time when an interlocutor interacts with them.

I.1.2.1. Language Characteristics

For the sake of speaking effectively and fluently, a set of language characteristics is necessary for both the speaker and recipient. Thanks to these characteristics, the speaker recognizes the phonemes allowing him to connect and establish contact, besides understanding the nature of the native speaker and their phonological rules. Kouicem, K (2010: 27-28) suggests the followings characteristics to attain effectiveness as regards speaking skill.

I.**1.2.1.1. Connected Speech Flow**

This characteristic denotes the speaker's ability to produce more connected sounds not only separated phonemes. These sounds may be modified, omitted, added or weakened in the connected speech, i.e., being aware of the assimilation (phonemes influence), elision (loss of phonemes), intrusion, catenation, etc.

I.1.2.1.2. Expressive Devices

English native speakers use effectively the phonological rules which refer to 28 the pitch, stress, volume, speed with the use of non-verbal means. These devices help them convey their intended meaning. Students, then, need to master and employ such devices if they want to be effective communicators.

I. **1.2.1.3. Lexical and Syntactic Constituents**

When learners produce some language utterances, they may often use and generalize the same lexical and syntactic structures. The teachers' role then, is to provide them with different phrases and sentences which carry different functions so that they can use them in the different situations of communication with others.

I.1.2.1.4. Language Meaning Negotiation

Learners benefit a lot from the use of negotiation language. For the sake of clarity and understandability, the learners should be familiar with different forms of language enabling them to express themselves and understand other interlocutors. In other words, they should be familiar with language forms as opening statements, asking for information, expressing opinion, rejecting an offer, suggesting or accepting, being firm, being flexible, etc. So, teachers have to provide them with the necessary expressions they need when they ask for clarification from other speakers. Learners also need to regularly perform these language forms if they seek to be understood, especially when they notice that the other interlocutors did not understand them.

I.1.2.2. Mental/ Social Processing

Organizing and encoding the language should imperatively undergo mental functions which help the recipient understand and decode the speaker's messages. The development of this mental/social information processing would occur through increasing speed and efficiency in information processing and through experiences that change and update the memory databases.

I.1.2.2.1. Data Processing

This refers to the learner's/ speaker's ability to process the data in their minds through putting it in a coherent order so that the other interlocutors can understand them and get the intended messages. This process functions as a computer, i.e., the person's mind receives the input, processes it and delivers the output. Speakers should depend on their memory to retrieve words and phrases to re-use and reinvest them when they are interacting with others.

I.1.2.2.2. Interacting with Others

Speaking situations systematically involve reciprocal speaking and listening between two or more interlocutors, that is to say an effective speaker needs to be able to listen and understand others' talk then reacts through taking turns or keeping the others to do so. Such interactive learning is more hands-on, real-world process of relaying data in the classroom. By and large, interactive strategy ensures that every learner's learning needs are sufficiently met.

I.1.2.2.3. Information Processing

This relates to the capability of treating in a swift and systematic way the information in the mind, i.e., the time speakers receive the information; they should be ready to respond to their interlocutors' talk.

Generally speaking, in most EFL classes, speaking is regarded as being just the learner's reiteration of words, phrases and sentences. In fact, this is not the only way to speak

English, but it is useful for learners to reinvest the language they acquire in classroom situations that are similar to their l<real-life outside the classroom for the reason that they will have the chance to use English to express themselves, talk about their desires and beliefs, and have a chance to discuss and debate issues of importance.

A good example is compared with a real situation. When learners are required to talk about a specific issue, they will have the capacity to generate ideas and to speak using their own style, not repeating what they heard. As in real life, people do not repeat one another speech; they construct their own speech and conversations. So, teachers should allot time for his/her learners to talk by suggesting topics and situations similar to their lives in order to speak, and not just parroting words and sentences for a whole lesson (Baker and Westrup, 2003: 7).

I.1.3. Definition of Oral Interaction Competency

Oral interaction competency, being one of the ultimate objectives of EFL teaching/learning, is defined as an interactive process of constructing meaning that encompasses threefold aspect, viz., producing, receiving and processing information. Spitzberg defined it as: "*The ability to interact well with others*" (1988: 68)**.** He explains the term 'well' to mean accuracy, clarity, comprehensibility , coherence, expertise, effectiveness and appropriateness. The process is frequently spontaneous, open-ended, and evolving, but not completely unpredictable. Its structure and meaning rely on the context in which it occurs, the status of the participants themselves, their collective and common experiences, the physical environment and communication purposes. The spoken language meaning is partly conveyed through the supra-segmental phonemes including rhythm, stress, pitch speech delivery and intonation.

Communicating in English is undoubtedly a paramount skill for English learners to master. It is also significant in terms of language learning. In fact, it is an evidence of learners' extent of mastery of the target language. Oral communication helps learners to experience modified interaction. Doughty and Pica mentioned that: "*Interaction is altered in some way (either linguistically or conversationally) to facilitate comprehension of the intended message*". (1986: 305). Speaking requires for learners to know how to generate correct utterances in accordance with English language syntax, morphology and phonology. A 'competent' speaker integrates necessary skills and knowledge to communicate successfully.

I.2. Multifarious Definitions of Interaction

        Interactions, being made-up of two morphemes, namely inter and *action*, are one of the primary means via which learning is carried out. In classroom settings, interactions in English play a dual significant role as a medium through which learning is performed, and an object of pedagogical attention. Besides, it helps learners to develop the social skills, thus maximizing interaction speaking sessions is incumbent to the teachers' role. According to Hadfield, in his book entitled *"Introduction to Teaching English",* the word interaction involves more than just putting a message together; it also requires responding to other people (interlocutors). This means choosing the language that is appropriate for the person you are addressing; it means also responding to what others say, taking turns in a conversation, encouraging people to speak, expressing interests, changing the topic, asking people to repeat or explain what they say and so on; in order to facilitate communication among them (2008, p. 105). In this vein, Nunan states that *"learning to speak in a second or foreign language will be facilitated when learners actively engaged in attempting to communicate."* (1991: 51). In addition to the previous definitions of interaction, Allwright has defined interaction as: *"the fundamental fact of pedagogy"* and that *"successful pedagogy involves the successful management of classroom interaction"* (1984: 156) (As quoted in Ellis, 1997: 173). From that quotation, it can be noticed that classroom interaction is one of the primary ways in which learners obtain data and enhance their speaking skills.

        The Role of Classroom Interaction, according to Hedge (2000:261), is considered as a paramount factor for EFL learners in producing comprehensible output since it allows students to practise their language in the classroom. Also, interaction in the classroom gives the learners opportunities to get feedback from the teacher or other students, leading to their language system enhancement. For her (Hedge), speaking in the classroom makes learners capable of coping with their lack of language knowledge; for example, students speaking slowly, repeating or clarifying their ideas while talking together is regarded as negotiation of meaning (discussion to reach agreement) which aims at making the output more comprehensible. This means that in ELT practice, interaction urges learners to produce appropriate language when they are working in pairs or in groups; because when a learner produces the suitable language, this language will be as an input for other students; therefore, in language learning, group work plays an important role since it investigates the ways in which language input and output differs in the classroom (2000: 13). Moreover, Long (1996) argues that interaction plays a key role in developing second language since the primary source of data for learners is taken during a meaningful interaction with a more competent

speaker, this means that interaction is considered as the only source which provides learners with opportunities in order to control the input. In addition, interaction makes the learners able to put to the proof their communicative success through exchanging information with the teacher or among the learners themselves (as stated in Lyster, 2007: 102-103). Classroom interaction then, contributes to language development by providing target language practice with opportunities through designing classroom interaction activities that enable learners to use the target language in life-like situations.

I.2.1. Classroom Interactions: Importance and Forms

According to Brown *"interaction is the collaborative exchange of thoughts, feelings, and ideas between two or more participants, resulting in a reciprocal effect on each other"*. (2001: 165). Interaction is also collaborative work that needs contribution from both or all the partners; through collaboration and cooperation between teacher and students in classroom, agreement is reached and lesson is determined. As a result, interaction does not happen only from one side, there must be mutual effect through giving and receiving information in order to achieve communication.

In language teaching, classroom interaction is an important feature of second/foreign language pedagogy. This interaction could be either between teacher and learners and/or between learners themselves. Moreover, successful interaction may promote the participation between teacher and learners or learners themselves, enhance learning, and motivate learners in classroom. Crago states that *"teacher and learners also build on each other"s communicative behavior as they work together to achieve goals, relate experiences, and meet curricular demands."* (1997: 246). Thus, there are two forms of interactions.

I.2.1.1. Teacher-Learner Interaction and vice-versa

This type of interaction as Coulthard (1977) mentions it has received a great deal of attention from teachers in a wide range of disciplines. It happens between the teacher and one learner or many other learners, that is to say, a teacher takes a part in such interaction. He negotiates with his learners the content of the course, asks questions, uses students' ideas, lectures, gives directions, criticizes or justifies learners' talk responses. On the other hand, the students will benefit by drawing on the experience of their teachers on how well to interact in the manner that is most effective. This type of interaction, viz., teacher-learners, is important for many reasons. It impacts productively on learners' self-esteem, and enhances their skills. The other way of the interaction, that is to say, learners-teacher interaction, contributes effectively in the learners' academic self-concept and their enthusiasm and success enhancement.

In teacher-learner interaction, the teacher role is to provide meaningful, coherent and understandable inputs, while the role of the learner is to demonstrate their speaking and listening skills according to the teacher's way of interacting. Scrivener (2005) made the following diagram to clarify how teacher and students interact.
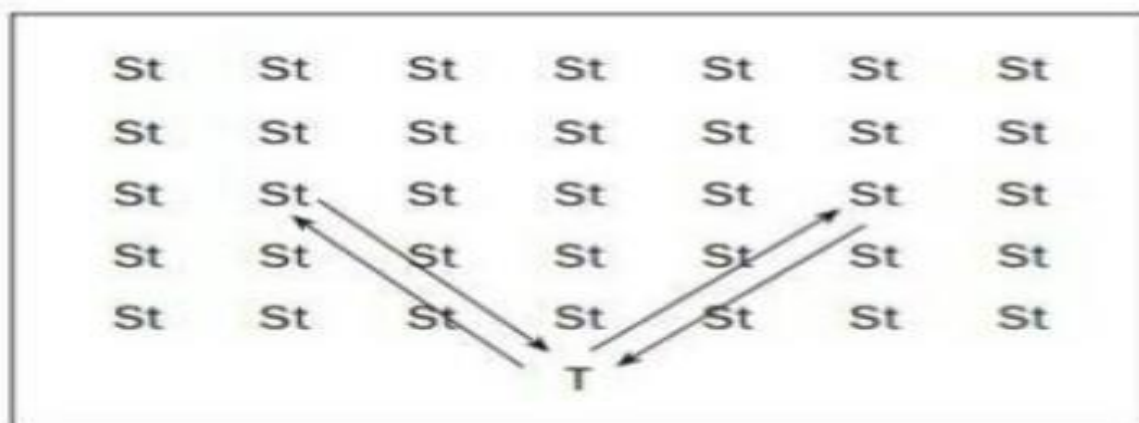
Figure 1: Interaction between Teacher and Students (Scrivener 2005)

Keys:

↑   Teacher-student interaction

St   Students

T   Teacher

During teacher-learner interaction, the learners seek to demonstrate their speaking and listening skills in front of their teachers and classmates that is why latter should consider their way of interacting which is very crucial in learning and teaching. According to Harmer (2009) teachers should focus on three things when they talk with learners. Firstly, they must pay attention to the kind of the language the learners are able to understand, i.e., teachers should provide an output that is comprehensible for the level of all the students. Secondly, the teachers must think about what they will say to the learners, hence the teacher speech is as a resource/reference for learners. Finally, teachers also have to identify the ways in which they will speak such as the voice, tone and intonation.

I.2.1.2. Learner-Learner Interaction

It is mainly acknowledged by many theories of learning that knowledge is actively constructed and skills improved through interactions between learners. In this vein, Johnson (1995) supports that if learner-learner interaction is well-structured and managed, it can be an important factor of learners' cognitive development, educational achievement and social competencies emergence. It can also develop the learners' discursive capacities through collaborative works. So, learners are expected to establish social relationship through this

kind of interaction, where the sense of learning community is fostered and isolation is reduced in the classroom. Naegle Paula adds also that *"talking students with their peers about the content of the course is a powerful way for them to reinforce what they have learned."* (2002: 128). The appropriate management of learners-learners interactions can encourage informal learning styles, promote positive attitude toward the learning process and enhance learners' abilities to work cooperatively and collaboratively. This can be attained either in pair or group work for the sake of providing learners with opportunities to express themselves and hone their speaking skills. Undeniably, this type of interaction is at the core of the communicative approach that should not be underestimated or overlooked. For all these reasons, teachers are compelled to encourage such type of interaction among learners because it is the fastest and the surest way to make learners active rather than passive participants.
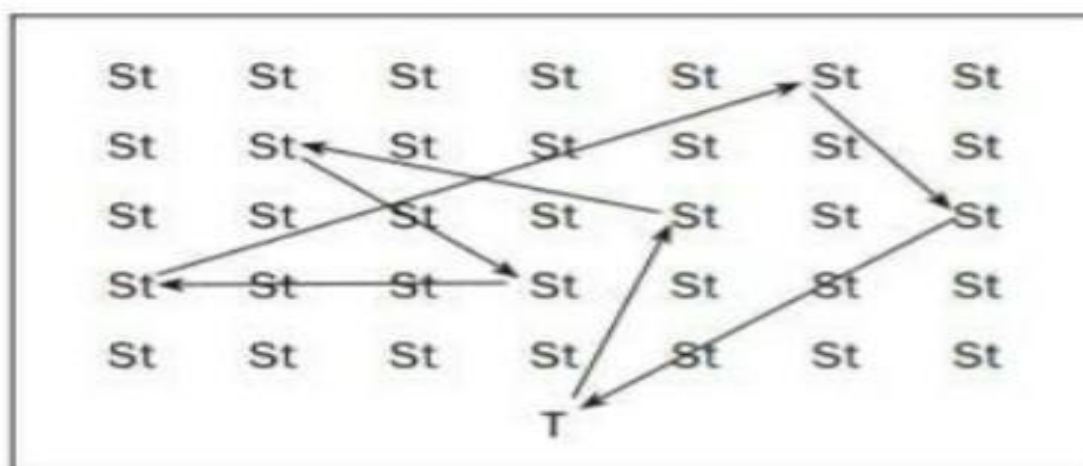
Figure 2: Interaction between Students (Scrivener 2005)

Again Scrivener (2005) suggests the above diagram showing learners'-learners' classroom interaction and the manner they exchange and share information. Doing so, they demonstrate their involvement in the interchange of the learning process. Motivating learners to engage into the learning process and therefore developing their speaking skills relies on the teacher's appropriate choice of the activities which serve the goal of speaking proficiency.

I.3.2.2. Classroom Interaction Activities

As it was quoted earlier, classroom interactions occur in academic contexts and settings. The development of the speaking skills claims some experience and practice. EFL teachers should implement a wide range of activities in classroom to support learners' interaction. Within the implementation of the CBA, the learners' autonomy and verbal communication proficiency are the main objectives to be reached. On the contrary, teachers' intervention is to be reduced to the maximum leaving space to learners' independent work.

For the sake of the enhancement of the learners' accuracy and fluency, teachers should implement the most common interaction activities as: pair-work, group-work, discussion, simulation and role plays and some communicative games.

I.2.2.1-Pair-Work

Pair work activity is one of the effective strategies, which increases the amount of learners' talking time and makes them gain more confidence and self-esteem, yet reducing anxiety. In this activity two students (i.e., pair) practise the language together, study a written passage, fill in the blanks of information gap activities, and write dialogues. Pair work activity encourages the sharing of knowledge among the learners, increasing the feeling of independency, and keeping engagement, thus, implementing learner-centeredness.

This type of activity (pair-work) is seen as quick and easy to organize. However, it is highly considered as a noisy process, since it increases the learners' talking time, the fact that led many teachers to avoid pair-work activity simply because most of them lose control over their classes.

It is worth noting that teaching English cross-lingually, i.e., using learners' mother tongue (in monolingual classes) as a learning aid was for a long time discredited in favour of an 'English through English' (intralingual approach). However, there seems to have been a recent swing of the pendulum towards a more flexible proposal which still admits that the more English is used in the classroom, the better but considers MT (mother tongue) as a useful teaching/learning tool. Differently couched, the idea of tabula rasa is abandoned in favour cross-lingual approach, where the learners' MT can an important tool easing the FL learning.

I.2.2.2. Group –Work

Group work activities are an integral aspect of many EFL teachers approach. Group work interaction is similarly seen as an activity that increases the amount of learner's talk as it was mentioned by Ur (2000) in his book entitled "*A Course in Language Teaching*" saying that: "*Group work increases the sheer amount of learner talk going on in a limited period of time and also lowers the inhibitions of learners who are unwilling to speak in front of the full class.*"(2000: 121).

Group work therefore, can reduce learners' inhibition, and foster learners' responsibility and self-reliance. Lin (2010) similarly argues that many studies have shown that cooperative learning (CL) has great benefits for the enhancement of learners' motivation and the promotion of their social interactions. Group work, referred to as team dynamics, can be an effective activity to stimulate learners' active learning, and develop key critical-thinking,

interaction, and decision-making skills. Besides, group work activities enable learners to acquire valuable life-long skills that are important for future social and professional life. Whereas, fearing the loss of control over their classes due to their noise and mother tongue excessive use, some teachers avoid this type of activity.

I.2.2.3. Discussion and Debates

A short conversation is an excellent moment to give students genuine opportunities to interact in classroom and further their thinking, learning, problem-solving, understanding and literary appreciations. Throughout discussion and debate activities, learners take turns to express their opinions. In addition, it is an exchange of thoughts, experiences, and feelings about different interesting issues; everyone is allowed to give his/her opinion on a subject matter by providing arguments as support. Consequently, it helps students to speak more fluently and to develop their listening and speaking abilities. Furthermore, discussions and debates should be used in EFL classes to make students practice language as if they are in real-life situations. Moreover, it promotes ice-breaking among students in class. Krieger comments:

> *"Debate is an excellent activity for language learning because it engages students in a variety of cognitive and linguistic ways. In addition to providing meaningful listening, speaking and writing practice, debate is also highly effective for developing argumentation skills for persuasive speech and writing." (2005).*

Hedge (2000: 277) states that free discussion activities will involve students in talking about a range of topics which engage their interests, opinions, histories, and experiences. As a result, teachers should pay attention to bring interesting topics and not to limit their students.

For Harmer "*some discussions just happen in the middle of lessons they are unprepared for by the teacher, but, if encouraged, can provide some of the most enjoyable and productive speaking in language classes*.'' (2000: 273).

In some situations, unpredictable discussion periods should be welcomed by the teacher for the sake of enjoyment, language reinvestment and eschewing routinish and boring moments.

I.2.4. Simulation and Role-playing

Simulations and role-playing can help learners analyze issues, evaluate actions and decisions, connect classroom knowledge to real world decisions, and develop problem-solving skills.

Many students greatly benefit from simulation and role-playing activities since, they simulate real life situations (such as: business meeting, interviews and the like). Simulation and role-playing can be used to encourage oral fluency, to train students for realistic language use situations and bring liveliness in the classes.

Simulation and role-playing are considered as the favorite speaking activities for EFL students because they bring situations from real life into the classroom. When role playing, students act upon a script that they wrote. Moreover, role-playing rises learners' imagination, enriches their vocabulary repertoire, and develops their speech acts. Simulation incites learners to perform and try those speech acts, for instance, apologizing, requesting, complaining and thanking. These types of activities create enjoyable atmosphere, and strengthen relationship among students, and foster cooperative and collaborative work.

They also allow learners to explore concepts, practice a variety of skills, relate to others, experience multiple perspectives and engage in multifarious modes of learning. Since simulations generally investigate complex real-world issues and events, they can be excellent opportunities to strengthen critical thinking, problem-solving and conflict-resolution skills. Doing so, learners can experience an opportunity to connect their own experiences during the simulations and role-playing to the larger issue being explored.

I.2.2.5. Communication Games

The set of games are in the first place intended to develop communication skills, particularly those of listening and speaking. Such games generate unpredictably wide range of language and language functions as the learners interact, since they are compelled to to make the fullest use of their own linguistic resources. Yet, to reach success, the emphasis of these types of games should be put on cooperation rather than competition. Learners should be motivated to work together for the sake of the completion of a specific task, and thus again should foster purposeful communication.

De facto, learners come into the classroom with various levels of motivation in order to interact. Language games come to change classroom environment, the learners' mood and to motivate them to participate in class. Games stimulate learners' interest to an additional conversation. It provides them with new information and vocabulary.

I.2.2.5.1. Storytelling

For the sake of communicating among themselves, EFL students are asked to summarize briefly a tale or a story from somebody beforehand, or they may create their own stories to tell their classmates. This effective activity fosters somehow the students' retention

and creative thinking. It helps them to express themselves in the format of beginning, development, and ending, including the characters and setting a story requires.

