THE EXPLORATION OF SOME FACTORS HINDERING THE LEARNERS' ORAL PERFORMANCE CASE OF EFL LEARNERS IN SETIF UNIVERSITY, ALGERIA.

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Abstract: The current inquiry explores some factors hindering the learners' oral performance in terms of communication strategies use and conversational skills. At the preliminary phase, Third year English as Foreign Language learners at Mohamed Lamine DEBAGINE, Setif 2 University, expressed in the pre-questionnaire that they are not eager to speak in the oral expression sessions. The current study is exploratory, descriptive, and it entails a mixed-methods approach. Qualitative data are manifested in teachers' interviews. Quantitative means comprise Teachers' and students' questionnaires. The research sample encompasses 60 out of 283third-year students randomly selected and third-year oral expression teachers. Data analysis has demonstrated that poor use of oral communication strategies and conversational skills are among the reasons behind the poor oral performance of learners. In conclusion, incorporating communication strategies and conversational skills training is thought to enhance the learners' oral performance.

Keywords: Conversational skills; Communication strategies; EFL; Oral Performance.

Jel Classification Codes: XN1, XN2

1. INTRODUCTION

The essence of learning a language is to communicate efficiently, effectively, and appropriately while using it. Thus, developing the learner's Communicative Competence (CC) is of paramount importance for language learners. The current study explores factors hindering the learners' oral performance in terms of the use of Communication Strategies (CS) and conversational skills. It also aims at highlighting essential aspects of the CC, namely, strategic competence and sociolinguistic competence.

The assumption that communication is the thriving purpose of language is widespread and seemingly applies that the CC is the most inclusive language competence (Canale& Swain, 1980). However, in his article, Nunan (1987) has argued that there have been relatively few studies of actual communicative language practices. He has pointed out that communicative language use should be fostered. One of the crucial elements of the CC, yet somewhat neglected, is strategic competence (Dorniey&Thurrell, 1991). Strategic competence encompasses a set of CS that enable the learner to communicate meaning successfully, mainly when problems occur in the communication process. Dorniey and Thurrell (1991) have pointed out that strategic competence is found in both the mother tongue (L1) and in the second language (L2), but it is of paramount importance for Foreign Language (FL) learners. Phakiti (2007) has stated that strategic competence is a significant non-linguistic factor that affects L2 communicative ability, yet it has been poorly researched. In accordance, Littlemore (2003) has emphasized that CS are steps the learners take to enhance their communication effectiveness.

Similarly, Santos, Alarcón, and Pablo (2016) have argued that speaking strategies need to be developed to speak a foreign language at ease. Strategic competence is manifested in the conversational skills of learners. Dorniey and Thurll (1993) have argued that one of the relevant conversational issues is teaching conversational strategies. The latter has been identified as means of dealing with communication "trouble spots' (Dorniey&Thurrell, 1993). Dorniey and Thurrell (1993) have claimed that an effective way to prepare students for spontaneous communication is to improve the students' conversational skills. They have stated that there has been an increasing popularity of conversation classes, but they are often not

systematic enough. According to them, communicative language teaching methodology has offered guidelines for creating authentic communicative situations in the language classroom. Unfortunately, the latter has failed to specify which conversational skills and what kind of language input to focus on.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Communication Strategies

The first use of the term 'communication strategies' has been attributed to Selinker. The latter has declared that the learners use CSS to cope with communication problems when their interlanguage seems inadequate with the communicative task. CSS have been regarded as necessary for L2 learning but were not thoroughly discussed (Selinker, 1972. Cited in Tarone, 2006). Dorney and Thurrell have stated that strategic competence entails a range of CSS that the learners could activate to deal with difficulties with limited language knowledge (1991).

Tarone (2006) and Nakatani (2006) have investigated the use of CSS by learners. They have claimed that CSS resolve the learners' communication problems and ultimately enhance their oral proficiency level.