Learners also can tell riddles or jokes. i.e., to provide humoristic moments via which legend, historical events are related and shared. For instance, at the very beginning of each class session, the teacher may call a few learners to tell short riddles or jokes as a brainstorming. In this way, both types of interaction are encouraged; furthermore the teacher can get the attention of the class.

I. 2.2.5.2. Picture Describing

Picture describing is another alternative to encourage learners to speak and relate these pictures to their own experiences. Via this technique, teachers hand out pictures to learners and ask them to describe what they can see or what they remind them of. This can be done individually or in group. Also, for the sake of diversity, different pictures can be distributed to groups to be discussed, then a spokesperson for each group describes the picture to the whole class.

This activity fosters learners' creativity and ignites their imagination as well as fostering their public speaking skills.

I.2.2.5.3. Information Gap

Information gap activity is an activity where learners are missing the information needed to complete a task and need to find it. Thus, learners are supposed to be working in pairs or groups. One student will have the information that other partners do not have and the partners will share their information. Information gap activities serve many purposes such as solving a problem or collecting information. Also, each partner plays an important role because the task cannot be completed if the partners do not provide the information the others need. These activities are effective because everybody has the opportunity to talk extensively in the target language.

I.2.3. Speaking Skill and Classroom Interaction

Interaction refers to the process through which the participants give and receive messages. These messages are commonly conveyed through spoken form. As Tsui (1995: 12) expresses that interaction enables learners to be involved in more natural conversation, through a variety of language functions to develop not only the linguistic competence, but rather the discursive competence. Thus, the learners' engagement is through speaking by generating words and sentences to exchange thoughts, feeling, or ideas. Besides, interaction encourages learners to use second/foreign language as a mutual understanding advice, and to

develop their speaking proficiency. So, it is clearly that there is no interaction without speaking skill.

Section Two: Effects of Age, Gender and Social Variables on Classroom Interaction

The current section aims to check if the subjects' variables such as age, gender and social status impact on classroom interaction. It is frequently acknowledged that foreign language learning process might be strongly influenced by such variables. As regards researches in the field, it has been previously found that student gender has no effect on classroom participation (Boersma, Gay, Jones, Morrison, & Remick, 1981; Cornelius, Gray, & Constantinople, 1990; Crawford & MacLeod, 1990). Whereas, other studies have concluded that males participate disproportionately (Brooks, 1982; Constantinople, Cornelius, & Gray, 1988; Crawford & MacLeod, 1990). Brooks (1982) connected males' greater levels of participation with teacher's gender, suggesting that males participate more than females in female-taught classes. On the other hand, Sternglanz and Lyberger-Ficek (1977) and Pearson and West (1991) concluded that male students are more likely to dominate discussion in male-taught classes. Auster and MacRone (1994) found that instructor gender was not a significant determinant of student participation. Fassinger (1995) concluded that although teacher's gender had no effect on the male students' participation, female students were more likely to participate in classes taught by female teachers. First of all, much emphasis is devoted to mixed-age learning environments.

I.3.1. The Effect of Age on Classroom Interaction

Mixed- or multi- age classes might be exploited positively to enhance learners' achievements if flexible cooperative learning is focused on. The subjects' experience, knows, know-how-to-do and know-how-to-be can benefit the learners learning. Yet, what characterizes young learners as regards learning facility and flexibility?

I.3.1.1 Young Learners and Classroom Interaction

Who are Young Learners? The term Young Learner covers a large chronological age span: from 3 years of age to 15. Children may exhibit various mental and social characteristics at different age. Nunan (2011) they are unique and very active by nature, even though young learners do not grow up in the same society and culture. They share the same developmental stage at the level of acquiring either their native language or L2/FL language from the surrounding environment.

The learning progression appears through the evolvement of four main stages: Sensori-motor, Pre-operational, concrete-operational and formal operational. Young learners

start interacting with objects and adopt new words, before they enlarge their knowledge to create and produce meaningful statements and paragraphs in the classroom or outside the classroom. In such circumstances, it is necessary the presence of teacher and parental guidance.

I.3.1.2. Young Learners' Cognitive Ability

Cognitive ability is the mental action or process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through experience, thought and the sense (Oxford Dictionary) Moreover cognitive ability in the field of learning is much related to brain mechanism of individuals with different ages.

Young learners are not blank slate with any experience or knowledge as a lot of psychologists think. They have the capacity of learning and adopting new things fast, regardless of the lack of forming or understanding abstract thoughts and complex ideas.

Young learners are competent and active agent, their fresh mind help them to memorize a big amount of information better than adult learners.

However young learners need to be well oriented by a parental direction. Even at school teacher is required to support and engage them in relevant tasks in order to supply and effective learning amelioration.

I.3.1.3. Adult Learners and Classroom Interaction

Who are Adult Learners? Adulthood normally extends from about the age of 20 years to 40. During this vast period adult learners go through stage-range of variations associated with their readiness, physical, cognitive and psychological maturation throughout life cycle. In such stage adults start to be conscious about their acts and independently decision makers in different life domains.

In the realm of learning in some specialized field as L2/FL learning, adult learners are totally recognized with their needs and wants respectively. As well as they tend to be well-oriented to meet their goals and objectives. In the classroom adult learners may share the same knowledge which leads to challengeable discussions between them.

I.3.1.4. Adult Learners' Cognitive Ability

Many linguists shed the light on the cognitive development of adults and how it affects their learning progression Harmer (2001). Adult learners naturally are matured sufficiently to decide what exactly suits their demands, due to schematic knowledge and life experience and comprehensible input. Beside teachers should pay attention adult learners ability in employing their knowledge appropriately, because learners may criticize the teacher's methodology in the classroom during the session.

I.3.2. The Impact of Gender Differences on Classroom Interaction

It is recognized that gender differences can impact classroom interaction.

I. 3.2.1. Gender Differences

With the growth and the development of the feminist movement in America in the 1960s, language and gender as a field has been the research topic of some interest within sociolinguistics. The concentration has shifted from being on the form of the language, such as pronunciation, vocabulary and syntax to the gender-differentiation in conversational strategies, discourse style, and other areas of study. Linguists, anthropologists, sociologists, and even psychologists notice the difference between the genders in daily communication and try to seek explanations hidden behind from different perspectives.

I.3.2.2. Gender-differentiated Communicative Competence

There is a paucity of research which addresses specific gender issues in defining competencies. However, gender differences in management have been widely researched .Gregory (1990) reviewed the research evidence and concluded that:

1-Findings will sometimes show that women have lower self-confidence, dominance and need for achievement. However, these findings are based on samples of managerial students and there is usually no difference between male and female managers when education and level in the organization are controlled for.

2-There are no differences between males and females in their motivation to manage ,but women managing in a mostly male environment showed a lower motivation to manage and lower self-esteem than male managers .There were no gender differences in an organization where women represented 19 per cent of managers (Harlan and Weiss,1982, cited in Gregory 1990).

3- Researchers have found that women managers, compared to men managers, have to read a thin line between not being too masculine or too feminine.

4- The numerous studies comparing males and females in their exercise of leadership have found few differences between them.

The study on gender differences, therefore, suggests that we should not expect any significant differences in the competencies possessed by both men and women. Indeed, Cahoon (1991) argues that gender differences may result more from sex stereo-types than from real differences in individual performance. The research on sex stereotyping in management, however, suggests that there may be important differences in the perceived likelihood that women will display the competencies required in their managerial positions.

I.3.2.3 Males and Females' Brain Structure and Function

Male and female' brain structure and function has been a subject matter of many scientific researchers for a long time. It is obviously familiar that men and female's way of thinking is largely distinctive. At the level of biological structure male brains are typically stronger between the front and the back regions, whereas female brains are highly connected across the left and the right hemispheres. They use both sides of their brains and have the ability to transfer data between the right and the left hemispheres faster than men. Otherwise men perform tasks and ideas using only the left side. At the level of emotions, women tend to react with issues expressive with emotions, in contrast to men' feeling that rely on the logic to solve problems. They have a difficult time understanding emotions implicitly. All differences mentioned above may affect the interaction between male and female.

I.3.2.4 Gender Differences in Interaction

It has been generally assumed that gender affects the process of student-student interaction in the classroom. Males and females have different styles of interacting and that is because of their different use of syntax, morphology, and punctuation. Therefore, women and men develop different communicative competences.

According to Weelan and Verdi (1992) Women are claimed to be more tentative, and this is related to the fact that they keen to use more hedge to express certainty. They are also more refined in talk, and they use less coarse.

However, men are seen as more confident than women which enables them to dominate and monopolize the conversation. They also keen to use vulgar language. In mixed-sex conversation men interrupt and overlap the talk. Consequently women fall silent for they are less confident than man.

I.3.3 The Impact of Social Status on Classroom Interaction

According to Lundberg *"social status is the comparative amount of prestige, deference or respect accorded to person who has been assigned different roles in group or community."* (1958: 315). Social division is created because of human differences these differences causes stereotyping which is represented in social class, regional, and cultural stereotypes. It is stated that high status member are usually who dominate group interaction and that is reflected also in classroom interaction

Conclusion

In the second language learning process, interaction is considered as a key factor that leads to successful communication. Interaction then is defined as a way in which people respond to what others say using the language that is appropriate for the person with whom they are talking. In this chapter we discussed the nature of speaking skill and the importance of interaction in the classroom .In addition this chapter has dealt with the types of classroom interaction that involve not only learner in face to face communication, but also it includes teacher-learner interaction inside the classroom. We have also raised and revealed the impact of the factors of age, gender and social status that may influence learners' competence in interaction. However, it is still debatable to confirm this hypothesis.

Chapter Two
Context of the Study

Chapter Two: Context of the study

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Introduction

The upcoming chapter deals with the twofold main aspects, viz., the context of the study, aiming to limit the research scope to the Algerian context and the practical phase, investigating the impact of age, gender and social status on the conversational interaction between male and female students in Oral Expression sessions and seeking to highlight teachers' and learners' opinions as regards this issue. To attain the expected objective, a descriptive-interpretive methodology is implemented. Further details will be presented later on. Yet, before tackling the main issue, it is worthy to elucidate some of the sub-issues in tight connection with the main topic under investigation.

II.1. Status of English in the World

The speedy growth of technologies and scientific research due to the demands of the economic developments, has called for some an academic intervention. Over the decades of the late 20th century and after the industrial revolution has drawn the globe's new map; nations have progressively been in need of the appropriate elements to serve as high leveled developers .All countries have had the same interest in terms of being developed, the development that is measured according to economics with its different sectors in the first position. This international attention and the global nature of the major elements of economic growth, i.e. science and technology made of a common language a necessity .

Modern English is sometimes described as the first lingua franca. It is the dominant international language in all the domains. So, English is selected to preside. First, it is now dominant in over 60 countries and it is represented in every continent (Crystal, 1997, in Tiaiba Imene, 2014). Second, it was taken as the means of communication in the great industrialized countries' different exchanges. Moreover, English is taken by different people in the world as their first or second language. The worldwide expansion of English means that it is widely spoken with well over 40000000 native speakers and roughly the same number who speak it as a second language.

As for the reasons which have given English the status of global language, David crystal viewed:

> *"The history of a global language can be traced through the successful expeditions of its soldier/sailor speakers and English has been no exception. But international language dominance is not solely the result of military might. It may take a military powerful nation to establish a language, but takes an economically powerful one to maintain and expand it". (Crystal, 1997: 9).*

Algeria, similar to other developing countries, has become wide open to the whole globe economically, politically and especially scientifically. It adopted English to be the

language of the different academic and occupational institutions with greater focus on science and technology .

II.2. The Algerian Educational System

During the French colonization, Algeria had no schools and institutions to provide education for its people; therefore, only a small minority received this education, and since there were a great number of French children among this minority, they were forced to learn European languages mainly French and English. Algeria gained its Independence in 1962, and thus a radical change occurred in many fields. However, education was still oriented towards particular elite till 1963 when the Ministry of Education was founded. As a result, many schools and institutions were established to make education free to all Algerian children. Since then, the Algerian educational system witnessed various reforms. The actual school system in Algeria is made up of twelve years divided into three main cycles: primary, middle and secondary education under the Competency Based approach (CBA).

II.2.1.The Secondary School Education

In the secondary cycle, students can choose the stream which suits them, but according to their grades in the BEM exam. In the first year, there are three main streams: languages and social studies, sciences and technology. In the second year, other streams are offered such as: Philosophy and Literature, Literature and Foreign Languages, Sciences, Mathematics, Economy and Management, Civil Technology, Chemistry, etc. However, the second choice of the streams is based on three criteria: learners' personal preferences, their teachers' opinions and their first year results. At the end of the third year, students take a national exam called "Baccalaureate" in which they are tested in all the subjects studied in the third year. To pass this examination, students will have to score more than 10 on a 20 point scale .

II.2.2. Higher Education

The University of Algiers was established in 1909, it is considered as the first high education institution in Algeria. At that time, it offered very limited number of specialties such as Law, Letters, Medicine, Pharmacy and Sciences. After the Independence, many universities and institutes have been established in all over the country, and thus pedagogical specialties and modules are taught in different faculties. The current Algerian system of university degrees is nearly similar to the European one. This new framework, known as LMD (Licence- Master- Doctorate) consists of :

The Licence, corresponding to three years of study beyond the baccalaureate- (Bac + 3).

The Master, corresponding to two years beyond the Licence (Bac + 5).

The Doctorate, corresponding to three years beyond the Mater (Bac + 8).

II.3. Algerian Reforms

In fact, there was an educational system in Algeria during the colonization period, but it was purely French since it was founded and managed by the French authorities. Once it gained its independence in 1962, Algeria started making radical educational reforms. The first was in 1971 to launch, for the first time, the nine-year fundamental education program. Five years later, another amendment was added in the Algerian educational system to make education free for all children and compulsory from six to ten years. In the same reform during 1976, it was also confirmed that education is a public sector; it was the exclusive domain of the state. However, this resolution was cancelled in 2004 when an executive decree was promulgated to allow the foundation of private schools, but under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. By the beginning of the academic year 2003-2004, the Algerian educational system witnessed a series of reforms. The main change was in the teaching methodologies and approaches adopted in all subjects and the school levels. Thus, the Competency Based Approach (CBA) for education and the Licence-Master-Doctorat (LMD) system for higher education were introduced for the first time in the Algerian educational context. As a result, other changes occurred regarding the curricula and the study programs.

II.4. English Language Teaching in Algeria

In Algeria, a country that counts more than 38 million inhabitants (2014 national statistics) who speak, Arabic as the official language, French as a second language; inherited from the past years of the French colony that lasted more than 130 years. English is considered a foreign language, yet the main language for business, higher education and research . English is studied through all instructional levels, including vocation trainings. It is taught as a compulsory course starting from the first year middle school. Altogether with other school subjects (Arabic, Mathematics, Science, as well as Geography and History); the teaching of English is becoming part of the curriculum. English is a means of efficient acquisition of knowledge that learners need, especially for further studies . Yet, it differs from other school subjects in that it is new and foreign and requires much effort from the teachers' and learners' sides, relatively more demanding than the other subjects which are taught in Arabic, the mother tongue of the learners. This means that they learn knowledge with already acquired language (Arabic), and thus they may confront no difficulties. "Mathematics, for example, is learnt not acquired" (Yule1991:151) ,yet in the case of English, learners are still learning the vocabulary, grammar and phonology to acquire this language, besides they have to learn it through a context to ensure its acquisition. This means that learners are initiated to learning the social and cultural meanings of the English language which are different from the

ones of the mother tongue. In fact, English language is learnt in the classroom, in a social , cultural and linguistic context which differs enormously from the ones of the learners' environment.

Across all instructional levels, the teaching time average for foreign language including English is 3hours per week. However, in higher educational institutions (universities and preparatory schools) the total hours of English teaching are as follows :

- 4 hours/week in preparatory schools ;
- 2 hours/week during the whole university curricula for scientific and technical areas of specialization.

English was not neglected in education reforms because Algerian decision makers see teaching English as a clue to :

1. Communicate with different parts of the world .
2. Have access to modern sciences and technologies.
3. Encourage pupils to develop creativity in its universal dimensions .
4. Make learners autonomous in exploring and exploiting materials having a relation with their field of study, and be prepared to successful examinations .

Generally speaking, the major goal behind teaching English in Algeria is to equip learners with a set of competencies which enable them to use English in communication. By doing so, learners are encouraged to share and acquire ideas and experiences in the field of science, culture and civilization .

II.4.1. Objectives of Teaching English in Algeria

Since English is a foreign language in Algeria, and due to historical and social reasons. English is primary learned for educational reasons as to pass exams. It is mostly used in the formal classroom environment and there are few opportunities, other than in school, to use it for daily communicative purposes, i.e., its use is limited only to the classroom. Some studies have revealed that, Algerian people are in favor of using English, nevertheless; most Algerian students consider English as a course to pass rather than a tool to use it in their future careers. Most students think that English is not so important and they stated two main reasons for that, first because they do not use it in their daily lives activities outside the classroom, and second because English belongs to a foreign culture that they have little exposure to. However, the Algerian educational policy tends to foster the teaching of English to impose it as the first foreign language instead of the French language which makes it clear that the previous narrow conception of language learning that consists of merely acquisition of linguistic items is extended. As Miliani stated:

"In a situation where the French language has lost much of its ground in the
Socio-cultural and educational environments of the country; the introduction
of English is being heralded as the magic solution to all possible ills,
including economic, technological and education". (Miliani, 2000: 13).

Therefore, teaching English as a foreign language in Algeria turns around three objectives: linguistic, methodological and cultural objectives.

II.4.1.1. Linguistic Objectives

One of the chief goals of the Algerian educational system is to achieve a great deal of success in the field of foreign language teaching and learning. Algeria has realized that there is crucial need for individuals to be able to speak and write in English in order to catch up with the advance which is taking place in all fields in the world. Therefore, the aim of English language teaching is to generate competent learners who can read, speak, and write in English in sufficient, accurate and fluent way to enable them to get access to world knowledge. Moreover, the ELT in Algeria aims at deepening and developing the learners' capacities, skills, and knowledge that they have acquired during the learning process.

The English language syllabus is designed to provide learners with practice and application of the key elements and concepts. Besides, ELT is aimed to develop learners' proficiency by enhancing their knowledge through graded levels, and tends to familiarize them with language functions, grammatical structures, language components, as well as skills and strategies. Besides, proficiency in English is a basic skill that helps learners to get access to the world knowledge and to carry on further studies in this language. This proficiency requires learners to acquire sufficient grammar that helps for a good comprehension and production of English. Moreover, it involves vocabulary knowledge as an essential part of any language learning .

These objectives aim at consolidating and developing learners' knowledge and the capacities already acquired so as to create an environment in which they develop positive attitudes towards learning English and be able to use the necessary tools to pursue their studies.

II.4.1.2. Methodological Objectives

Some of the objectives of EFL teaching in Algeria that were set aim at helping learners understand English, to use it for different purposes, to promote self-learning and critical thinking. This type of objectives consolidates and helps develop higher order LLS aiming at autonomy, critical thinking and self-assessment. Also to enable learners exploit and make use of various documents and feel interested in subjects that are not treated in class. The ultimate goal is to enlarge their knowledge and reinforce their mental and intellectual

capacities through pertinent activities.

II.4.1.3. Cultural Objectives

Since language and culture are two faces of the same coin, ELT in Algeria aims at equipping learners with cultural experience through the English language. This will help them know about the world around them. Good enough said :

> *"As I see it, a society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members. Cultures, being what people have to learn as distinct from their biological heritage, must consist of the end-product of learning knowledge in a most general sense of the term". (1957: 74).*

For him, the rules of culture operate through the rules of language within any society. In other words, social groups and individuals express their cultural views through languages . People can be defined by their languages which affect and organize their beliefs, customs, and perceptions. The cultural purpose of the English language teaching is to ameliorate learners' capacity to contribute to the broadening of their minds by providing a frequent exposure to various contexts of English culture and civilization. As Thomson wrote *"To learn a language is to be nurtured or apprenticed into the life-world of individual host people and groups". (Thomson, G.2007:1)*

In relation to ELT, culture can be taught to learners through teaching the traditions and the practices of the native speakers in particular situations. This may help learners to get a clear view of the foreign culture and makes them realize that language elements are related to those of culture. Placing learners in an environment which fits their needs helps plan activities in real life situations. Therefore, teachers need to create a suitable atmosphere in which learners can develop positive attitudes towards learning English and broaden their cultural knowledge. Needless to say, giving learners a clear understanding of different foreign cultures stimulates their curiosity and helps them raise awareness of the different ways of life and makes them develop positive views towards other cultures .

By integrating English in the curriculum, Algerian officials aim at reinforcing its socio-cultural and educational environment so as to gain educational, cultural, economic and technological benefits to the country. To illustrate this, Nait Brahim states that :

> *"English has become the privileged means for international communication and business and stands as a prerequisite in the world of research and scholarship. Besides its linguistic aim, English Language Teaching claims to introduce students to a foreign culture, a different way of apprehending life as part of the students' intellectual instruction basic to a university education. It also brings students to engage in intercultural and cultural encounters to enrich their knowledge and promote their human qualities of tolerance and respect for others." (2000:8).*

The teaching of English in the Algerian schools has primarily an educational function

where the system is aiming towards a multilingual position so that all educated people would have a good command of English. It is also taught for specific purposes (ESP) where basic linguistic aspects such as specialized vocabulary are introduced to make English more relevant with the learners' need of scientific items that can be met across different scientific and technical fields and variety of topics and themes.

Algerian learners learn English for different reasons. Broughton refers to the latter as instrumental motivation and states that :

> *[…]'the learner who deliberately sets out to learn English has a clear instrumental intention: he wants to visit England, to be able to communicate with English-speaking tourists or friends, to be able to read English in books and newspapers. (1978:7 (*

This is the least thing learners are expected to be able to perform, mainly because their use of English is merely limited to the classroom, i.e., *in vitro*.

To sum up, the teaching of English In Algeria is not only concerned with general aims of teaching but also universal, human and national values are promoted, students are expected to learn how to speak about their country and its cultural values in English , as well as to be open to English, universal, and human values which are essential elements of modernity and globalization .

II.5. Context and Implementation of CBA

Several major challenges condition the reform of the Algerian school; some are of an internal nature and others of an external one. It is a question of improving the relevance of teaching/learning in regard to the needs of today's Algerian society. It is also a question of making it possible for the school to increase the quality of its education system while increasing its equity. Moreover, these challenges consist in increasing the external effectiveness of this education system while making learners able to meet the multiple needs in a worldwide environment. While realizing the insufficiency of this education system, which, in fact, focuses on the transmission of the knows to be learned by heart for a mere preparation for the day of the examination, hardly allowing learners to manage in situations of everyday life, the Ministry of National Education took the decision to adopt a new methodology which is mainly based on socio-constructivism. Nowadays, school is perfectly able to produce learners who acquire knowledge during several years, but who are unable to use it in everyday life .

1. They can decipher a text without being able to seize its essence to be able to act consequently .
2. They learn grammar, the conjugation, but are unable to produce a short paragraph in a

coherent way in every day's life.

3. They can carry out an addition or a subtraction, but when they are confronted with a problem of the everyday life, they do not know if it is necessary to use a subtraction or an addition, etc.

It is a serious problem for the society, since it has to devote a significant financial effort for the education of all these learners. A great number of them leave school without being able to use what they learned in an effective way.

This is why people in charge of the Algerian educational system consider it necessary to adapt the programs of the Middle school education complying with new universal criteria. The goal of the 21st century education is supposed to enable the learners:

> *"To learn how to read, write and calculate, not only in vitro, but to be able to face situations of everyday life; to be able to write a receipt, an invoice, a letter of thanks, condolences, to be able to defend their rights, to be able to weigh, measure…" (Program 2002)*

Or as it is stated by Carl Rogers:

> *"We are faced with an entirely new situation where the goal of education, if we are to survive, is the facilitation of change and learning. The only man who is educated is the man who has learned how to adapt and change; the man who has realized that no knowledge is secure, that only the process of seeking knowledge gives a basis for security. Changingness, reliance on process rather than upon static knowledge is the only thing that makes any sense as a goal for education in the modern world." (1983:120)*

The Objective-based Approach (OBA) had the enormous merit to put, for the first time, the learner at the centre of education syllabi concerns: the objectives should no longer be summarized in a mere list of contents brought by the teacher, but it should consist of the knows, of the know-how-to-do as well as know-how-to-be that are to be built and reached by learners themselves within teacher's plain scaffolding.

Unfortunately, we realized an important limitation of OBA: the objectives are numerous and are broken up, learners learn from the pieces, without understanding the meanings, and without noticing their link with everyday life.

The limitations of OBA gave rise to the implementation of the CBA, which should, by no ways, deny the importance and the contributions of this pedagogy known as OBA, but on the contrary the CBA will continue to rely on this one and will enrich it .

II.5.1. Objectives and Competencies of the CBA

The CBA aims at helping the learners to give sense to their learning by making them acquire intellectual competencies and develop various processes that are necessary to the assimilation and the use of their knowledge. Also, it teaches the learners how to reinvest/transfer the knowledge acquired at school in problem- situations they may face in real

life or in the other disciplines.

II.5.1.1. Disciplinary Objectives Targeted by the CBA

With regard to the learners, who have just started learning English as a second foreign language, the final objective is to make them acquire the communicative competence by means of various linguistic activities concerned with the reception) listening and reading comprehension), the production (oral or written expression), the interaction or the mediation. Each one of these types of activities is suitable to be carried out either by means of the oral examination, or written or both oral examination and written. The new approach, CBA, targets three distinct but inseparable competencies which we will try to approach thoroughly below.

A. **Interacting Orally**

Learners are conducted to interact in current school situations by privileging the verbal or non-verbal language. By using a well-elaborated verbal language, they will thus be able to adapt to the reactions of their addressee, to express their needs and to formulate in a more precise way the requests, for example, verbally, while posing and answering the questions, by asking for explanations, clarifications, assistance, by expressing their agreements or disagreements, etc., and non-verbal, by expressing their astonishment, surprise, pleasure, incomprehension, etc. They can also understand and satisfy the requests of the others, transmit messages and maintain the oral interaction .

B. **Interpreting Authentic Oral and/or Written Documents**

Learners are conducted to exhibit their comprehension via oral or written reformulation of various types of more complex authentic texts, prose, songs, tales, comic strips, notes, forms, etc., they are also led, through manipulation, plays, collection of information, etc, to further expand and discover other aspects of the English Speaking countries cultures. Undoubtedly, non-native learners' progress in understanding is due to increasing cultural knowledge, particularly in terms of a better understanding of the implicit cultural aspects inherent in all types of discourses between native speakers. Therefore, progression in the recognition of the sounds, for oral comprehension, and linguistic acquisition, for written comprehension, must be regarded as necessary capacities without losing sight of the fact that they constitute components of the entire process. This competency is concretized by the means of reaction to the visual text by using the suitable strategies: selective, global, detailed, verbal and nonverbal expression, putting forward hypotheses, establishing a link between the document and the learner's lived facts, etc .

C. Producing Oral and Written Messages

Learners are led to produce more elaborated, coherent and relevant messages . These productions become increasingly varied, increasingly long and less and less guided, although not free of misspelling, punctuation and syntax mistakes. They become more autonomous, especially when writing; to state their ideas, to order them, for example, to write a letter to ask for and give pieces of advice, to write a report on the learner's learning progression, to take notes on a diary, etc. For these productions of oral and written statements, the learner makes use of processes of compensation periphrasis/circumlocutions: paraphrase, substitutions, and equivalents…as well for the logical articulators of the language: coordination, comparison, contrast, cause, purpose, consequence, hypothesis, condition, etc.

Developed in synergy, the three competencies are always complementary and interdependent. They are still articulated around the first competency "to interact orally". However, at this stage of their learning, the four AM learners must concentrate their efforts on the third competency which enables them to produce more complex and diversified oral and written messages.

All in all, the utmost goal is to train learners who will be 'competent' and 'skilled' able to select, adapt…their discourse, attitudes according to the requirements of the situations. As Wenden states it:

> "*Successful' or 'expert' or 'intelligent' learners have learned how to learn. They have acquired the learning strategies, the knowledge about learning, and the attitudes that enable them to use these skills and knowledge confidently, flexibly, appropriately and independently of a teacher. Therefore, they are autonomous." (1991:15)*

II.5.1.2. Objectives of the CBA

A. The Knows

The initial objective of the CBA is to equip learners with tools (declarative knows) enabling them to continue their cycle of studies and their learning of the language, to ease for them the construction of fundamental knows which enable them to exceed this state by deepening, widening, modifying, complicating, relativising what they learned before. It is obvious that the learners' meta-linguistic reflection is primarily fed by the knows (linguistic, referential, pragmatic, conceptual...) which are dependent on the perfect mastery of the mother tongue. The declarative memory is the reservoir of facts of which we are informed and knowledge which we constructed. According to Anderson, it is necessary to distinguish between: *"The declarative memory and the procedural memory which contain the rules of action controlling the know-how-to-do." (1982:369).*

B. Know-how-to-do (Skills)

The second objective aims at promoting learners' learning strategies which target autonomy enabling them to deepen, develop and increase their knowledge, i.e. the procedural knows enhancement: to plan, formulate and reflect on their own learning. To develop in them working and thinking methods related to organization, coherence, relevance, etc. so as to enable them acquire strategies of self-evaluation and easy access to the exploitation of various documents. Also, foreign language learning is characterized by the procedural learning without which the knowledge cannot be transmitted directly by the teacher, and be merely added to the already existing one, but must be rebuilt by the learners themselves by means of many experiments. Indeed, the general principle of the acquisition of any know-how-to-do is that of the learning by the practice "learning by doing", supplemented by the conceptualization, i.e., the ability to reflect on the practices.

At the initial stage, the learners build a procedural rule starting from a unit of declarative knows and using general procedures for problem-solving situations, such as inference and the analogy. They carry out an action in conformity with the goal which they set in advance. To do this, the learners call certainly upon declarative database stored in memory which is not simply activated but reinterpreted to rebuild a procedural rule adapted to the new situations .

C. Know-how-to-be (Attitudes)

The third objective is meant to contribute to learners' open-mindedness by exposing them to a variety of English speaking countries civilisations and cultures. This know-how-to-be enables the learners to adopt attitudes of tolerance and respect with regard to the cultures of others while anchoring themselves more in their own system of convictions. In other words, the learners must be capable of taking some distance, remembering that they are themselves structured by their environment, their education, their history and their cultural universe; their cultural identity should in no case be threatened or devalued. In fact, they learn how to co-exist in an increasingly globalized environment such as ours that requires the acquisition of competencies and values, allowing all human beings to live in a context which is strongly marked by a wide range of cultural and linguistic diversity. This diversity does not characterize only those societies we regarded formerly as remote, it is part of our daily activities, since in our home our life is full of what is different and otherness. This phenomenon is due, on the one hand, to the increasing prevalence of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) which enable us to establish contact with world of

different cultures and languages, and, on the other one, to the population displacements, also increasing, individuals coming from other areas and countries.

The CBA aims at connecting the school acquired learning to contexts of a variety of use and meaning which will make them viable and durable. Indeed, while helping the learner to give sense to his learning, it makes him acquire intellectual competences and develop various necessary processes to the assimilation and the use of knowledge. It also enables him to realize the resources which he develops and, then, learns how to reinvest the knows acquired at the school in problem solving situations met inside and outside it.

Acquiring cultural competency is a gradual process, as an awareness of the different cultural characteristics of the English speaking world. This is to arouse students' curiosity about cultural facts and the desire to understand and speak the target language. Thus, cultural and language skills are closely intertwined and involved in the learning process. The very meaning of certain terms in the lexicon, for example, can be understood thoroughly if, at the same time, are taken into account their context and connotations, which will be made available to students by teachers. Otherwise, learners may ignore the specific communicative codes of the speaking countries they are learning about. This awareness must focus not only on knowledge of verbal codes, but also the recognition of nonverbal codes (gestures, intonation, etc.).

Then, the selected teaching materials, graded through a programmed approach , must meet two criteria: language and culture.

II. 5.1.3. Language Competencies within the CBA

1. Interactive Competency of the CBA

The CBA aims at developing learners' ability to use the language orally to interact with others in order to create social relations, express needs, understand and address needs of others and to get things accomplished. Engaging in a discussion is an example of using interactive competency .

2. Interpretive Competency of the CBA

It also targets learners' ability enhancement to understand both written and spoken language through reading and listening, and to interpret it appropriately. Reading is the ability to understand and interpret written texts; listening is the ability to understand and interpret oral language. Reading and listening are, thus addressed separately .

3. Productive Competency of the CBA

It seeks the development of the productive competency that confirms learner's ability to produce coherent, appropriate and relevant messages in writing and speaking .

It is also the ability to effectively express ideas and organize thoughts appropriately.

II.6. ELT in Algeria under the LMD system

The nature of higher education in Algerian universities has been controversial since independence in 1962. It continues to raise controversy at the level of teaching language for scientific disciplines that were in French until the inclusion of the Arabic language a few years ago. Thus, last decades witnessed an immense quantitative evolution of higher education in Algeria. There was an important growth in all domains which was followed by a succession of problems and issues that led to a gradual decadence of the teaching and learning quality at university level. Besides, there was a serious paradox between social and market demands and what the university produced .

This fact proved the malfunctioning of the old system implemented in the Algerian universities since the independence of this country. The classical (old) system, i.e., four years bachelor, two years magister - four years doctorate system, did not respond to main challenges imposed by the changing Algerian situation which led the government and education policy makers to re-think the educational system and integrate a new system that can correspond and respond to the needs contributing to a significant evolution of this country. This coincided with the introduction of a new educational system, BMD, which is based on three certificates: 'Bachelor, Master and Doctorate'. (cf. Réformes des enseignements supérieurs", Juin 2007, the Ministry of Higher Education).

In the same line, the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research posted, in January 2004, a guideline summarizing the main new tasks of the university in what follows:

- Provide quality training.
- Make an environment that aims at developing all possible interactions between the university and the outside world.
- Develop mechanisms for continuous adaptation to changing jobs.
- Be more open to global developments, especially those of science and technology.
- Encourage diversity and international cooperation by the most appropriate terms.
- Lay foundations for good governance based on participation and consultation .

Therefore, a reform of the higher education system imposed itself to deal with the prevailing shortcomings and make it more proficient, competitive and attractive.

Besides, this would enable Algerian universities to be more responsive to the challenges imposed by globalization, meet the expectations of the labor market and cope with the rapid

development. To achieve these goals, the Ministry of Higher Education drafted a comprehensive scheme that has been debated, discussed and enriched for several years. Such a reform introduced the international LMD system.

The instructors wanted to deploy it aiming at students' mobility and recognition of the degree in every part of the country and even abroad. Design of the studies in Algeria is articulated around three main grades:

- The Bachelor, granted after three years of study (corresponding to 180 credits).
- Master's degree conferred after two years of study (corresponding to 120 or 300 credits earned -when joined with bachelor).
- The doctorate conferred after the completion of research for at least three years and defending a thesis.

The implementation of this system in the Algerian university has been examined by many Algerian researchers in terms of its evaluation and assessment. However, its novelty and reliability, as a new reform, and its impact on teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) is the focal point. It is interesting to investigate the difficulties and challenges students and learners faced and are still facing during the implementation of LMD brought into Algerian universities .

In order to understand and recognize that the efficiency of English language development in the Algerian educational system paves the way for learners to take part in the globalization, the government has made a huge effort to change the ELT policy and some changes were made in the 1990s .

The new international approach, does not offer any solutions to the employment of graduates. Bringing a certain kind of flexibility in assessment of learning, the new article 18 of Decree No. 137 dated 20/06/2009 states that the assessment of skills and knowledge acquisition is based either on a continuous and regular control or by a final exam or a combination of the two modes of control, but priority should be given to continuous monitoring. Thus, the evaluation of students leans now on a set of procedures meant to measure the results of their learning in terms of the grasped knowledge, the deduced comprehension and the acquired competence.

Another aspect that the LMD system brings into the universities is the new roles of teachers and students in the teaching and learning process. In this respect, the recent pedagogical procedures that were born out of many reflections tend to transform the student, the docile "object" and the passive agent into a principal active agent as the learner in the learning process. Consequently, the role of teachers has been modified for the reason that it

suits the freedom given and prescribed for the learner. Thus, teachers have to accept now their role as a mediator, a facilitator of the knowing and the learning processes. Teachers, therefore, are no more the only, exclusive omnipotent of knowledge. They are called to master not only the discipline they teach but also the methodological competencies that allow them to clearly define the objectives of the learning process as well as the referential of the competence on which the control of the learning process is based.

What is more disturbing is the reaction of teachers for whom a considerable effort is displayed to construct offers of innovative formation, but who barely worry about the questions related to the pedagogic practices and in particular those related to the evaluation of students. Despite that, even if the necessity to renovate the contents of formation is not deniable, the demand of a new vision of the pedagogical act is essential and indispensable .

This vision has to integrate the actual realities into the considerable increasing of knowledge. Moving from an annual system to a semi-annual system that tolerates the passing to the following year with debts is often conflicting and it imposes an individualized management of students.

Moreover, the temporary co-habitation between the two systems until a full disappearance of the classical system renders the organization of teachers and more particularly the evaluation of students more difficult and those that result in the progression and the orientation in the LMD system was introduced into Algerian universities by August 2003.

The LMD system, as the latest new reform is in the use phase in the Algerian universities. It aims at bringing the Algerian diploma to the status of an international university, and the Algerian student to a higher level of learning on the one hand and to the business world on the other. The requirements for operating and maintaining this system are multiple and entail time and resources to be satisfied. For this, it is useful to note that the government has invested a lot of money in recent years in colossal educational, scientific, material and structural means to meet all requirements defined by the new data. The introduction of LMD into the Algerian universities should be accompanied by these new ideas for innovative teaching practices to improve the performance of the university system but also lead to greater employability of graduates.

II.7. Teacher's and Learner's Roles in the Current Algerian Educational System

Algerian decision makers adopted both CBA in education and the LMD system in higher education for the same goals. Both of them assign the same set of roles for teachers and learners targeting the production of independent learners . These two approaches redefine

not only the role of knowledge in the learning process, but also the teacher's one: from a knowledge dispenser and truths provider as he used to be, he becomes more a "facilitator", "motivator", and "mediator". This inversion is not limited only to the considerations of a teaching nature, but also implies a change in the epistemological plan. From the paradigm of "transmission" we shift to the paradigm of construction and co-construction of knowledge. Indirectly, this logic leads us to consider not only the various processes of learning, but also the nature of the knowledge as such under constructivism, and even under "socio-constructivism" optics (see in particular Jonnaert, 2002: 66 ; Fourez, 2005: 401-412)

In fact, the teacher's principal role is no longer to dispense knowledge and to check the learners' assimilation through systematic evaluations. It should be pointed out that the role of the teacher is considerably modified if we compare it to what he used to play in the context of the school known as 'traditional'. The facilitating teacher should avoid teaching, but he should incite learners to build their knows which will not be too much demanding for the learner, hence the lightening of the curriculums. He should leave a good deal of his tasks to the class-group which would be invited to proceed to its organization. We notice that this proceeding manner derives largely from the current of the school known as modern with this fundamental difference of the teacher/learners ' roles, that one would be wrong to neglect. According to the latter principles, it is up to the learners to determine themselves the goals which they have to attain and the process to pursue. As a matter of fact, from such a standpoint, the teacher should as much as possible avoid the transmission of knowledge to become a facilitator, mediator and motivator who :

- Planifies and organizes activities;
- Advises, accompanies, encourages and supports;
- Learns in the course of the process;
- Makes suggestions but never imposes;
- Stimulates creativity, encourages the development of an independent thought .

Indeed, the relation teacher-learner has been the subject of innumerable work for several decades. We tend today to adopt a policy which is from the viewpoint interaction, exchange, of synergy, to use a buzzword (newest fashion).

The increasing emphasis on learner-centered learning (Hannafin, Land & Oliver, 1999) under the CBA has moved the centre of gravity away from the teacher and closer to the learner. Indeed, it has become fashionable to talk about learning and the learner rather than

teaching and the teacher. This increased attention to the learner may be seen by teachers as a loss of control and power which can lead to feelings of uncertainty, inadequacy and anxiety. The change may even be seen as, in some way, a devaluing of the role of the teacher. It has to be recognized, however, that it is not true. That teaching and learning are closely related and that the purpose of teaching is to enhance learning .

It is important to ensure that the teacher is not neglected in debates about new educational strategies and approaches to curriculum development. The key question is which role the teacher and the learner have in the context of the CBA implementation .

II.7.1. Teacher's Role under the CBA and the LMD System

Under the CBA, the teacher's role has to comply with the underlying assumptions and principles of the approach. In fact, the CBA advocates the learner's autonomy and knowledge construction. To attain these objectives, the teacher has to adapt to the roles of facilitator, mediator and motivator.

> "*As a teacher I see my role as being two fold. One is, yes, I am teaching the language but I feel my other very important role is to assist the learners to take a growing responsibility for the management of their own learning... learners are with us for only relatively—short time, and we have to prepare them so that their learning continues outside, erm, the length of their course." (An EFL teacher interviewed by Nunan 1991:185)*

A. As a Facilitator

The move to a more learner-centered view of learning has required a fundamental shift in the role of the teacher. No longer is the teacher predominantly as a dispenser of knowledge and information or walking tape recorder, but rather as a facilitator or manager of the learner's learning. The more responsibility and freedom is given to the learner, the greater the shift is required in the teacher's role. *"The facilitator supports the learner, takes account of his possibilities, his strengths, his needs, his feelings; humanistic philosophy and psychology."* (Rogers, 1961: 283).