2.1.1. Definitions of Communication Strategies

In language teaching and learning, it has been proved difficult to reach a stable and firm sole definition of CSS.

Tarone has defined CSS as "tools used in a joint negotiation of meaning where both interlocutors are attempting to agree as to a communicative goal" (1980, p. 420). Canale and Swain (1980)have suggested that strategic competence, which is the "verbal and nonverbal communication strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or insufficient competence" (p. 30), represents a significant part if not a separate one of the CC.

Teng (2012) have defined CSS as means the speaker uses to overcome communication difficulties. According to Dornyei and Scott (1997), the notion of L2 CSS emerged based on the acknowledgment that the mismatch between L2 speakers' linguistic resources and communicative intentions often leads to communication breakdowns and difficulties. Yan-ni (2007)

has defined CSS in terms of their purpose: to solve an emerged communication problem by using some kind of techniques. Bialystok (1990) has stated that CSS are an undeniable event of language use, their existence is reliably documented aspect of communication, and their role in L2 communication seems particularly salient" (p116).

Summing up, the focal aspect shared between the previously stated definitions is overcoming communication problems. CSS are thought to be techniques or devices used by learners to overcome communication difficulties due to limited linguistic knowledge.

2.1.2.Communication Strategies Classification

The study of the strategies used by L2 learners to cope with communication difficulties emerged in the 1970s. Researchers have made a significant contribution to the CSS classifications. Some of the CSS classifications that have been discussed within this chapter entail the work of Tarone (1977, 1983); the work of Færch and Kasper (1983); Bialystok's paper (1990); and Dörnyei (1995).

Researchers like Ellis (1984), Bialystok (1990), and Nakatani (2005) have agreed that Tarone's typology is likely the best one as it tackles the various underlying cognitive operations to face communication problems. Hence, Tarone's typology has been adopted in the current study.

Tarone (1981) have classified CSS into three types:

Table1.1

Tarone's Classification of CSS

1. Avoidance
a. Topic avoidance
b. Message abandonment
2. Conscious transfer (borrowing)
a. Literal translation
b. Language switch
c. Appeal for help
d. Mime
3. Paraphrase
a. Approximation
b. Word coinage

c.Circumlocution

2.1.3 Teaching of Communication Strategies

Researchers have argued over the value of teaching CSS to FL learners.

Yule and Tarone (1997) have labeled the dual view of CSS as the 'pros' and the 'cons' (p.19). Hinkel (2005) has expressed that a significant number of researchers or so-called 'the pros' (Dörnyei, 1995; Macaro, 1997; Yule and Tarone, 1997; Nakatani, 2005; Lam, 2005) advocates the teaching of CSS to language learners. However, few empirical studies have been carried out to investigate the actual benefits of introducing CSS to L2/FL language learners (Maleki, 2007).

In the study of Maleki (2007), the findings have confirmed that CSS are pedagogically practical. In the study of Nakatani (2005), learners exposed to instructional input have developed their strategic competence compared to their peers who have not received any instructional input. Teng (2012) has concluded that systematic strategy instruction has improved communication strategy use and communicative effectiveness for EFL learners. The findings have strengthened Dörnyei's (1995) argument that CSS provide L2 learners with a sense of security by allowing them room to maneuver in times of difficulty when communicating. Similarly, teaching CSS may empower the learners to participate in L2 communication by helping them not to give up on the conversation (Faucette, 2001).

In contrast, several researchers, the cons (Bialystok, 1990; Kellerman, 1991 and Grenfell and Harris, 1999), have not championed CSS teaching to language learners. Researchers have supported their argument against CSS teaching for L2/FL learners explaining that strategic competence is primarily developed in the native language. Thus, it can be transferred when learning a foreign/ second language. The transfer has been regarded as automatic, and that CSS will be transferred from L1 to L2/ FL. Accordingly, researchers who have opposed teaching CSS for language learners have not

based their arguments on a factual, empirical investigation. Hence, the claims for or against CSS have been based on opinions rather than sufficient empirical studies.