In fact, the introduction of the problem-based learning with a consequent fundamental change in the learner-teacher relationship has highlighted the change in the role of teacher from one of knowledge provider to one of facilitator. The teacher's role is not to inform the learners but to encourage them learn for themselves and facilitate learner's knowledge construction. In other words, the emphasis thus turns away from the instructor and the content towards the learner and learning (Gomoran, Secada & Marrett 1998). This dramatic change of role implies that the facilitator needs to display a totally different set of skills than a teacher (Brownstein 2001). A teacher tells, a facilitator asks ; a teacher lectures from the front, a facilitator supports from the back; a teacher gives answers according to a set curriculum, a

facilitator provides guidelines and creates the environment for the learner to attain her/his own conclusions; a teacher mostly gives a monologue, a facilitator is in continuous dialogue with the learners (Rhodes & Bellamy,1999). All in all, the teacher should provide the appropriate environment to facilitate learning. Albert Einstein who quoted as saying: "I never teach my pupils; I only attempt to provide the conditions in which they can learn. (quoted by Walter & Marks 1981:1).

Teacher's facilitation of learning does not rely only upon his knowledge, the tools he uses, the lesson planning he prepares, etc., but teacher's personal attitudinal qualities have an effective impact on learners' learning. Rogers states that :

> *"We know… that the initiation of such learning rests not upon the teaching skills of the leader, not upon his scholarly knowledge of the field, not upon his curricular planning, not upon his use of audio-visual aids, not upon the programmed learning he utilizes, not upon his lectures and representations, not upon an abundance of books, although each of these might at one time or another be utilized as an important resource. No, the facilitation of significant learning rests upon certain attitudinal qualities which exist in the personal relationship between the facilitator and the learner" (1969: 105*)

According to the quotation above, it is quite clear that learners' learning depends much on attitudes and behaviors that characterise the teacher-learners' relationship that prevails inside the class environment.

B. As a Mediator

As a mediator, the teacher lays the platform for teaching/learning process. Mediation means interposing. The teacher interposes something within the environment with which the learners interact. The problem for the teacher is to make appropriate stimuli available for the learners' interaction to help them select and organize these stimuli in ways that develop their thought processes. To make this possible, the teacher should redefine learning which imperatively requires them to redefine teaching. Optimal learning requires teaching that supports and facilitates it without controlling, distorting, or thwarting the learning .

The teacher helps learners see realistic purposes for school activities in relationship to their own needs and goals; therefore, he

- Helps learners to discover
- Exposes them to many potentially interesting facets of the World .
- Arranges physical environment, which provokes curiosity; encourages them follow up the interests stimulated by the environment .
- Elicits from them what they want to find out .
- Places them in active and creative roles of explorers, inquirers, designers , performers…etc.

- Helps them define complex problems.

As a mediator, the teacher should help the learners solve problems themselves better than giving them the solution. He interferes by asking a question here, offering a useful hint there, directing learners' attention to an anomaly, calling their attention to overlooked information, and supporting them as they synthesize what they are learning into new concepts and schemas.

C. As a Motivator

Many 'good' teachers state that they try to motivate the learners by encouraging the results that are satisfying and pleasurable. No doubt, tests can be valuable tools for self-evaluation. Yet, tests are not the only means, which can be used for the purpose, and results are not always valid. To restrict learners' achievements entirely to tests and marks may lead to competition, which precludes cooperation and mutual agreement among learners. Teachers, who try to make learning satisfying, use a wide range of tools for recognition and appreciation of learners' work. Praise is their main forte. Marks should be regarded as symbols of rewards rather than as tools of fear. Generally, teachers, who try to motivate learners by applying either the carrot or the stick policy, are largely engrossed with their own goals.

Teachers, who mechanically assign each hour's work without guiding and motivating learners the larger sequence of which it is a part, can serve dooms and will usually have little intrinsic appeal. Thus, they will deprive learners of the opportunity to carry their existing motivations into the classroom in ways that could help their learning .To motivate learners and serve as precursor, teachers should implement motivational strategies which encourage positive attitudes to learning in all respects .

They have to foster realistic beliefs attainments and facilitate learning processes. Besides, they supply the means of making learning enjoyable, memorable and pertinent. The most important teacher's motivational behaviors for success can be abstracted, according to the studies of Dornyei 1997 (quoted by M. Williams and Robert Burden 1997) as follows:

a) set a good example with your behavior;

b) create a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere in the classroom;

c) present tasks properly;

d) develop a good relationship with the learners;

e) increase learners' linguistic self-confidence;

f) make language classes interesting;

g) promote autonomy;

h) personalize the learning process;

i) increase learners' goal orientedness;

j) familiarize learners with the target culture;

k) establish cooperative learning and maintain group dynamics;

Doing so, the teacher can play an effective role of motivator and encourage learners to learn the FL .

II.7.2. Learner's Roles under the CBA and the LMD System

As far as the learner is concerned, his status has enormously changed: he changes into a learner, taking in charge his own learning in an "autonomous" way. In other words, the English language session is no longer centered on the teacher but on the learner.

In this spirit of interaction and focalization on learner's learning, the group dynamics is also regarded as a major factor of motivation for the language acquisition. Role playing, group and pair work are encouraged to establish an atmosphere of confidence and cooperation to favor communication. In this manner, the 'feedback', traditionally delivered by the teacher, will also be produced by learners themselves, by monopolizing competencies of each one, developing and valorizing mutual help and exchanging ideas.

Each learner determines himself his position and role with regard to the other members of the group. He manages and creates with his classmates (pairs/group) the appropriate learning environment inside the groups. The teacher will have to lose the practice of dictating the behaviors, to correct the errors, to set up as a critic; he will remain in withdrawal but always with a finely tuned listening of his learners. Consequently, he will weave a communication network much closer to the real life.

In a learner-centered teaching, learners are supposed to function autonomously, the best way to do so, learners are required to be knowledge processors, effective performers, problem-solvers and initiators.

A. As a Knowledge Processor

Learners become knowledge processors when they are given the opportunity to observe, apply and refine through practice. In this model, learners reflect on their practices in diverse situations and across a range of tasks, and they articulate the common elements of their experiences .

Learners' development depends to a great extent on language awareness which is not restricted to a focus on language itself, but also to a cognitive reflection upon language functions. In fact, language mastery requires much more than just familiarity with the vocabulary and grammar of the language. It also involves awareness of how language operates to influence thinking, emotions, and understanding. Language awareness can be

fostered by giving learners various choices in learning activities. This variety of choices stimulates learners' interests and has a definite potential for their development as knowledge processors.

B. As an Effective Performer

Generally, learners who are taught to be increasingly aware of their learning will be more effective performers and, as a result, will become active in monitoring their progress (Lee and Solomon 1992; Paris and Oka 1986).

The role, teachers should play as mediators in the learning process, is crucial to the development to self-determined and independent learners. The attainment of these outcomes may take some time and energy on the part of the teacher. The focus on this type of learning will ultimately contribute to the learners' development as an effective performer and thus a critical thinker .

C. As a Problem-solver

Yet, few instructional design prescriptions are available for designing problem solving instruction and engaging learners. To render learners problem-solvers necessitates the involvement of a variety of cognitive components, such as propositional information, concepts, rules, and principles (domain knowledge). However, it also involves semantic knowledge.

A successful problem-centered teaching should focus on problem-solving and planning strategies more systematically and intensively than is typically the case in most classrooms.

The aim behind learners' learning is to acquire the appropriate strategies that enable them to be effective learners, i.e., to function as problem-solvers. Yet, teachers should play an efficient role to help learners acquire the characteristic of problem solvers by instilling in them constant curiosity and questioning, enjoyment to figure out things, seeking challenges, persistence, resourcefulness, independence and confidence.

Acquiring these strategies enable learners to actively seek, appropriately use and continuously create knowledge. They reflect on their own learning, draw on personal knowledge and intuition, and challenge the basis of assumptions and perceptions.

The Modular Structure for MA Studies

1. The Modular Structure Analysis

This section is a follow-up to the questionnaires and interviews analysis. Similar to questionnaires and interviews, the purpose of this analysis of the overall curriculum structure of the initial instruction is to check its compatibility with the expected competencies of the new reforms especially the LMD tenets. In other words, to verify to what extent these competencies, especially the communicative one, are materialized. Thanks to the data generated via the questionnaires, interviews and analysis of the curriculum, we wish to highlight the issues in connection with the speaking skill competence.

Like all countries around the world, and to respond to the requirements of the labor market, Algeria has adopted the LMD/BMD system. Since 2003-2004 academic year, the LMD system [2] was implemented in the tertiary education. This reform was designed to introduce new competencies at each level, a standardized teaching unit system throughout each curriculum, and make transfer possible among national and international universities. In a nutshell, the reform objectives are to place universities at the heart of the country's economic development by ensuring the production and dissemination of knowledge, mastery of technology, promotion of research and development and training of the human resources. (Idri, 2010).

Each academic year is divided into two semesters, spread over 14 to 16 weeks/each. Each semester consists of a set of fundamental (core classes specific to the general field of study), discovery (electives outside the student's area of specialization), methodology (classes for particular subjects of study) and transversal teaching units. The latter are either tutorials or lectures. Each semester includes at least between 350 or 360 hours of study, i.e., 2100 hours (96 to 84 weeks) to cover a BA degree curriculum. Each teaching unit is assigned credits and coefficients. These credits can be capitalized and transferred. The BA degree is equal to 180 credits. The successful BA students can carry their MA studies. The latter endure two years which are split up into four semesters, i.e., three semesters of theoretical studies, consolidating the BA prerequisites and the four one is devoted to an academic dissertation.

1.1. The University MA Graduates

By browsing the MA curriculum degree in English over three semesters of study spread over 28 or 30 weeks a year, we notice that it includes 10 modules, and is covered in a global hourly volume of about 375 hours. Courses are taught in CMs and TDs as follows (*cf*

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[2] It is introduced by executive decree on 29th August 20

Appendix C).

In the first two semesters of the MA degree, the curriculum includes 10 modules for each semester which are divided into CMs and TDs. The CMs receive an overall weekly schedule of 07h/week or an annual hourly volume of 210 hours. However, TDs are distributed over a weekly schedule of 18 hours, an annual volume of 504 hours. Therefore, it can be noted that a significant hourly volume is devoted to TDs. Their overall time-volume is 700 hours of study (*cf.* Appendix C).

In third semester, 10 teaching units are distributed over a weekly schedule volume of 25 hours. This schedule is also divided into CMs and TDs. The weekly schedule assigned to the CMs is 07 hours (28%) and the one assigned to TDs is 18 hours (72%). Annually, the 10 teaching units are performed in an overall schedule of 700 hours (*cf.* Appendix C).

In the fourth semester of the BA degree, the MA students are supposed to embark on a research work. The survey endures a whole semester crowned by an oral defense. Generally speaking, the themes are suggested by teachers and validated by the scientific committee of the department. Parted into monomials or binomials, the students should defend their research work either publicly or behind closed doors. Awarded the degree of Master, the graduates can sit for Doctorate contests.

The teaching units are organized in a modular structure which, during the first two semesters, seems to give great importance to the mastery of the receptive and productive oral and written skills of the English language. In other words, the lion' s share of credits and coefficients is devoted to the fundamental teaching units, viz., Linguistic theories, semantics and pragmatics, dialectology and sociolinguistic variations, language policy and language planning and oral expression. Thus, we note that the teaching units which contribute to the acquisition of proficiency of and on the TL (including disciplinary, cultural, discovery and methodological competencies) receive an hourly volume of seven hours and a half, accounting for about 75% of the two-semester curriculum. In addition, the teaching units that contribute to the development of the multicultural aspects are carried out in an overall hourly schedule of 392h, representing around 18.66% of the whole the three-year time volume.

Referring to the canvas, it can be noticed that the oral expression gains 1h30 a week. This seems insufficient to develop such an important skill.The time factor in very significant to construct an important competence .

II. 8.Oral expression in the university environment

Being of fulcrum component of the communicative competence, the speaking skill represents th**e** cornerstone on which is founded the successful attainment of proficiency in communicating competently.

II. 8.1. Oral expression and its implementation

In academia, at the Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages at Ibn Khaldoun University, Oral Expression Module presented is in the form of TD from the first-year Bachelor till the first year Master; for four years. In the first and second semesters of the MA, the assessment process which covers a whole semester consists of a set of components, viz., attendance (10%), classroom active participation in the TD session (20, (10%), homework doing (20%) and 50% final oral assessment (50%).

The goals to be achieved by this TD are both overall and specific: to construct the oral communicative competence, to understand and practice the rules of oral expression, improve oral comprehension and expression so that at the end of the semester the student is able to apply and explain these rules, to understand a message, to express his opinion on this message, to argue orally his personal judgment. All in all, theses TD sessions are the ideal and the only courses, enabling the students to speak and practice the target language instead of learning about its system.

A- The Simulation

During the speaking activities, we can involve a ***simulated I*** that allows students to imagine situations and characters using a thematic album of images, thus plunging him into a situation of concrete communication (e.g.: the first TD unit according to the program: The couple and the family, etc. If we appeal to the act "to present oneself", the images must obviously illustrate a situation of communication, such as: university, university cafe, a taxi / bus / train / plane, where the characters thus imagine get to know each other. This approach aims at answering questions from the student according to the situation: Who speaks? Whose? Or When? How? Then, we ask him to simulate such character and create the situation. Or, instead of presenting him the album with images put to the interpretation, we use the video, the cut sound, and we ask him, after an analysis of the situation indicated, to reconstruct the replicas of the characters.

Students simulate the situation using words from another of his imagination, using non-verbal and expressiveness of one's own body; he does not play his own role, but this situation helps him in his attempt to express himself in English, clearly and without too many mistakes.

B-The Canevas

"A canevas is a kind of guide for the learners they will follow in order to help them in their oral production work ". Even though we are talking about students in Letters, supposed to have a high level of oral communication skills, they are not used to exposing their opinions, they do not know how to reuse the lexicon and grammatical structures. This learner's guide offers micro-conversations simple ones that reuse already learned structures, thus creating a communication situation well defined. If we consider the act of speech "to present itself", then the Canevas can be in the following form: A is B's friend, they meet C who is A's friend and the instructions are: greet someone, get to know each other, ask questions (about age, about family, about city / village / neighborhood of residence, studies, plans for the future).

This is the example of the first TD, unit 1. The couple and the family (1.30 hour) teachers can tell learners to introduce members of their family, to present themselves or, according to the images and texts of the method indicated, to create micro-conversations on the subject under discussion: to be for or against celibacy, to be for or against life in a relationship. Then the requested tasks must be clearly explained, micro-conversations are prepared in small groups; the teacher can help his students by providing them with additional information, but they must be allowed to act on their own. Finally, once the micro-conversations have been created, the role of the participating students is to play them without resorting to the previously written variant while the teacher monitors the correction of the sentence, pronunciation (always after the created role) as well as the self-correction of its learners; he is also concerned with the creation of activities to correct their mistakes.

Using this Canevas, learners are able to better use the knowledge gained through listening comprehension.

C-The Role play

The role play involves a scene animation with the help of a few learners who create, at their discretion, more personal and real characters than for the canevas game, "without any special documentation or preparation other than the language course". and without instructions other than what is necessary for the point of departure. " Role play does not mean playing a memorized dialogue but an oral dialogue that learners have created according to a previously established scenario; it is therefore an improvised non-written text that avoids the automatism of structures and asks learners to learn to listen to others in order to communicate something to them, who can use, if they do not understand the message, phrases like Sorry? Could you please repeat? Can you tell me… ? No ?! What? How to… ?

Let's take a few examples of role-playing instructions according to the themes of the

TDs. For unit 3. To learn (1.30 h), the instructions are as follows: A., a young student, decides to give up her university studies and to work in a shop; his parents do not agree with his decision; exchange of opinions; for unity 4. Praise of age: to each one's appearance (1.30 h), the instructions are as follows: B. has just visited his grandmother who tells him about his life and his passion for music; dialogue on passions.

For the unit 5. For or against advertising (1.30 h), the instructions are as follows: C., young student between two jobs, looking for work by flipping through the newspapers; interviews with bosses; his opinions on advertising.

For the unit 6. The world of work (1.30hours), the instructions are as follows: D., a young student in part-time job, asks for a salary increase to his boss who refuses his request; each states his reasons.

Once the instructions are read and the dialogues prepared, the learners play their role by stopping where they feel they have reached their goal or their limit, while their colleagues must necessarily applaud them by highlighting their concerted effort. Then, each scenario is put in discussion by each group in order to mark the reaction of the others vis-à-vis the game of role, the transmitted message and to propose variants which will improve the game, the attitude of the actors, their reactions.

A problem remains nevertheless the scenic place that the classrooms do not assure in totality. In our opinion, it is up to the teacher and his learners to transform the classroom according to their scenic needs.

The goal of any role play is that the teacher and his / her learners have a duty to predict real and possible situations, drawn from everyday life, with an emphasis on imagination, creativity and good disposition inside each group. In addition, the benefits of role playing are multiple: passivity is defeated, memorization is activated, grammatical and lexical structures are used in context, the learner is encouraged to express himself in a foreign language, the situation is clearly drawn from real life; he thus has the feeling that he will be able to fend for himself in reality during a direct contact with a native.

D-The Debates

Debates and presentations are forms of oral expression for an advanced level, assuming the formulation of a personal judgment on a problem under discussion in front of the audience.

The debate begins between the learners and emphasizes the argumentation, on the contradiction, thus expressing the agreement or the disagreement, starting from a common topic of discussion. The structure of a debate presupposes the presence of a president (teacher

or learner), a "for" team (consisting of 2-3 learners) and a "against" team (always composed of 2-3 learners), a timekeeper, a jury made up of an odd number of learners (i.e., 3 learners) and the public (the class). Debate becomes an extraordinary "formative exercise" for learners because it requires a structure, organized ideas, concisely formulated texts, a presentation to an audience, an evolution of arguments in a well-defined framework that is the hall of class. The teacher necessarily observes the learner's way of using the technique of debate, the structuring of a discourse: the introduction, the discourse plan with the general and secondary ideas of the debate and the relevant examples, and, finally, the conclusions.

We can illustrate this step on the same program of the first year License that allows us to offer some examples: For unit7. The problems of English / Romanian society (1.30hours), the themes of the debate are as follows: Are we assisting a world in crisis? ; What are the new dimensions of Europe? ; To prohibit or not the motor traffic in the big city centers? ; Why are we talking about a worried teen? ; What does equal rights mean to us in the 21st century? ; A new matriarchy, women in control? .

For unit 08. The English / Romanians (1.30h), the theme of the debate is: The new European citizen - similarities and differences.

All topics of debate are organized in an argumentative form, the aim being to demonstrate a good handling of the vocabulary of argumentation, to know how to justify the situation under discussion. The learner must prepare and argue, according to a structured plan, his oral intervention.

E-The Presentation

According to E. Roulet et al. (1985), the presentation is a speech in situation, especially "monolingual". Teaching the presentation means having "a repertoire of language means" and "specific techniques" offered to learners who will become "objects of learning or didactic intervention during classroom activities" under the idea that the oral is taught. It is "a public discursive genre (...) in a space-time of the act of production" where "the enunciator addresses himself to the addressee through a linguistic action that conveys a referential content", according to Bronckart (1985).

In his presentation, the learner takes into account the characteristics of the situation of practical communication: the addressee, the enunciator, the transmission channel, the goal, the knowledge pre-exist, its expectations and the expectations of the public to which it is addressed, the sound of his voice to expose his actions. In addition, he is involved in the exploitation of sources of information: audio-video sites with recordings, audio-video cassette of books / manuals; he appropriates the extralinguistic elements so necessary for the

presentation: the tone of the voice, the bodily movement, etc., he uses examples and illustrations of the concrete situation, he explains the chosen structure and the points of adopted view.

To prepare and produce his presentation, the learner uses various knowledge and know-how and respects certain progressive stages: the creation of a corpus of texts, the listening of oral texts (recorded interviews, presentations under audio and video form) accompanied by a listening grid and exercises. Basically, the oral presentation needs an explanation from the observation of the audio-video document, the use of various media to convey the message, the adjustment of the voice, the look, or the use of gestures to sensitize other participants to the act of communicating, listening and analyzing the document to summarize its content, and finally the structure of the presentation (with an announcement of the plan, an opening and closure of the topics under discussion).

If we always take the example of our program, then we can indicate that for unit 10 Paris / Bucharest-atmosphere (1.30 h), we insist on a rather useful presentation for our students / learners, given the fact that the subject is quite generous: it can be explained from the point of view of tourism, history, economics, politics, etc. Learners recreate an extensive archive of audio / video material that they use to explain and convey the message (using a real arsenal of manipulation techniques using voice, gestures, look at), analyze the content and form of the material under discussion and finally present the final variant to the audience formed by their group.

II. 8.2. Oral expression and its Skills

Oral expression also requires different skills because every learner encounters difficulties in learning. According to the CEFR, the competence to communicate linguistically has several components: "a linguistic component, a sociolinguistic component, a pragmatic component" (CEFR, 2001: 17). Or, according to The Belin Guide of Education (2005: 19-20), which takes up the opinions of Sophie Moirand (1979), communication implies the linguistic component (the rules by which the learner realizes his messages) , the discursive component (types of speech adapted according to the communication situation), the referential component (the reference domains), the socio-cultural component (the rules of socio-cultural communication)

First of all, linguistic competence must be taken into consideration. There are situations in which the learner, who is still being monitored by his teacher, does not hear the oral message well, or makes phonetic, lexical or grammatical confusion or is still influenced by the interference caused by the structures of his mother tongue. Secondly, we must not

neglect the idiomatic competence, taking into account the opinions of Bertrand (1999), idiomatic competence which seems to derive from the linguistic competence because the learner, in his attempt to learn a foreign language, makes use of fixed formulas to paraphrases specific forms for each language, forms that he does not master at all; moreover, he does not know too well all the grammatical and lexical particularities of the new language.

There are also sociolinguistic skills that refer to "the socio-cultural parameters of the use of language" (Ibidem.), In the sense that the learner must react according to the situation of communication developed.

The pragmatic skills (realization of linguistic functions, acts of speech) insist on "interactional exchanges" and require mastery of speech (with cohesion and consistency), "the identification of textual types and genres, ironic effects of parody "(Ibidem.); the learner must therefore choose the discursive strategies, organize well, adapt well and structure his speech in order to know the real communication situation, to link it to his speaker.

But one must observe another skill, according to Bertrand (1999), the cognitive competence in the sense that the learner misses certain stages in the evolution of the oral expression, that it is at the beginning of the study of a new language, that he does not bother to know it: he does not yet know how to define a working hypothesis, he does not know how to even prove it, to argue it or to draw the necessary conclusions.

Finally, we can emphasize the role of interactional and communicative competence, according to the same ideas of Bertrand (1999). If the teacher has failed to train his or her learners with these skills, he or she can expect several situations that aim at not mastering that area. Moreover, the learner knows very well that he must respect certain codes, his teacher forces him to advance in the structures of a language that seems to him to come from the past, too difficult for his rules of grammar and pronunciation.

If the learner has difficulties in the acquisition of oral skills, then he is content to remain silent and passive, refuting communication in the target language simply because he is afraid of falling into 'ridicule'. Or, he is plunged into a situation where he is afraid to confront himself freely with his colleagues on this or that topic, fearing to argument his ideas owing to the insufficiency of necessary knows, know-how-to-do and know-how-to-be. He is still afraid to make mistakes, he is shy and he refuses communication, he does not know the rules of construction in a new language.

Here are some examples of situations faced by the trainer of future teachers of English as a foreign language during an oral examination in a university environment. So, it is incumbent to the university teachers to resolve and remedy situations put into discussion, to

establish the objectives of learning, to respect the culture and professional history of our learners, the relationship between the mother tongue and English as a language of communication (Desmons et al., 2005: 20).

Conclusion

In the foregoing chapter, the endeavor has been to explore the multifarious and often the elusive context wherein the English language teaching and learning context in general, and the oral expression dealing with in particular. Equally important has been to track the status of the English language, the Algerian educational system, the educational reforms, the implementation of the CBA and its tenets and objectives, the LMD system and the oral expression in the tertiary environment.

Chapter Three

Fieldwork, Data Collection and Analysis

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Fieldwork, Data Collection and Analysis

Introduction

III.1. Methodology

III.2. Research Design

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Conclusion

Chapter Three
Fieldwork, Data Collection and Analysis

Introduction

Throughout the foregoing chapters an insightful literature review about the issue under investigation, viz., the impacts of age, gender and status variables on speaking skills and classroom interaction has been provided. Besides, a set of various concepts, related to the issue have been identified, and explained.

However, the upcoming chapter is rather practical. It is undertaken with the objective to investigate about the compliance between theoretical aspects of the issue under investigation and their compatibility with what actually takes place in the classroom. It is generally said that "saying is one thing, and doing is another thing" (Montaigne, cited in Robson 1993: 191). In fact this implies that what is said might be quite different from what effectively happens *in situ*. Throughout this part, the functional framework of the research is elucidated. The research methodology, the targeted population, and the research tools are described. The whole chapter ends up with presentation, analysis and interpretation of the collected data. Finally, it concludes with suggestions and recommendations.

III.1. Methodology

It is acknowledged that every scientific research must follow certain procedures to ensure reliable and valid data. Thus, the reliance on one single method is insufficient to confirm the accuracy of the data and to provide a better understanding of the research issue. Hence, the methodology implemented to conduct the current inquiry is based on mixed methods, i.e., the combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods. In the light of this perspective, Creswell & Clark (2011), define mix-method as follows:

> *As a method, it focuses on collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies. Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches, in combination, provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone. (2011: 12);*

As stated above, the implemented approach is a dual-focused descriptive- interpretive one. The choice of this investigative method is dictated by the nature of the study, responding to the objectives of our research work, which are fundamentally meant to explore and explain the underlying impacts of those variables of age, gender and social status on students' conversational interaction.

The case of the current research which involves both EFL teachers and students of IbnKhaldoun University is expected to help the researcher collect enough reliable data in connection with some factors affecting students' oral performance, thus ensuring scientific validity and allowing outcomes generalizability. So, the generated data would probably provide informed findings mirroring how the conversational interactions in oral classes can be influenced by some factors, viz., age, gender and status.

This part also deals with the explanation of the methodology and procedures of the study. It gives an idea about the research design and the participants, and also presents the sample size, sampling techniques and data gathering instruments.

III.2. Research Design

It is commonly recognized that a variety of academic methodologies are designed to serve the different goals and purposes of the research. Lynch (1997: 14) draws potential researchers' attention to be cognizant of both the nature of the existing phenomenon and the determination of the justifications thereof. Theoretically, these two essential optics, viz., ontological (nature of the existing phenomenon) and epistemological (determining the justifications), determine and orientate the choice of the methodology and undoubtedly affect its course to attain the expected objectives: discerning the issue of study and elucidating the associated constituents in an inclusive setting.

To collect reliable data, two different research tools, viz., a questionnaire directed to students and an interview conducted with teachers are used. The mixed method combining the quantitative and qualitative instruments is to improve the final evaluation by ensuring that the limitations of one type of data are balanced by the strengths of the other one. Thus, the descriptive-interpretive method is implemented to attain the predetermined objectives which are basically a) investigate and b) explain the impacts of the intersection of a set of factors, i.e., age, gender and social status on students' oral expression. The quantitative data will be analyzed numerically. In addition, all the calculated data will be presented through tables and graphs for better visualization. Thus, qualitative data were to be presented in the form of summary to illustrate the analysis of data. Both kinds of data will be collectively analyzed to identify patterns as well as details. Among the advantages of mixed method is the potential for gaining a fuller, richer and complete understanding of research instruments.

III.3 Sample

The present investigation takes place at the Department of Foreign Languages in Tiaret University, in the academic year 2019/2020. The survey considers teachers in charge of the Oral Expression Module and MA English students. We viewed it necessary to provide a

brief overview of the circumstances of the creation of the department of English at Tiaret. It was initiated in 2012-13 academic year in collaboration with Abdelhamid University of Mostaganem. Since then, the department has been in full expansion though facing serious hurdles with regard to the reduced number of teachers and the excessive number of enrolled students. Presently, the student enrolment has reached 2000 students; 1700 BA students and 300 MA students. The department endures two MA specialties, viz., Didactics of foreign languages and Linguistics.

III.4. Population Sampling

The choice of a manageable subset of the whole population of MA students was imposed by the large number of students at the department of English. In fact, this survey has followed probability sampling that is mainly set up on a random selection, where every subject in the population is given a chance to be selected. The objective behind following this process is to minimize partiality and to maximize objectivity and reliability. Whereof, for the present case study, 30 MA students have been randomly selected from Master 1 cohort; 19 females and 11 males who are aged between 23 and 28 years old. The sample represents half of the Didactics specialty. We have selected this sample on the basis of the background, knowledge and experience the students share together; this would probably enable us to recognize the nature of the relationship between them, how the latter is affected by several factors and how it is reflected in their interaction inside the classroom.

III.5. Data Collection Instruments

For the sake of methodological viewpoint, research tools utilized in any survey are not subjected to the principle of randomness. Various elements are taken into account when intending to embark on a study. In this vein, Dornyei (2011) believed that the backbone of any research reckons upon the instruments that are used in gathering the data. Thus, it requires different resources of data collection. In this study, we followed twofold methodology that relies on two data sources, i.e., qualitative and quantitative. The aim of these two instruments is to assure the validity of information and to develop a comprehensive understanding of the research outcomes.

III.5.1. Description of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire is actually the most common instrument for collecting data in a record time. Therefore, Brown (2001:6) defines it as **"**Any written instrument that presents respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers".It consists of a series of written question-

items worded in different formats. In fact, this instrument is used for it allows the accessibility to large number of the respondents. Besides, it is consistent and easily accessible with regard to analysis since it provides the researcher with numerical data.

The questionnaire is addressed to EFL learners in the department of English at Tiaret University, there have been selected thirty (30) students of Oral Expression Class. The aim of the questionnaire is to investigate the impact of age, gender and social status on the conversational interaction in oral expression classes.

The questionnaire consists of sixteen (16) questions. The questions are close ended questions except for the last one. As regards the close-ended questions, the surveyed students are supposed to pick up the appropriate answer from a number of choices, whereas for the open question, they are requested to provide explanations. These questions are categorized under four different yet complimentary sections which are stated here below.

Section One: Background Information (Q1-Q2)

Questions in section one aim at gathering personal information about the target sample. The surveyed students are asked to specify their gender,age and class; and the second question is about students' basic knowledge of English in general.

Section Two: Speaking Skill (Q3-Q5):

The second section is concerned by the speaking skill in oral expression. In question (3), they are asked to tick one answer from three options about how many sessions are devoted to oral expression class.Then, question (4) is addressed to students enquiring about the sufficiency or the insufficiency of the number of these sessions for the enhancement of the meant skills; they are asked to choose among three given options. The fifth question, students are asked about their opinions in speaking skill session.

Section three: Interaction in Classroom. (Q6-Q11)

The third section consists of six (6) questions. The aim behind this series of questions is to investigate the classroom interaction, the way it is dealt with, the subjects' participation, the dominant type of interaction, i.e., teacher-learners or learner-learner one. In other words, it is meant to check if the speaking sessions are teacher- or learner-centered ones.

Section Four: Factors and Status (Q12-Q16)

Section four consists of 5 question-items that revolve around the problem of the study. The questions address the factors that affect the students' interaction inside the classroom. Finally, this section is concluded with an open-ended question which enables respondents to express their perceptions and views about the issue.

III.5.2. Design and Description of Teachers' interview

The teachers' semi-structured interview consists of twelve (12) open-ended questions where the teachers are requested to give explanation or specifications. This interview was conducted with five teachers of oral expression module in the department of English at Ibn Khaldoun University. Our interviewees were asked at the beginning if they have ever taught Oral Expression Module. Teachers were also asked about how they can assess learners' speaking skill. Besides, they were asked whether they give opportunities to their learners to speak in the classroom or not. In addition, they were asked about what hinders students' interaction, and what gender dominates the classroom interaction. They were also asked about the main causes behind students 'refusal to interact with the opposite gender. They were asked elucidate the main speaking difficulties that students may encounter in the oral expression courses. Moreover, our interviewees were asked about the social boundaries that can affect students' interactions in the classroom. Finally, they were invited to suggest some recommendations for suitable solutions to enhance students' oral expression proficiency.

A) The Quantitative Data

III.5.3. Questionnaire Data Presentation and Analysis

In this section, the collected data are to be displayed into tables and graphs for the purpose to analyze, interpret and generate appropriate results.

Section One: Respondents' Profile/ Informants' personal data

Similar to all investigating tools used in any survey, the first questions are intended to collect the data targeting the respondents' background. Thus, the first question-items cover their gender and age.

Item 1: Respondents' sex

Options	Students	Percentage
Females	19	63.50%
Males	11	36.50%
Total	30	100%

Table 3.1: Respondents' Gender

Respondents'Gender

Males 37%
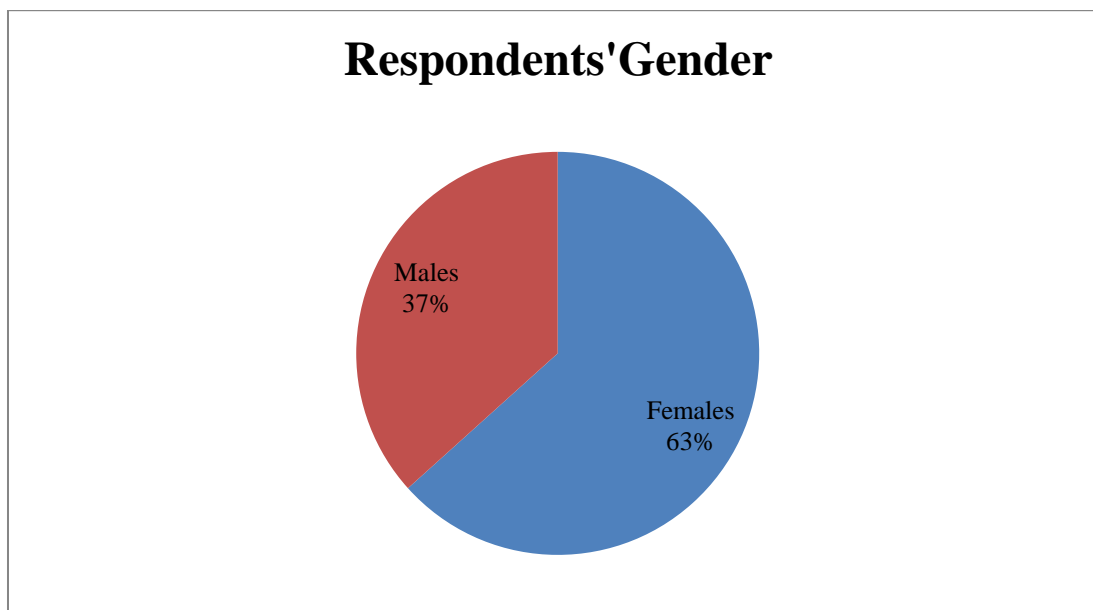
Females 63%

Graph 3.1.: Respondents' Gender

From the results above , it can noticed that two-third (63% n=19) of the respondents are females. Yet, only one third (36.50 n=11) is males.

It is worth noting that the majority of the surveyed population of the MA students is constituted of females. Two thirds (2/3) of them are women. In fact, this distribution corresponds to the socio-demographic data published by the Ministry of National Education (cf. Appendices). A study was drawn up by the Ministry of National Education. It reveals that at the level of the secondary education, the literary streams are chosen by the girl-students. That explains the rise of women in the sector of education (cf. appendices). It is generally acknowledged that females outnumber males and this disparity is due to females' interest in studying languages more than males who are more likely attracted, as a general stereotypical assumption, in studying hard sciences.

Item: Respondents' Age

Options	Students	Percentage
23	3	10%
24	14	46.6%
25	3	10%
26	4	13.4%
27	3	10%
28	3	10%
Total	30	100%

Table 3.2: Respondents' Age
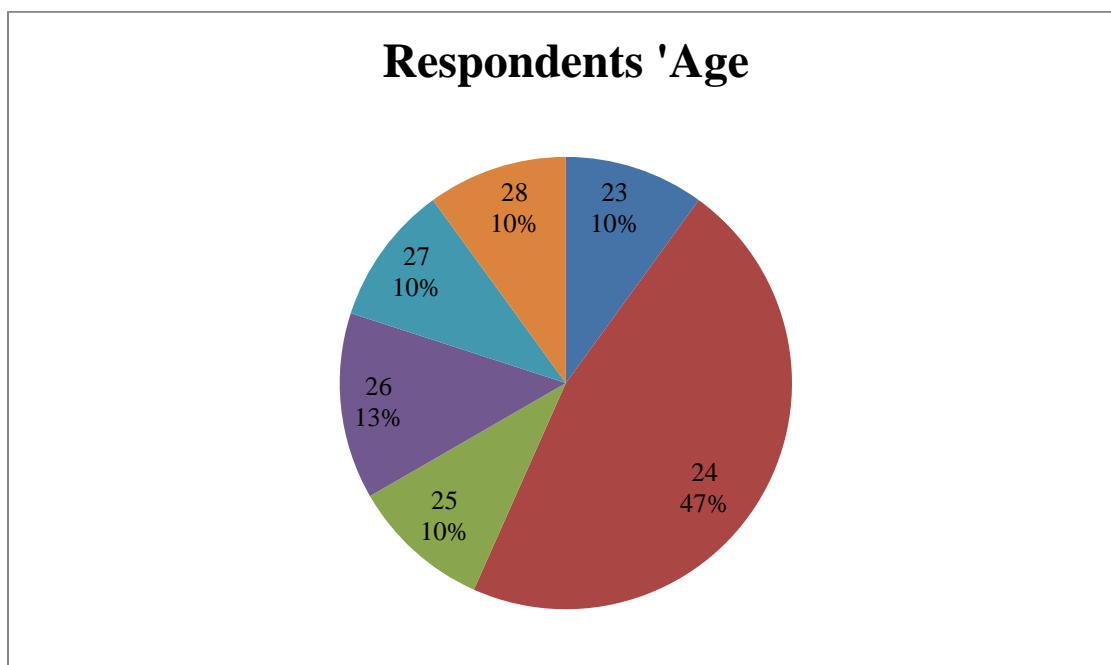
Graph 3.2: Respondents' Age

The table above shows the respondents' age. The age of the targeted population ranges from 23 to 28 years old. 10% (n=3) of them are 23, 25, 27 and 28 years old, 46.6% (n= 14) are 24 and 13.4% (n=4) are 26.

Referring to the above percentages, it can be noticed that the surveyed sample is composed of a variety of age ranges. Those who are aged 26 years old and more are students who may be in-service middle or secondary school teachers, motivated by MA studies pursuing. Yet, this respondents' age heterogeneity can be an influencing factor which facilitates or hinders students' oral performance during interaction sessions.

Section Two: Informants' Speaking Skill assessment

Item 3: English Proficiency

Q3: Is your level in English_____?

Options	Students	Percentage
Very good	2	6%
Good	23	77%
Average	5	17%
Poor	0	0%
Total	30	100%

Table 3.3: Respondents' English Proficiency
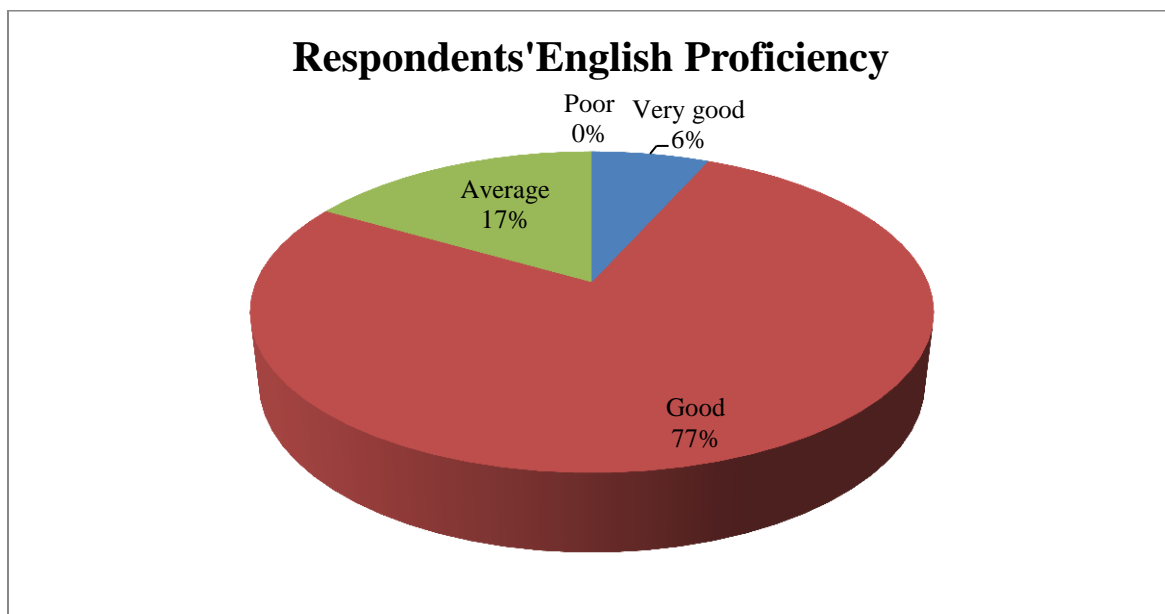
Graph 3.3: Respondents' English Proficiency

The table displays the respondents' English proficiency. 6% (n=2) of the surveyed sample attest that their English level is very good, whereas 77% of them report that their level is good. Only 17% (n=5) declare that their level is average. None says that it poor.

The above assessments provided by the respondents reveal most of them have a good level at English. Yet, and because of the lack of accurate measurement of this level, this remains subjective. An additional probing of this proficiency is needed so as to be able to bring an accurate evaluation.

Item 4: Speaking Skill Sessions

Q (04): a-How many sessions per week do you have for oral expression?

The respondents say that they have two sessions a week for oral skills.

b- Do you think that it is sufficient?