2.1.4 Teachability of Communication Strategies

Concerning the teachability of CSS, the studyDörnyei (1995) has examined the teachability of CSS. He has supported an explicit approach to teaching CSS using three types of reduction and achievement strategies, Namely, avoidance and replacement, circumlocution, and fillers and hesitation devices. He has concluded that learners in the strategy training group made a significant improvement in the quality and quantity of strategy use and their speech performance. Also, learners' attitudes towards the training have been regarded as highly positive. The results have shown that strategy training could contribute to L2 development. This study provided evidence that CSS may be teachable and that the use of learners' strategies may be influenced by training. Maleki (2010) has supported the previous study by concluding that teaching CSS is helpful and feasible.

2.2 Conversational Skills

2.2.1 Conversation and conversational skills

The importance of conversation to our daily life has been regarded as increasingly evident. Thornbury and Slade have stated that it is hard to define a conversation as it's a complex manifestation of daily language utilization (2006, p. 5). In other words, daily communications entail a range of language use manifestations, one of which is conversation. In the same vein, Conversation has been categorized as "a type of speech event" (Hymes, cited in Richards, 1980, p. 14). According to Clifton (2004), a conversation is a form of interactive, spontaneous communication between two or more parties following rules of politeness and ceremonies.

However, Dorniey and Thurrell (1994) have stated that although conversations may vary in forms, they all follow a specific pattern (p.40). They have further posited that language learners who have rich knowledge of grammar and vocabulary of the TL may still 'fail' in real conversation. Thus, they need practice in the specialized skills that determine conversational fluency (p.41). In the same vein, Dornyei and Thurrell (1992 and 1994) have highlighted the features of conversational rituals as being openings and closings, turn-taking mechanisms, and adjacency pairs such as

greetings.

In the L2/FL classes, teacher-students interaction is the most practical manifestation of learning how to use the language. After the teacher asks a question, Auer (1996) has declared that students mentally process their answers. Ellis (1997) has stated that the participants regard language learning as an outcome of participating in the discourse, precisely face-to-face interaction. This interpersonal interaction is a fundamental requirement of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) (Angerter& Clark& Katz, 2004).

Brown (1995) has concluded that conversational skills entail a range of social skills and cultural knowledge, generalized as what to say when to say it, where and how to say it (p. 22). Richards and Schmidt (1983) have highlighted the importance of developing conversational competence. They have stressed that having poor conversational competence can have serious consequences on the learners who engage in genuine interactions. According to them, conversational competence closely reflects self-image:

While the learner has intuitively acquired the principles of conversational discourse in his or her language, conversational competence is just as important a dimension of social language learning as grammatical competence, which is the focus of much formal language teaching. However, transferring features of first language conversational competence into English may have serious consequences than errors at the level of syntax or pronunciation. because conversational competence is closely related to the presentation of self, that is, communicating an image of ourselves to others. (1983, p. 149-150)

2.2.2 Approaches to Teach Conversational Skills

Dorniey and Thurrell (1994) have discussed in their article two approaches to teach conversational skills. The indirect approach has viewed conversational competence as a product of engagement in conversational interactions. The latter entails situational role-plays, problem-solving tasks, and information gap exercises. The direct approach has been considered more systematic as it involves planning a conversation program to reach conversational fluency through teaching specific micro-skills, strategies, and conversion processes. (p. 41). The direct approach utilizes recording conversations to depict student deficiencies in observing natural conversational transcripts (Carter, 1998, p. 52) and highlighting the

differences between a non-native and native conversation (McCarthy, 1991, p. 121).

The third approach has emerged from learner-centered training, language exposure, interactional activities, and teaching conversation. Researchers such as Thornbury and Slade (2006, p.295) and Celce-Murcia et al. (1997, p. 148) have approached conversational teaching as a combination of specific language input and exposure to a real conversation with awareness-raising time in sequenced activities. Typically, the application of such an approach begins with a specific negotiation between teacher and student regarding the preferences, needs, and abilities that will determine later the conversational content. Much motivated collaboration is needed regarding classroom decisions if the approach is to be implemented. Yet, Thornbury (1998) has stated that this approach is difficult to apply since the contents of textbooks and classroom activities are widely controlled by teaching grammar (p. 110).

2.2.3 Conversational Issues Classification

Dorniey and Thurrell (1994) have classified in their paper the typical issues regarding teaching conversational skills. The classification has been done in the hope that it will aid in designing the content of a conversation course. The issues stated are accordingly:

1. Conversational rules and structure: this issue deals with the organization of conversations. The organization of a conversation entails the rituals of the openings, rules of turn-taking mechanisms, interruptions that are culturally bounded, shifting from a topic to another properly, the adjacency pairs, and the closing of a conversation. This organization is what prevents the conversation from continuous breakdowns. It prevents conversations from turning into complete chaos of interruptions and simultaneous talks.

2. Conversational strategies: conversational strategies have been defined as invaluable means of dealing with communication trouble-spots. The deficiency in l2 knowledge calls for using some techniques. These techniques are used to bridge the gap between the desired communication goal and the current linguistic knowledge of the speaker. L2 communication strategies encompass message adjustment or avoidance, paraphrasing, approximation, appealing for

assistance, asking for repetition, asking for clarification, and checking whether the receiver has understood.

3. Functions and meaning in conversation: it concerns the actual messages speakers convey and their purposes, that is, the exact meaning the speaker wishes to convey. The authors have discussed language functions, the indirect speech act, and the notion of the same meaning, different meaning.

4. Social and cultural context: the last issue deals with the social and cultural constraints of language use. Since all conversations are socially and culturally determined, the lack of awareness often leads to several embarrassments for language learners. The social and cultural factors have been classified accordingly: Participant variables - office and status, the social situation, the social norms of appropriate language use, including formal/informal continuum, degrees of politeness, and cross-cultural differences (p. 41-47).

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The design of the study is an exploratory, descriptive mixed method research type. The current inquiry aims to gain insights into the reasons behind the learners' poor oral performance regarding the Cs and Conversational Skills. Additionally, a mixed-method was used to gain an in-depth understanding of the investigated phenomenon.

Accordingly, Random selection has been utilized in the current study. The sample-driven from the population embodies one-fifth of the population, which is 60 out of 284 third-year EFL students have been selected. Also, Third-year oral expression teachers represent the population of the study.

3.2. Sampling of the study

Accordingly, Random selection has been utilized in the current study. The sample-driven from the population embodies one-fifth of the population, which is 60 out of 284 third-year EFL students have been selected. Also, third-year oral expression teachers represent the population of the study.

3.4. Statement of the Problem

Developing communicative skills seems to be an important goal of FL

learners. The communicative approach has been adopted worldwide, and it calls for the development of the CC of learners. The communicative approach to teaching language aims at preparing learners for spontaneous communications.

However, English as Foreign Language (EFL) students seem to face communication difficulties while using the language. Third-year students at the University of Mohamed Lamine DEBAGHINE Setif 2 have expressed their frustration due to communication difficulties in oral communication using the English language (cf. Appendix A, Appendix B).

3.5. Aim of the Study

This study explores the reasons behind the poor oral performance of third-year students in the department of English language and literature at Mohamed Lamine DEBAGHINE, Setif 2 University.

3.6. Research Questions

Following the problem mentioned above, two research questions have been answered:

1. What are the reasons behind the poor oral performance of the third year of English language students at Mohamed Lamine DEBAGHINE Setif 2 University?
2. Is it due to the lack of the use of oral CSS?
3. Is it due to the lack of the necessary conversational skills?
4. What are the teachers' perceptions of the role of oral CSS conversational skills in developing the learners' oral performance?

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

4.1.1 Teachers' Interview Analysis

The semi-structured interview has entailed following the subsequent questions:

1. As an oral expression teacher, what are your perceptions of the role of oral communication strategies and conversational skills in developing the students' oral performance?