Option	Number	Percentage
Yes	02	07%
No	28	93%
Total	30	100%

Table.3.4.:Learners' satisfaction about Speaking skill
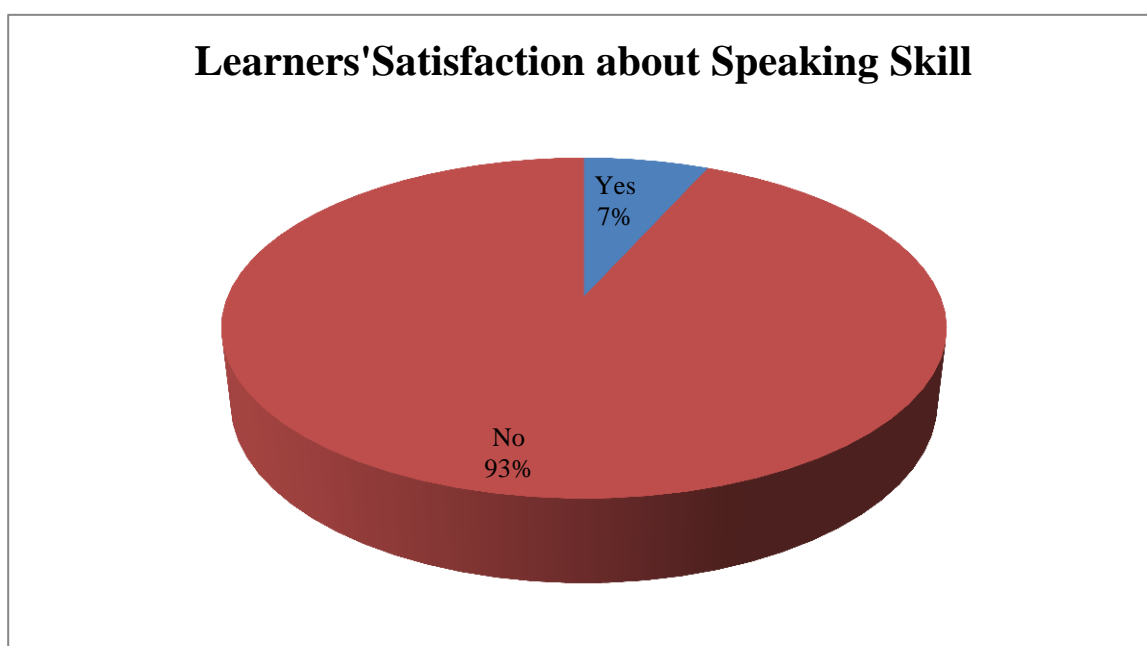
Graph.3.4.:Learners' satisfaction about Speaking skill

For the follow-up question item (4-b), the heavy majority of the respondents (93% n=28) attests that the sessions devoted to the speaking skill are not enough. Only 7% (n=2) of them acknowledge the sufficiency of the sessions devoted to the speaking skill.

Undoubtedly, productive skills, viz., speaking and writing remain by far the most difficult competence to be fully attained by non-native speakers. In fact, they require much more time and practice as well as the integration of various language components; syntactic, morphological and phonological. Yet, speaking is harder to master in many ways.

Item 5: Respondents' Speaking Skill Proficiency

Q5: How can you assess your speaking skill?

Options	students	Percentage
Weak	01	03%
Intermediate	05	17%
Advanced	22	73%
Excellent	02	07%
Total	30	100%

Table 3.5.:Learners'speaking skill
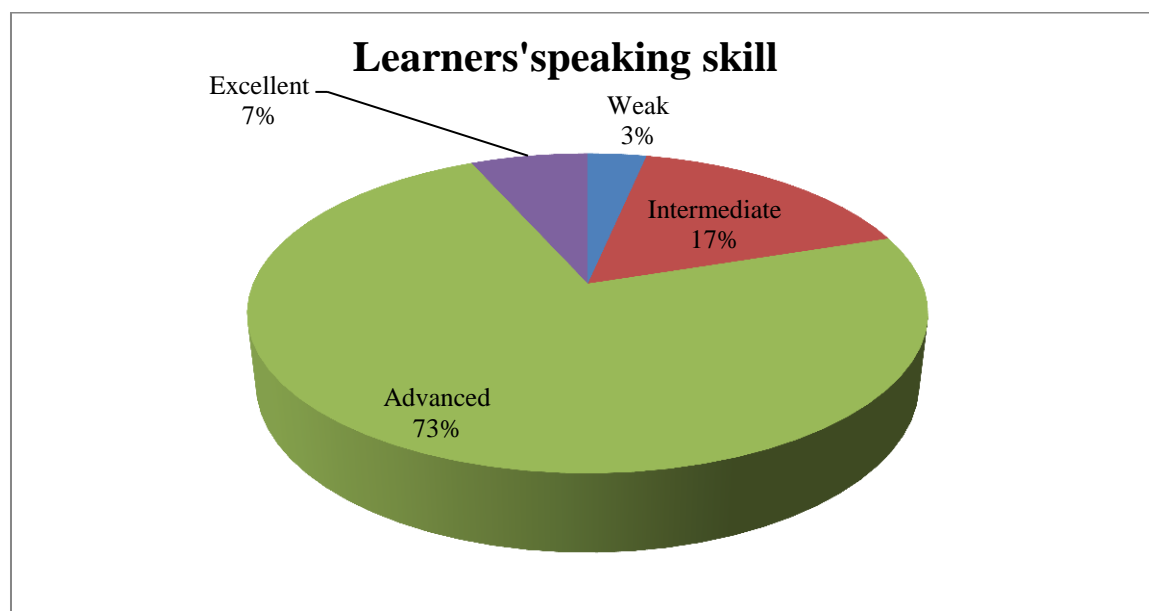
Graph 3.5.:Learners'speaking skill

     The numerical data above suggest that 73% (n=22) of the respondents attest that their speaking skill proficiency is advanced. Only 7% (n=2) report that their proficiency is Excellent. The rest of respondents are shared between intermediate (17% n=5) and weak (3% n=12).

     The above question-item is meant to gauge respondents' self-evaluation of the speaking skill proficiency. Such self-assessment is indispensable to be implemented so as to provide students with a valuable opportunity to highlight weaknesses and strengthens, enabling them to readjust and monitor their learning.

     However, this self-evaluation again remains inaccurate since it was not tested especially via classroom observation in a longitudinal period.

Section Three: Informants' Reflection on Classroom Interaction

Item 6: Classroom Interaction

Q6: How often do students voluntarily answer questions or contribute to class discussion?

Options	Students	Percentage
Never	2	6%
Rarely	18	60%
Sometimes	5	17%
Always	5	17%
Total	30	100%

Table 3.6. Frequency of Respondents' Participation in Class Discussion
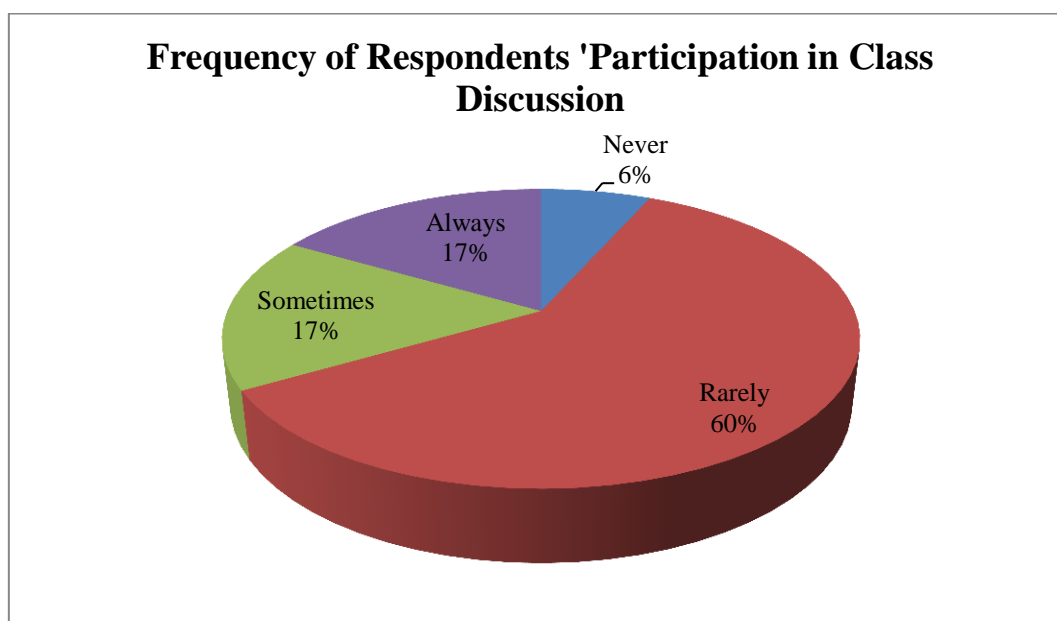
Graph 3.6. Frequency of Respondents' Participation in Class Discussion

　　　The sixth question-item aims to highlight the frequency of the subjects' participation in classroom discussion. It enables us to figure out the classroom interaction scene. Indeed, the results obtained denote that 6% (n=2)of the respondents state that they never participate in OE class, yet17% (n=5) attest they always take part in oral expression sessions. The rest of the respondents are shared between rarely (60%) and sometimes (17%).

　　　The above results reflect the respondents' refutation (66%) to participate in oral interactions. The pertinent question is what causes such refusal?

Q7: How often does the instructor call on your name to respond to a question or a comment?

Options	students	Percentage
Never	7	23%
Rarely	13	43%
Sometimes	3	10%
Always	7	23%
Total	30	100%

Table 3.7. Teacher-students Interaction Frequency
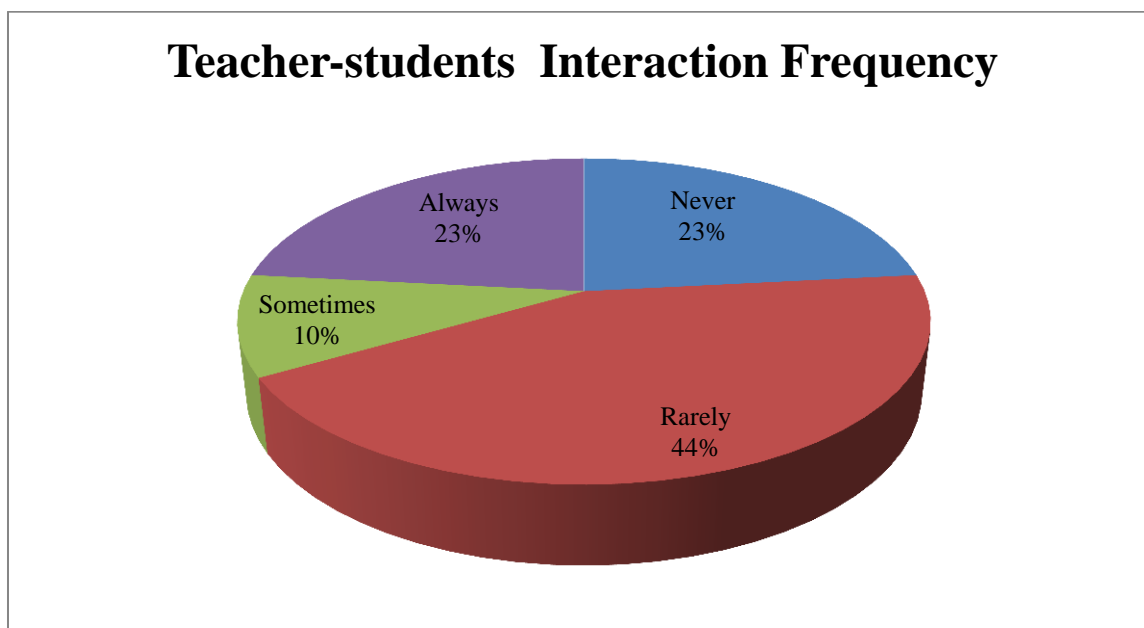
Graph 3.7. Teacher-students Interaction Frequency

The question-item 7 is asked to check if the teacher-students interaction covers the whole class group. The table (3.7) reveals that 66% of the respondents testify that they are rarely (43%) or never (23%) asked to respond or comment on an issue. The rest of the respondents reports that they are either sometimes (10%) or always (23%) called on to answer.

On the basis of these results, one can image the way oral speaking sessions are managed. Apparently, the teacher's focus is mainly directed to 33% of the students which demotivates the rest of the students (67%). Doing so, these neglected students would switch forever during the classroom interactions.

Q8: Which type of interaction is dominating in the classroom?

Options	students	Percentage
teacher-student interaction	14	47%
students- student interaction	05	17%
both	11	36%
Total	30	100%

Table 3.8. Dominating type of interaction
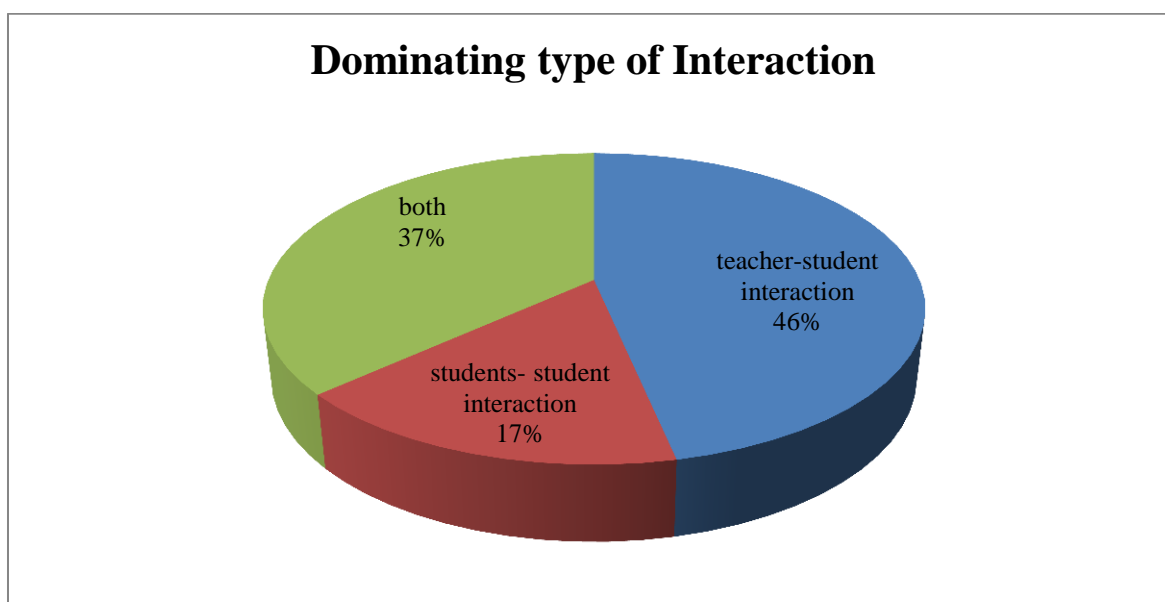
Graph 3.8. Dominating type of interaction

This question-item 8 is asked to identify the type of interaction that prevails in classroom sessions. The answers are shared among teacher-students for about 47%, students-students with 17% and both types with 36%.

Here again, the dominance of the teacher-centeredness is confirmed. The implementation of the methods which shift the instruction from the teacher to the students only can never help learners to construct their own learning. It seems that the traditional methods of instructing have not yet changed. Students learn to direct and regulate their own learning only if they are given chance to work in cooperative and collaborative ways. It is through group work that they can be autonomous and independent learners.

Q9: Do you feel anxious whenever you interact in oral expression course?

Options	Students	Percentage
Yes	20	67%
No	10	33%
Total	30	100%

Table.3.9. Learners 'anxiety in Oral Session
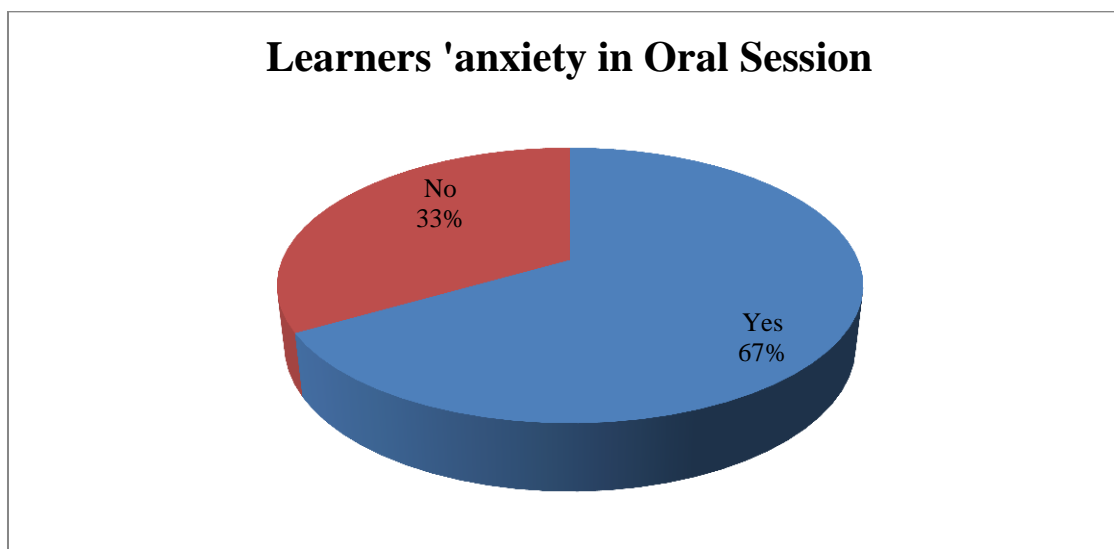
Graph.3.9. Learners 'anxiety in Oral Session

The 9 question-item is meant to inquire about students' psychological state during oral expression sessions. The numerical data generated from the question show that nearly two-third of the respondents feel anxious. Only one-third of them reports that they do not feel so.

It is obvious that anxious learners would purposefully eschew engaging in classroom communicative activities they fear the most. They show this by being uninterested, absent-minded and bored. Being in front of such situation, teachers would be careful before imputing learners' poor performance exclusively to lack of motivation and laziness.

Teachers are not to be blamed for such judgmental opinions towards learners' behaviours. In fact, they have neither sufficient time nor are they experts or therapists to deal appropriately with such critical cases. However, the use of some techniques could to some extent mitigate anxiety severity.

Q12: Which problem do students encounter while interacting in the classroom?

Options	Students	Percentage
Fearing mistakes making	14	47%
Fearing criticism	0	00%
Out of shyness	12	40%
Total	26/30	87%

Table3.10.Students'InteractionProblems
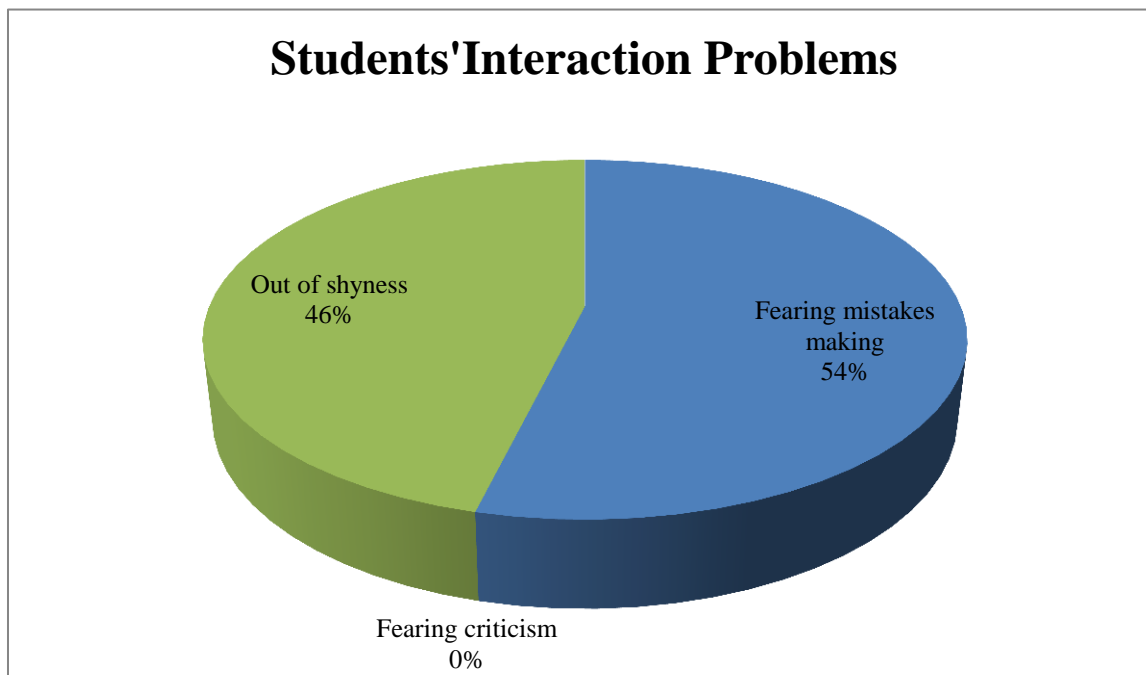
Graph 3.10. Students' Interaction Problems

The question-item is asked for the sake of elucidate the factors behind learners' disengagement from classroom interactions. Among the targeted sample, nearly half of them (47%) attests that they fear mistakes making. Besides, 40% attest that they feel shy during oral sessions.