2. Do you think that poor control of oral communication strategies and poor conversational skills are significant reasons for students' poor oral performance?

3. What is your perception of the importance of teaching oral

communication strategies and conversational skills for students to improve their communication skills effectively?

4. Do you have anything to add regarding developing students' oral performance?

· Question one: The teachers have affirmed that oral communication strategies and conversational skills "will be of paramount importance" in students' oral performance. He has added that they'll be helpful "especially" for students who will use English as teachers, translators, journalists...

· Question two: The Teacher explained that poor control of oral communication strategies and poor conversational skills is "partially and certainly not totally" primary reason for the poor oral performance of students. He has added, "Other factors can be accounted for."

· Question three: The Teacher has explained that "the first year" must be totally spent on teaching and improving oral skills together with other fundamental skills. He has further proposed to create a space where English and only English language are spoken.

For the near future, the teacher has suggested creating spaces where to practice English as said ahead. For the Medium-term, to develop programs for first years where oral classes are given top priority. For the long term, He has suggested developing exchange programs with foreign universities.

· Question four: The Teacher concluded by stating that there is still a long way to go to attain the students we've set.

4.2.1 Teachers' Questionnaire Analysis

Section One: Oral Communication Strategies

Item 01: Have you received any training regarding the teaching of oral communication strategies?

All oral expression teachers have received training to teach oral communication strategies.

Item 02: how do you evaluate your students' speaking abilities as future graduates?

The teachers have evaluated the speaking abilities of third-year students as average.

Item 03: Do your students face difficulties when trying to communicate inside the classroom?

The answers have indicated that students do face difficulties when trying to communicate inside the classroom.

Item 04: If yes, what are the main reasons behind the learners' poor oral performance? (You may tick more than one)

Answers have indicated that according to teachers, the main reasons behind the learners' poor oral performance are: the lack of linguistic competence, lack of CSS, and the lack of conversational skills. The teacher has added the lack of confidence and fear to speak hinder the learners' oral performance.

Item 05: In your oral expression classes, do you teach your learners strategies to cope with communication difficulties?

The answers have demonstrated that all oral expression teachers of the third year teach oral communication strategies in their classes.

Item06: If yes, which of the following strategies are helpful to your learners to overcome these difficulties? (You may tick more than one)

The analysis has indicated which strategies are helpful for learners to overcome communication difficulties. The most common one, according to teachers, is the Translation/ Language switch strategy.

Item 07: Do you think like an oral expression teacher that oral communication strategies can aid in solving communication problems of your learners?

All teachers agree with the statement that oral communication strategies can aid in solving the communication problems of the learners.

Item 08: If yes, why? If not, why?

The teachers have stressed that knowing a technique is in itself a way out. What is essential is to set enough time to use it.

Item 09: Do your learners use oral communication strategies when they face communication difficulties?

Teachers have communicated that the learners "sometimes" use oral communication strategies when they face communication difficulties.

Item 10: If yes, which communication strategies do they tend to use most? (You may tick more than one)

Accordingly, the most strategies the learners tend to use are topic avoidance, message abandonment, literal translation, language switch, and mime.

Item 11: When your learners have communication difficulties, what do you usually do?

Teachers have stated that they encourage their learners to finish their ideas.

Section Two: Conversational Skills:

Item 12: Have you received any training regarding teaching conversational skills?

All teachers have received training to teach conversational skills.

Item13: In your classes, what do you tend to teach?

The third-year oral expression teachers tend to focus on both CSS and conversational skills equally in their classes.

Item 14: What are your attitudes when your learners perform classroom activities such as debates, discussions, and role-plays?

The teachers have explained that they pay attention to their learners' oral performance, give feedback and comments, and interrupt them for correction.

Item15: Do you think that your students' poor oral performance could be due to the lack of the necessary conversational skill?

Teachers disagree that the poor oral performance of learners is due to a lack of necessary conversational skills.

4.2. Students' Questionnaire Analysis

Item 01: How do you evaluate your speaking abilities as future graduate students?

45% of students have evaluated their speaking abilities as good. 36% have evaluated their speaking abilities as average. Only 10% have evaluated their speaking abilities as very good. 3, 3% of the students have stated that their speaking abilities are excellent. The rest have indicated that they perceive their speaking abilities are poor.

Item 02: In your oral expression classes, do you face difficulties when you try to speak in English?

95% of students have expressed that they do have difficulties in oral expression sessions. 05% of students have explained that they don't face any difficulties in oral expression sessions.

Item 03: yes, why do you think this is the reason? (You may tick more than once)

only11, 7% of the students linked their poor oral performance to a lack of linguistic competence. As illustrated above, 94,3% of the students linked their poor oral performance to a lack of oral communication strategies. As illustrated, 75, 5% of the students have indicated that the lack of conversational skills is among the reasons behind their poor oral performance.

Item 04: Does your teacher teach you strategies to cope with communication difficulties in your oral expression classes?

The majority of students agree that their oral expression teachers do teach them oral communication strategies.

Item 05: If yes, which of the following strategies are helpful for you to overcome these difficulties?

23,3% of students think that translation/language switch is the most helpful strategy for them. 16,7% of the students prefer the strategy of paraphrasing. 6,7% of the rest of students prefer the strategy of message avoidance.

Item 06: When you have communication difficulties, what do you usually do? (you may tick more than one)

Answers have indicated that only 18, 3% of the students find the message avoidance helpful strategy. 81, 7% of the students said that they don't use it. As shown, 78,3% of the students haven't championed the mentioned strategy. Only 21,7% of the students indicated that they use it when having communication breakdowns.

The translation strategy is relatively used among learners when facing communication breakdowns. The latter is used by 36, 7% of the students.

Code switch strategy is only used by 13, 3% of the students. 86,7% of the students have claimed that they don't use the strategy as mentioned earlier when facing communication problems

Answers have demonstrated that 33, 3% of the students ask for help when facing communication problems. 31,7% of the learners use the mime strategy when facing communication problems. 68, 3% of the learners don't use the strategy mentioned above.

Additionally, more than half of the students use the approximation

strategy when facing communication troubles. 46,7% of the students have claimed that they don't use the strategy mentioned above.

As demonstrated, 25% of the students have claimed to invent new words when facing communication problems. Circumlocution is the most used strategy among students, with a percentage of 60%.

Item 07: When you're having a conversation, what do you usually do?

As demonstrated, only 30% of the students have indicated that they know how to start or end a conversation. 60% have claimed that they don't know how to open or end a conversation.

More than half of the students don't respect the turn-taking mechanism while having a conversation. Only 43, 3% of the students have stated that they know and respect turn-taking mechanisms.

Only 36,7% of the students try to keep a conversation going and add comments. 63,3% of the students have indicated that they don't make efforts to keep a conversation going and add comments.

Item 08: When you have communication difficulties, what does your teacher usually do?

The responses have displayed teachers' attitudes towards learners' communication breakdowns according to students.62, 9% of the students have stated that their teachers help them other ways to continue speaking. 35, 7% of the students have stated that their teachers encourage them to finish their ideas, while only 1,4% of the students have claimed that their teachers stop them.

Item 09: In oral expression classes, what does your teacher usually teach you?

According to students, teachers teach conversational skills and communication strategies almost equally in oral expression sessions. Only 11,7% of students have claimed that teachers don't teach conversational skills and communication strategies.

Item 10: when you perform classroom activities such as debates, discussions, and role-plays, what does your teacher usually do?

The responses represent teachers' attitudes when students perform classroom activities according to students. 29,3% of the students have stated that their teachers pay attention to their oral performance while

performing classroom activities. 22% of the students have indicated that their teachers give them feedback and comments. 21,1% of the students have expressed that their teachers pay attention to their conversational skills. 17,9% of the students have claimed that their students interrupt them for correction. The rest of the students have expressed that their teachers manage the activity for them.