Learners' reluctance to take part in classroom oral interactions is a problem commonly encountered in foreign language classrooms. Yet, the causes behind such reluctance are multifarious. Undoubtedly, shyness affects learners' participation. According to McCroskey (1992), shyness is a behaviour that could be the result of any one or a combination of the following factors: social introversion, unfamiliarity with academic discourse, lacking confidence in subject matter, and/or communication apprehension.

Fearing errors making is often cited as being another cause of the learners' perceived reticence and passiveness. This psychological negative barrier leads to panicking due to

fearing mistakes committing in front of their classmates. It may be seen by the rest of the classmates as an index of incompetence.

All these causes and others make reticent learners lose self-confidence, and may make speaking in front of the whole class a potential risky business in many learners' eyes.

Section Four: Informants' viewpoints on the Effects of Different Variables on pair and group works

Factors and Status

Q13: During the activities that require group work, do you prefer working with?

Options	students	Percentage
Your peers	23	76%
Older students	06	20%
Younger students	01	4%
Total	30	100%

Table 3.11. Students' Age Effect on classroom Interaction
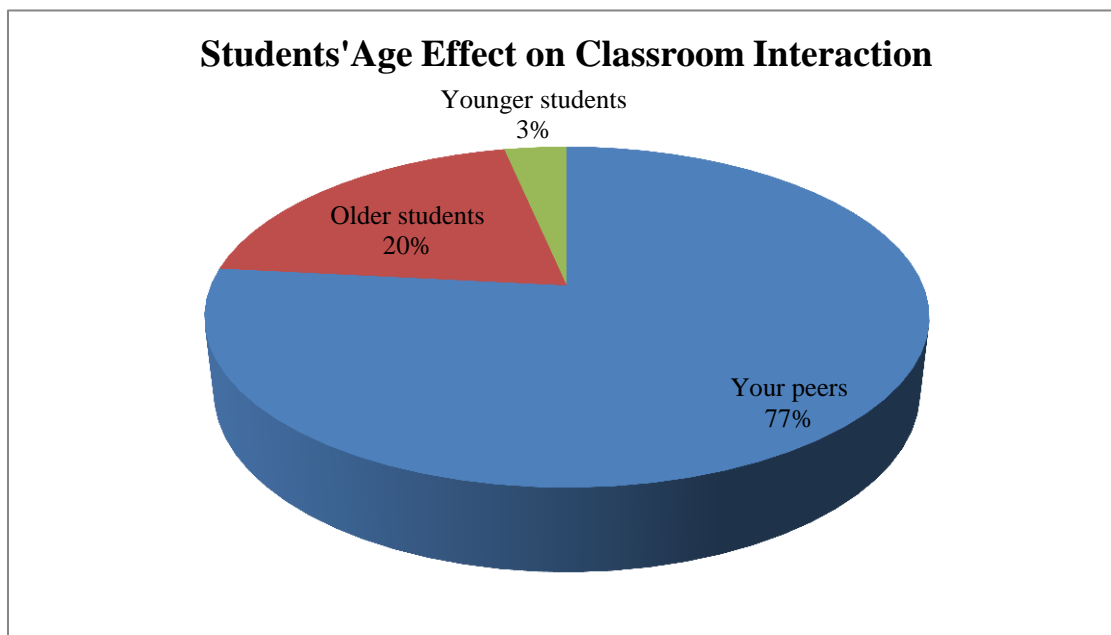
Graph3.11. Students' Age Effect on classroom Interaction

The above question is worded so in order to see if the classroom interactions are age-biased. In fact, most of the respondents (76%) approve the work with peers. 20% prefer working with older classmates. Only 4% of the surveyed students accept the work with younger students.

Multi-age classrooms can be the source of a positive influence when it comes to pair and group work. To work collaboratively with older students, whose coolness and appeal will always be far greater than younger ones, will be interesting, exciting and more motivating for younger ones. Pairing students together is one of the more effective ways to mentor younger students that can enhance their partnership and language learning. Yet, the success in such task implies that both younger and older students discover one another, and not only merely see the first ones as 'little kids' and the second ones as 'outmoded' persons.

The disapproval of mixing with younger or older students can deprive the disapprovers from benefiting from certain diversities with regard to experience, knowledge sharing and social skills development. In fact, benefits exist for both younger and older students. Younger students in multi-age classrooms have a natural source of peers with more experience and maybe more knowledge, enabling the younger ones to benefit from these peers to support cognitive and social learning. Having opportunities to converse and work cooperatively with each other allows the enhancement of the speaking skills.

Q14: Which students more frequently ask questions and make comments in class?

Options	students	Percentage
Male students	05	17%
Female students	16	53%
Both of them equally	9	30%
Total	30	100%

Table 3.12. Students Participation according to Gender
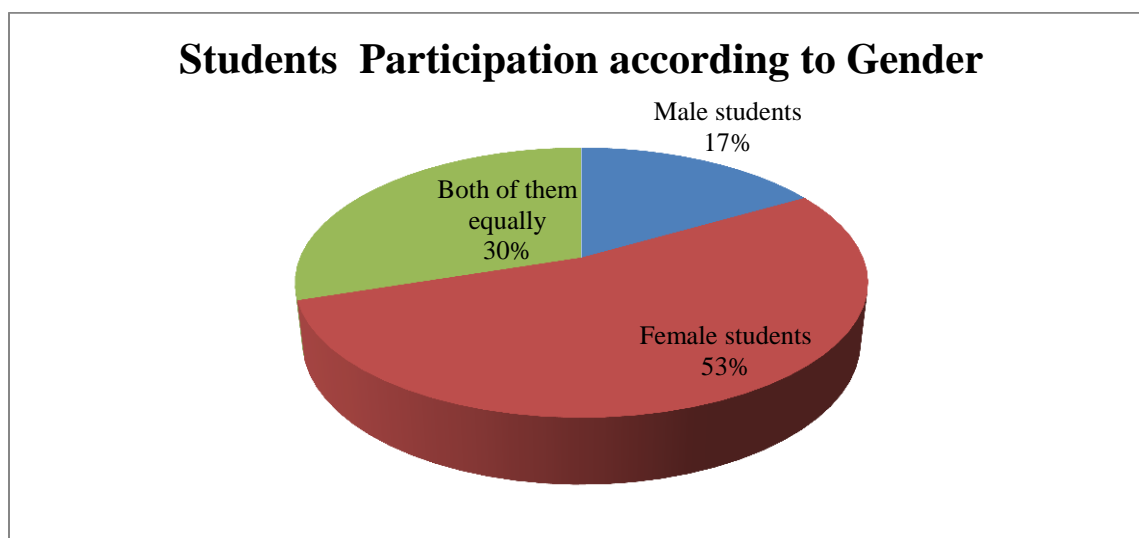
Graph 3.12. Students Participation according to Gender

This question-item seeks to disclose gender prevailing dominance in classroom interactions. The yielded data demonstrate that female students (53%) frequently ask questions and comment in class. The male students (17%) participate less frequently than females. 30% of the respondents report that participation is equally shared between females and males.

The scrutiny of the above collected data indicates that females are the demographic group most likely to participate in the classroom.

Q15: When dealing with activities that require group work, do you prefer to work with_____?

Options	students	Percentage
Male students	07	23.5%
Female students	16	53%
Both of them equally	07	23.5%
Total	30	100%

Table.3.13. Students' Preferred Gender in Group Dynamics
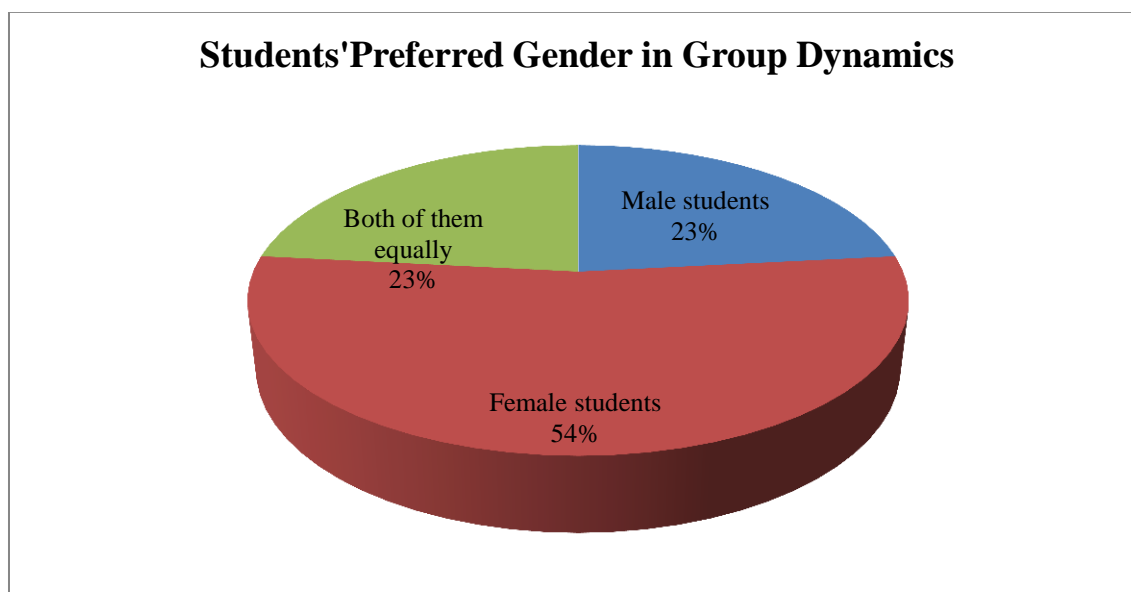
Graph.3.13. Students' Preferred Gender in Group Dynamics

The aim behind the above question-item is to unearth the respondents' gender-bias preference when it comes to collaborative work. The numerical data reveal that more than the half of the respondents (53%) prefers working with females. Whereas the rest of them are shared between males (23.5%) and both genders equally (23.5%).

The respondents' perception in relation to collaborative work in either mixed- or single- gender grouping differs hugely. This disparity in perception may mainly be based on a variety of socio-cultural and religious factors. In fact, several attempts have been made to analyze the effects of gender grouping on students' group performance, yet findings to have been varied. To cite sample of these researches, we refer to Stephenson (1994) who conducted a survey on mixed- and single gender groupings and concluded that in the first one (mixed-gender grouping) students are more socially oriented than the second grouping. However, in the second (homogeneous-gender grouping) students produced higher achievements.

However, those opponents to this vision argue that in mixed-gender groupings, students' knowledge elaboration processes are more inclined to diverge from each other, which should be considered as a significant outcome (Ding, Bosker & Harskamp 2011). The results of gender grouping are contradictory. Yet the effects of gender-grouping are particularly strong from the learning attitude perspective. In the light of these findings, it is advisable to implement mixed-gender groupings for its effectiveness in improving students' oral performance and attitudes. It is also recommended that additional surveys especially longitudinal observations are necessary to determine their effective impact on interactional sessions.

To conclude, it would be worthy to highlight that the gender-related stigma and stereotypes still have a powerful impact on female-male students' interactions in the Algerian universities. A good example is the sitting plan: male students sit with their peers and like female students. Furthermore, it has been frequently observed that rows are dominated by either sex or males are alternately seated. This policy seems to be deeply anchored in the local culture.

Q16: What obstacles prevent students from interacting with the opposite gender in the classroom?

Options	students	Percentage
Misunderstanding	10	33%
Shyness	14	47%
Religious boundaries	03	10%
Social class differences	03	10%
Total	30	100%

Table 3.14. Students' Problem with the Opposite Gender
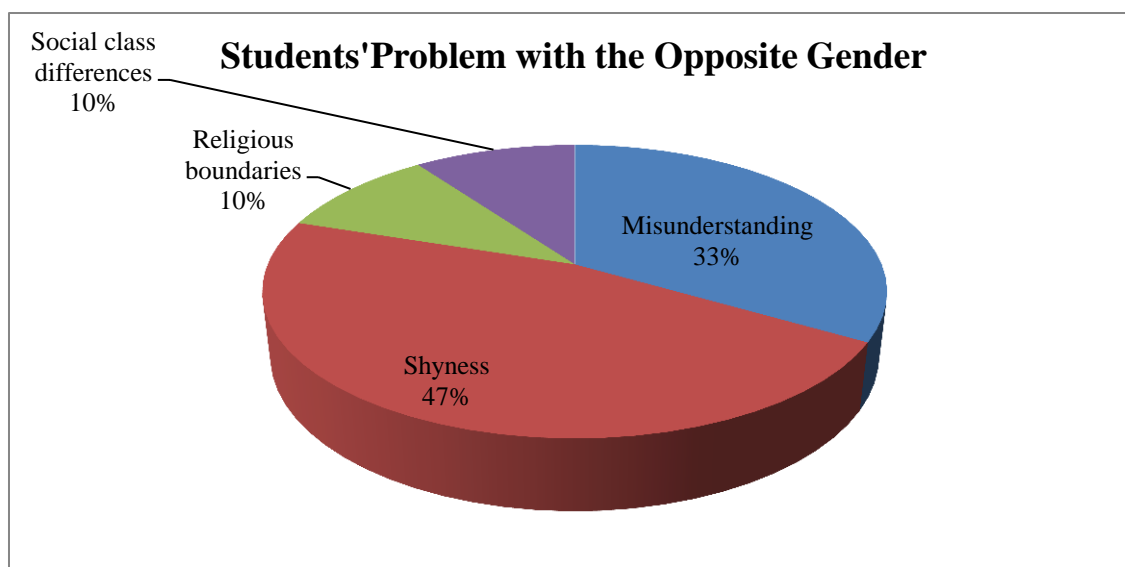
Graph 3.14. Students' Problem with the Opposite Gender

For the sake of unveiling the respondents' reticence towards working opposite gender, the above question was asked. The respondents' motives behind such attitude reveal that 47% of them bind this to shyness. Yet, 33% of them stipulate that this is due to misunderstanding. The rest of the respondents are shared between religious boundaries and social class differences.

The respondents' reticence is mainly justified in accordance to stereotypical perceptions which actually prevail in the Algerian context. The learning community contexts are generally influenced by religious boundaries, social class differences and other psychological emotions. The latter, being decisive components in learners' attitudes and behaviours, can preclude students' speaking skills proficiency. Triandis (1995: 5) advocates that the fact *"human beings are ethnocentric which reflects the truth that we all grow in a specific culture and learn to believe that the standards, principles, perspectives, that we acquire from our culture, are the way we look at the world."* Thus, each learner carries the specific characteristics of the cultural, religious and social norms from the immediate environment he grew up in that guide his behaviour as well as the way he understands his surroundings.

Q17: What kind of socio-economic and cultural problems affect students' interaction in the classroom?

Options	students	Percentage
Family issues	08	27%
Financial aspects	15	50%
Cultural differences	07	23%
Ethnicity	00	0%
Total	30	100%

Table 3.15. Social Problems Affecting Students' Interaction
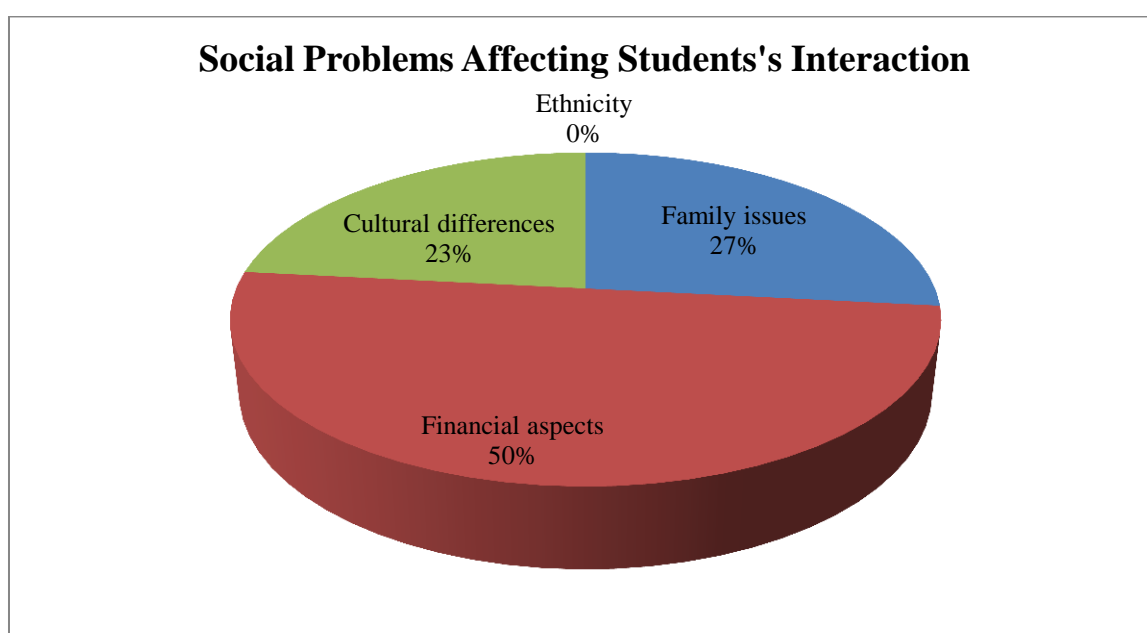
Graph 3.15. Social Problems Affecting Students' Interaction

To collect more insightful and informed data as regards boundaries precluding respondents' interaction in oral expression sessions, the above question, enquiring about family, financial, cultural and ethnic issues was asked. The table shows that half of the respondents (50%) believe that financial aspects affect students' interactions. Besides, 23% of them think cultural discrepancies are at the origin of such effects. 27% of the surveyed sample estimates that family issues are likely to affect learners' interactions.

By and large, students' learning cannot be isolated from what they undergo in the extra –university environment. All the above and other factors can influence negatively students' learning process, in general, and the interactive one, in particular. The impact of the

stereotypical representations plays an important deleterious role on learners' behaviour and attitudes.

Q18: In your opinion, what is the appropriate solution in order to enhance interaction in oral comprehension class?

Out of the total number of the surveyed students, only twenty (20) answered the open-ended question item. Some of the respondents advanced that they need to be motivated in the classroom and want to have the opportunity to select tasks and projects which cater for their learning styles. Some others think that teachers should give more time to think over an issue and freedom to feel comfortable in answering and interacting. Another issue is raised by some of the respondents, relating to teacher's behaviour as well as the way he deals with the topic. Moreover, they insist on the necessity for teachers to vary the activities and teaching methods, and encourage interaction among students by equally sharing roles and turns among most of the students. They also suggest that the topics for debate and discussion should be chosen in collaboration with students so as to ensure their motivation and commitment to speak. Few respondents propose that teachers in charge of the module of oral expression should be well-versed and training in dealing with such important skill. Finally, one or two of them propose that any class interaction should be semi-guided at least at the beginning of the session so as to motivate students, especially those who struggle and face serious deficiencies relating the target language, viz., grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and others relating to psychological emotions such as lack of confidence, anxiety, self-esteem, fearing mistake making, and also teachers' or classmates' evaluation.

All in all, this panoply of suggestions shows that the way oral expression module is dealt with in inadequate compatibility with expectations of the respondents. Besides equipping students with the linguistic competence, teachers are expected to provide the favourable opportunities allowing them to practice them in lifelike situations. According to the respondents, sufficient margin should be allocated to the practice in language classes.

Discussion of the Collected Data

Relying on the data gathered and analyzed from the students' questionnaire above, some facts were revealed concerning the effect of age, gender and social status on the conversational interaction in oral classes.

Right from the outset, it can be noticed that the targeted sample is more than the half feminized, and their age ranges from 23 to 28. The majority of the surveyed students (22)

assess the speaking skill as being advanced. that they have are advanced in speaking English, five of them think they are intermediate , two students say they are excellent and only one student feels that he is weak in speaking skill.Eighteen students state they have rare participation in OE class, five of them are always participating, and two of them have never participated in OE ,and five of them sometimes participate.

The majority of students face lack of interaction with their teacher and they are rarely called to participate or make comments. However, only seven of them are always engaged in discussions with the teacher and seven students have never been called to participate.While three others sometimes do.

The dominant type of interaction in The Classroom is teacher-student interaction. Section three includes students' participation inside the classroom. The results obtained in this section indicate that students avoid volunteer contribute to classroom interaction due to several reasons such as: being worried about making mistakes, or feeling shy.

The fourth section consists of the major factors and states which impacts students' attitude and interaction. The first question of this section shows that students have big tendency to work with their peers; in such case age differences cause a gap between students and affect group dynamics. The next question concerns students' preferred gender in group work activities. Sixteen students said that females are the most preferred gender in group work activities because they tend to be more collaborative and from a neuro-linguistics point of view, females tend to use their verbal abilities more than males, as well as the most topics selected and discussed are of great interest for females rather than males. While seven students choose to work with both male and female students. In addition shyness and misunderstanding are considered as the main problems that prevent students from interacting with the opposite gender. The last question in this section illustrates that financial aspects and cultural differences reflects negatively on students' interaction.

B. Qualitative Data: Teachers' interview

The qualitative data analysis is a complex task, taken over by the researcher right from the moment of the data collection. It is he who collects and reads traces with a view to assign them meaning. To do this, he will attempt to get them to talk in a delayed time compared with data taking, without necessarily a predefined framework (Paille & Mucchielli 2005). In fact, to analyse qualitatively, it is to observe, perceive, compare, judge, order/arrange, check, collect, report, etc.

In our study, the semi-structured interviews are a technique which seeks to report on the

subjective world of others. This technique promotes the free expression of the subjects while allowing us to frame the discourse from the research perspective. The account remains marked out by a narrative frame, constructed around the topic of the research and negotiated in the contract of communication that guides the evocation.

To collect the appreciations of those teachers, a semi-structured interview was administered to teachers of English at the department of foreign languages. We opted for the interview as a form of joint action (Desgagné 2005) where narration supported by the researcher in the course of the interview represents a stage of cooperation. Besides, the use of the 'mixed approach', i.e., the combination of the interview (qualitative tool) and the questionnaire (quantitative tool) is carried out to collect enough insightful data and ensure a comprehensive assessment on the issue of classroom interactions.

To check, deepen and complement the results obtained through the questionnaire addressed to MA students in the department of English, we opted for a semi-structured interview. This required the development of an interview guide prepared according to the survey objectives. The target population for this interview consists of five interviewees. The purpose of our interview with the practitioners is to bring to light the converging and/or diverging points between what is expected to be done and its effective implementation in the field.

To better understand the conductor threads which are related to issue under investigation, i.e., the oral expression module, approaching the teachers who are in charge of its teaching was viewed as an overarching importance.

The collected comments were transcribed in full in order to elucidate, from the responses received, indicators or even guidelines that will clarify the issue of the impact of different variables on students' classroom interactions.

For the sake of practicability, the analysis of the interviews was divided into eight distinct but complementary parts, viz., Oral Expression teaching and hourly volume, students' speaking skill assessment, classroom interaction hegemony, impediments to successful classroom interactions, gender-biased classroom interaction, mixed-gender grouping, additional influential variables and possible solutions. The synergy of these various regards, founded on the interviewees' perceptions and suggestions, are expected to help us shed enough light on the issue under investigation, i.e., The Effects of Age, Gender and Social Variables on Speaking Skill and Classroom Interaction. In fact, the speaking skill remains one of the most traits that students need to learn during their life.

III.5.4. Interview Analysis

A) Being in charge of the module and its weekly session frequency

As regards the teaching of the oral expression module, the interviewees attest they have already been in charge of this module for many years. They confirm that they taught it once a week, which, according to them, remains insufficient to enhance students speaking skill proficiency. It is worthy to highlight that for some of the interviewees one session a week is sufficient since the skill can be reinforced through other modules.

B) Students' speaking skill assessment

With regard to the assessment of the students' speaking skill proficiency, they unanimously evaluate it as being average. Asked about the reasons behind such modest proficiency, they report that the students show a high level of hesitation which limits their commitment and willingness towards an effective participation.

C) Classroom Interaction dominance

Enquiring about the type of the interaction which prevails during those classroom sessions, the interviewees confirm that the teacher-students type is most dominating, i.e., teacher led. For them, students do interact better with their teacher for he pays more attention and devotes more focus to the speakers. Yet, according to them, in case of oral presentation and debates, students interact much more in peers because these situations afford a less tense environment where no authority is implied to any participants. Relying on the tenet that students learn a great deal by explaining their ideas to others and by taking an effective part in activities via which they can learn from their peers. Yet, one interviewee estimates that students interact better with each other, because they feel no objection towards being criticized.

In fact, pairing reinforces students learning by instructing each other. Pair work makes students feel more comfortable and open when interacting. While working, students share a similar discourse, allowing for greater understanding. Peer learning should be mutually beneficial and involve the sharing of knowledge, ideas and experience between the participants. They reciprocally develop skills in organizing and planning learning activities, working collaboratively with each other, giving and receiving feedback and evaluating their own learning.

D) Impediments to successful Students' interaction

Investigating the impediments precluding students' interactions, the interviewees agreed that psychological hindrances such as shyness and anxiety may be the main cause to hamper students' commitment in classroom interactions, besides other deficiencies related to

poor pronunciation and lack of vocabulary, preventing students from interacting freely. All these increases students lack of self- esteem, confidence and willingness.

E) Gender-biased classroom interactions

With regard to gender classroom interaction hegemony, interviewees are parted into two different viewpoints. Three of them report that females dominate classroom interaction, whereas two of them claim that both males and females participate equally in classroom interactions.

F) Mixed-gender grouping & refutation

The interviewees' answers are shared between refusal and acceptance. Some students refuse to work with the opposite gender out of embarrassment as regards females' dominance of the interaction, whereas others see no problem to work with the opposite gender.

For the causes which instigate such refusal, among the five interviewees, two argue that shyness prevents students from interacting with the opposite gender. However, the rest of the interviewees (3) think that mispronunciation can be at the origin of such rejection of cooperation with opposite gender in pair and group work.

G) Extra Influential Variables

The interviewees unanimously agree that cultural differences stand as a major boundary impacting on students' successful interaction in the classroom.

H) Possible Solutions and suggestions

Three interviewees suggest that oral comprehension enhancement needs: better classroom, time and space management through designing activities suiting different learning styles, offering students learning opportunities to choose their topics and ways of learning, and not imposing things on them. Group dynamics: varying the ways classroom tasks are conducted; individual, pair and group work. As well as designing 100% communicative activities that promotes fluency and self-confidence.

The two other interviewees suggest that students need to regularly listen to authentic documents in the target language, to do a lot of extensive reading, practice oral public presentations, dialogues, debates, discussion, to develop their creative minds. They also need to devote much time to oral expression sessions and getting in contact with native speakers to improve their speaking skill, besides the creation of competitive contests for students to deliver speeches, discuss issues and argument choices in front a panel of evaluators.

To respond to the suggested hypotheses, we came to the fact that:

The difference of age affects the students' interaction in OE classroom; students do not feel comfortable to interact with younger or older students in group dynamics. Besides, gender influences students' participation in OE classroom owing to the misunderstanding and shyness among male and female students; however, they still enjoy working in mixed-gender groups in group-dynamics activities.

As regards social aspects and cultural differences, the latter can prevent students from interaction with each other confidently.

III.6. Conclusion

To go over the main points that the foregoing chapter encompasses, we would sum up them as follows. It deals with research design, methodology which is based on qualitative and quantitative methods. It attempts to analyze and interpret the collected data from an empirical viewpoint. The analysis and interpretation of the results demonstrate that age, gender, and social status differences decrease the interaction among students in OE classes. Moreover, teachers state that better classroom interactions require better time and space management, i.e., providing feedback and encouraging students in various tasks suiting their learning styles.

III.7. Limitations of the Study

Similar to any research work, the current one has faced a set of limitations. First, the sample involved in the survey in terms of motivation and other variables might have affected the expected outcomes**.**

Second, the results of this research cannot be generalized for it is limited to an exiguous size of teachers and MA 1 students of English at the department of foreign languages at Ibn Khaldoun University-Tiaret.

Third, the correlation between the quantitative and qualitative data, especially with regard to the issue in connection with psychological emotions should imperatively undergo observational sessions to unearth those variables. These observational sessions were impossible to attend because of the time limit, particularly in a disrupted academic year.

Fourth, it I   ² s worth of note to highlight that the lack of the primary sources and first hand data, especially those in connection with the Algerian context made it hard to collect enough empirical studies on the issue under investigation.

III.8. Implications and Suggestions

The current study aims at scrutinizing closely to what extent the demographic speaking skills can be influenced by variables such as gender, age and social status. Based on the findings, several suggestions can be provided for the sake of the speaking skills development. Teachers need to reconsider the way teaching the speaking skills is actually performed. To attain the ultimate competence, i.e., students' oral speaking proficiency, producing 'excellent' English communicators, the oral speaking sessions should be heavily devoted to practice. Besides, meaningful opportunities should be provided for students to communicate in real-life situations so that they can develop their abilities for oral communication. Differently couched, teachers in charge of the oral expression module need to afford appropriate classroom healthy atmosphere enabling students to voice out their viewpoints and interact freely. Doing so, students' motivation and self-esteem can be increased on the one hand and anxiety and shyness can be mitigated, on the other one. The attainment of such psychological emotions reduction relies definitely on teachers' appropriate management of speaking skill sessions. Thus, the classroom activities should be diversified to cater for learners' learning needs, styles and preferences. Cooperative and collaborative work, involving all students regardless of the gender, age, social status, should be suitably selected, adroitly planned and scrupulously implemented so as to help students overcome flimsy boundaries. The enhancement of students' speaking skill proficiency can be reached if the appropriate strategies.

Besides focusing on the students' linguistic competence enhancement, much more heed should be devoted students' affective aspects and particularly motivation, self-esteem, fear and anxiety to increase their speaking skill proficiency.

Similarly, the instructors are supposed to set up a friendly relationship among the students, which ensures their mutual respect, sharing and caring, and collaboration. The instilment of such key human qualities leads necessarily to the socialization of the EFL class, thus weeding out those boundaries. The following recommendations may help EFL teachers and learners overcome the hindrances precluding the attainment of the speaking skill proficiency:

- Teachers and learners should learn how to respect each other mutually;
- Teachers are compelled to know their pupils and their preferences and needs;
- They should also strive to enhance learners' self-esteem and confidence;

- They should appropriately select the strategies, techniques and classroom activities involving all students and responding to their aspiration;

- They should provide feedbacks and appraisals to raise students' engagement and motivation;

- Teachers are required to be caring, committed, compassionate, conscientious, cooperative, devoted, fair, loving, understanding vis-à-vis their students.

General Conclusion

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Many of the teachers keep blaming students for their deficiencies as regards classroom oral performance. Very few have attempted to conduct serious researches to disclose what provokes these students' reticence towards oral expression participation and collaboration and how these can be handled. For a long time, an excessive number of approaches have been implemented with the intention to improve students' learning proficiency. Yet, nothing has changed since then. EFL learners are struggling to learn the English language. They do not resist and refute out of the lack of goodwill, but because of serious hurdles that preclude their effective engagement in such teaching/learning process.

The present research work set a well-defined objective from the very onset: explore the impact of age, gender and social variables on the students' oral interaction. It is mainly approved that the productive skills play a vital role in the learning process since they stand for the essential part of the communication process in any language. It is observed that EFL teachers at Ibn Khaldoun University devote much more importance to the development of the speaking skill rather than to the three other skills during the oral sessions while the EFL learners seem to ignore the importance of such skill. Through this work, the researcher has investigated the impact of the demographic variables such as age, gender and social status on the productive skills and the main causes which may inhibit the EFL learners speaking. It aims also at identifying the role of the EFL teachers in helping their students to overcome those problems and difficulties and the main strategies used to enhance the students' proficiency of the speaking skills. This study departed from two hypotheses. They both revolve around the linguistic and psycholinguistic deficiencies which stand as a barrier in front of students' effective commitment in the speaking sessions, and the strategies to be undertaken so as to mitigate them. Both hypotheses were confirmed by the analysis of the data. These types of deficiencies were reported to be at the origin of the students' failure and the low level of performance. Besides, the teachers' commitment and the selection of the suitable strategies could flawlessly help the students to get rid of or at least reduce such obstacles impact.

This survey began with a theoretical framework which deals with the literary works related to the speaking skill and classroom interaction, and the associated factors of age, gender differences, and social status. The second chapter is devoted to the context of the study. It relates the status of the English language in Algeria, secondary school education, educational and tertiary reforms; objectives, tenets and expected outcomes, the objective of

English language teaching, the new roles assigned to teachers and learners, the BMD system, and the modular structure. The third chapter is mainly concerned with the fieldwork. It includes a detailed description of the research design, the participants, and the selected research tools, besides and in-depth analysis and interpretation of the data gathered from both teachers' questionnaire and students' interviews.

To conclude, one may say that speaking is a complex and difficult skill to both teachers and learners. However, acquiring communicative competence should imperatively go through the mastery of the speaking skill. Many of the EFL learners restrict their learning of the target language to listening, reading and writing skills at the detriment of the backbone skill ensuring speaking proficiency. This is not meant to denigrate or belittle the importance and the value of the three other skills but to point out the significance of the speaking skill with respect to communicative competence. Being the main component for the construction of such competence, oral speaking competence enables EFL learners to interact competently and effectively with other speakers of English. So, it is desirable that more insightful researches would be conducted to enlighten and increase teachers' awareness of the current situation as regards the teaching/learning of the productive skills, particularly speaking, and to draw students' attention to the consequences generated by an intentional reticence and neglect of the speaking skill.

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Appendices

<u>Appendix A</u>

Students' Questionnaire

Dear students,

This questionnaire is an investigation tool for gathering data required for the fulfilment of a master dissertation. It is done in order to know impact of age, gender and social status on the conversational interaction in oral expression classes. I would be very grateful if you answer these questions to help me accomplishing this research. Please, use a tick (✓) to indicate your chosen option, and justify your answer wherever it is needed.

<u>Section one:</u>   student's profile

Q 1: Specify your gender:

a. Female……… ……..☐

b. Male ………………..☐

Age :……………years

Class:……………..

Q2: Is your level in English?

a. Very good ……………...…☐

b. Good………………………☐

c. Average …………… …☐.

d. Poor ……………………..☐

<u>Section two: speaking skill</u>

Q3: How many sessions do you have in Oral Expression?

a-One session …………………☐

b-Two sessions………………...☐

c-Three sessions ………………☐

Q4: Do you think that it is sufficient ?

a-yes ……………………………☐

b-may be …………………………

c-never …………………………….

Q5: What do you think of your speaking skill ?

a-Very weak ………………………

b-weak…………………………….

c-average…………………………

d-strong ………………………...

Section three: classroom interaction

Q6: How often do you voluntarily answer questions or contribute to class discussion?

a. Never………………………....

b. Rarely………………………...

c. Sometimes…………………......

d. Always………………………....

Q7: How often does the instructor call on your name to respond to a question or a comment?

a. Never …………………………..

b. Rarely…………………………..

c. Sometimes ……………………...

d. Always……………………….......

Q8:- Which type of interaction is dominated in the classroom ?

a-Teacher-student interaction………

b-Student-student interaction ………⬜

c-Both …………………………………⬜

Q9: Are you afraid while interacting in Oral expression Class?

　　　a-all the time ……………. ⬜

　　　b-most of the time………... ⬜

　　　c-rarely …………………... ⬜

　　　d-never……………………. ⬜

Q10:Which of these linguistic obstacles may prevent you not to interact?

A. you are worried about making mistakes……⬜

B. you are afraid of being criticized …………⬜

C. you are shy………………………………… ⬜

Section four :Factors and Status

Q11: During the activities that require group work, do you prefer working with?

a.Your peers ……………………….......⬜

b.Older students …………………………⬜

c.Younger students ……………………..⬜

Q12: In your opinion, which students more frequently ask questions and make comments in class?

a. Male students …………………………..⬜

b. Female students………………………... ⬜

c. Male and female students equally………… ⬜

Q13: when dealing with activities which requires group work, do you prefer working with :

a. Male students? ……………………………☐

b. Female students?...................................☐

c. Both male and female students? …………☐

Q14: What are the aspects that prevent you from interacting with the opposite gender in the classroom?

a. shyness …………………………………..☐

b. misunderstanding ………………………..☐

c. religious boundaries ……………………..☐

d. social class differences…………………..☐

Q15: What kind of socio-economic and cultural problems affect students' interaction in the classroom?

 a. family issues ……………………………..☐

b. financial aspects …………………………☐

c. cultural differences……………………….....☐

d. ethnicity **………………………………....**☐

Q16: In your opinion what is the appropriate solution in order to enhance interaction in classroom?

…………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………

Appendix B
Teacher's Interview

Q1: Have you ever taught Oral Expression Module?

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Q2: How many sessions a week?

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……………………………………………………………………………………………………

Q3: Do you think it is enough to develop learners' proficiency?

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Q4: How can you assess learners' speaking skill?

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Q5: How often do learners voluntarily contribute to classroom discussions and debates?

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Q6: What type of interaction generally dominates classroom interaction?

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Q7: What hinders students' interaction?

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Q8: Which students' gender frequently dominates classroom interaction?

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Q9: When assigning group-work activities, do students like to work with the opposite gender?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

Q10: What may cause students' refusal to interact with opposite gender?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

Q11: What social boundaries can affect students' interactions in the classroom?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

Q12: In your opinion, what are the suitable solutions to enhance students' oral expression proficiency?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

ملخص الدراسة

تهدف هذه الدراسة الوصفية التفسيرية المزدوجة إلى استكشاف تأثير العمر والجنس والمتغيرات الاجتماعية على فعالية التفاعل في الحوار في حصة التعبير الشفهي. يسعى إلى الكشف عن التأثير المحتمل للمتغيرات الديموغرافية في أداء التعبير الشفهي. الهدف من هذا العمل البحثي مختلفًا ، هو استكشاف مدى تأثير هذه الاختلافات الديموغرافية على مشاركة الطلاب في تفاعلات الفصل. من أجل التحقق ، تم اعتماد طريقة البحث المختلطة ، أي النوعية والكمية. في الواقع ، تم تصميم الاستبيان وتوزيعه بشكل عشوائي على طلبة سنة أولى ماستر ، وأجريت مقابلة شبه منظمة مع اساتذة اللغة الإنجليزية في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة ابن خلدون-تيارت. تكشف نتائج الاستكشاف أن تحفظ طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية أثناء جلسات التعبير الشفوي يرجع بشكل رئيسي إلى سببين ، هما: المشاعر النفسية ، وأوجه القصور اللغوي والافتراضات النمطية. في الحالة الأولى ، يولد القلق والخوف من ارتكاب الأخطاء ومواقف زملائه السلبية وردود أفعالهم إحجام الطلاب عن الالتزام الفعال خلال دروس التعبير الشفوي في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. بالنسبة للسبب الثاني ، فإن أوجه القصور في الجوانب الصوتية والنحوية والمورفولوجية للغة المستهدفة تحول دون المشاركة الفعالة لطلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في تفاعلات الفصول الدراسية. بالنسبة للثالثة ، فإن الافتراضات الوهمية النمطية تستند إلى الاختلافات في العمر والجنس والحالة الاجتماعية التي طورت مواقف غير مواتية تجاه وحدة تدريس التعبير الشفهي. وبشكل عام ، تظل الأسباب الموضحة تجاه جلسات التعبير الشفوي بمثابة فخ خطير أمام تجسيد الهدف النهائي للنهج التواصلي. يعتبر وعي المعلمين بالعقبات المذكورة آنفًا والدعم الفعال أمرًا ملحًا وضروريًا للغاية لتخفيف هذه الأنماط السلوكية الخطيرة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المتغير الديموغرافي ، التفاعل في الحوار ، التكتم ، المشاعر النفسية ، القصور اللغوي ، الافتراضات النمطية.

Résumé

La présente étude descriptive-interprétative en deux volets se propose d'explorer l'impact de l'âge, du sexe et de variables sociales sur les interactions conversationnelles dans les classes d'expression orale. Il cherche à révéler l'influence possible des variables démographiques sur les performances d'expression orale. Le but de ce travail de recherche est d'examiner dans quelle mesure ces différences démographiques peuvent influer sur l'engagement des élèves dans les interactions en classe. Par souci de validité, la méthode de recherche mixte, c'est-à-dire qualitative et quantitative, a été adoptée. En fait, le questionnaire a été conçu et distribué au hasard aux étudiants de Master 1, et un entretien semi-structuré a été mené avec des professeurs d'anglais du département d'anglais de l'Université Ibn Khaldoun de Tiaret. Les résultats de l'exploration révèlent que la réticence des étudiants d'EFL lors des séances d'expression orale est principalement due à deux raisons, à savoir les émotions psychologiques, les déficiences linguistiques et les hypothèses stéréotypées. Pour le premier, l'anxiété, la peur des erreurs, les attitudes et les réactions négatives des camarades de classe provoquent la réticence des étudiants envers un engagement effectif lors des cours d'expression orale EFL. Pour le second, les carences en aspects phonologiques, syntaxiques et morphologiques de la langue cible excluent la participation active des étudiants d'EFL aux interactions en classe. Pour le troisième, les hypothèses stéréotypées et fragiles fondées sur les différences d'âge, de sexe et de statut social ont développé des attitudes défavorables à l'égard de l'unité d'enseignement de l'expression orale. Au total, les causes mises en évidence des sessions d'expression orale restent un piège sérieux devant la concrétisation de l'objectif ultime de l'approche communicative. La sensibilisation des enseignants aux obstacles susmentionnés et un soutien efficace sont jugés urgents et tout à fait nécessaires pour pallier ces comportements graves .

Mots-clés: variable démographique, interaction conversationnelle, réticence, émotions psychologiques, déficiences linguistiques, hypothèses stéréotypées