Item 11: What would you like to gain from the oral expression module?

Answers indicated that 68,3% of the students would like to develop their speaking skills in oral expression sessions.

Additionally, only 31, 67% of the students would like to develop their listening skills in oral expression sessions. More than half of the students wish to develop their communicative competence in oral expression sessions.

As shown, only 36,7% of the students would like to be prepared for spontaneous talk during oral expression sessions classes.

As demonstrated, students have expressed their preferences to develop communicative competence with a percentage of 25,4%. 31,5% of the Students have articulated that they would like to develop their speaking skills. 16,9 % of the students have expressed that they would like to be prepared for the spontaneous talk. 14,6% of the students have indicated that they would like to develop their listening skills.

5. Interpretations

5.1. Teachers' Interview Interpretations

The second research question has been addressed by the interview conducted with the Teacher: What are the teachers' perceptions of oral communication strategies and conversational skills in developing the learners' oral performance?

The oral expression teacher has displayed positive perceptions towards the role of oral communication strategies and conversational skills in developing the students' oral performance. According to teacher's responses, Oral communication strategies and conversational skill are "of paramount importance "especially for students who needs English for Occupational Purposes.

Research sub-questions: What are the reasons behind the poor oral performance of the third year of English language students at Mohamed Lamine EBAGHINE Setif 2 University?

1. Is it due to the lack of the use of oral communication strategies?
2. Is it due to the lack of the necessary conversational skills?

The first research question and sub-questions have been addressed in item 02 of the interview. The responses have indicated that the teacher agrees that poor communication strategies and conversational skills are "partly" reasons for the learners' poor oral performance. He has added that other factors can be accounted for.

5.2. Teachers' Questionnaire Interpretations

The first research question: What are the reasons behind the poor oral performance of the third year of English language students at Mohamed LamineDEBAGHINE Setif 2 University?

The first research question has been addressed in the teacher's questionnaire. The teacher has stressed that the lack of oral communication strategies and conversational skills are among the reasons behind the learners' poor performance. He has added the lack of linguistic competence and other factors such as lack of confidence and fear of speaking. The teacher has explained that he teaches both conversational skills and CSS in his oral expression sessions. The teacher has labeled students' use of CSS and conversational skills as "sometimes." Although the teacher has claimed that he encourages conversational skills and CSS, students' use of CSS and conversational skills is not satisfactory. Hence, this could hinder their oral performance in oral expression sessions.

5.3. Students' Questionnaire Interpretations

The first research question: What are the reasons behind the poor oral performance of the third year of English language students at Mohamed LamineDEBAGHINE Setif 2 University?

1. Is it due to the lack of the use of oral communication strategies?
2. Is it due to the lack of the necessary conversational skills?

The first research question and sub-questions have been addressed in the students' questionnaire. The analysis of students' questionnaires has concluded that most students face difficulties in oral expression sessions (item 02). Students have linked poor oral performance to the lack of

conversational skills and CSS (item 03). Students have articulated that their teachers give equal importance to teaching conversational skills and CSS (item 09, item10) and encourage conversational skills and CSS (item 08). Students have displayed a poor use of CSS and conversational skills (item 06, item 07). Students have articulated their preferences to gain from oral expression sessions. They have stressed the importance of developing their speaking skill and CC similarly.

6. Pedagogical Implications

Based on the findings of the current inquiry, some implications for EFL learners and teachers have been suggested infra:

- Besides teaching linguistic competence to learners, strategic and socio-cultural competences are to be given more attention to effectively improving their oral performance.
- Teachers are highly recommended to allocate enough time for students to practice the language inside the classroom and consider their preferences.
- Students are advised to take responsibility to develop their oral performance.
- It's crucial to understand the factors behind the poor oral performance of learners to be addressed. These factors might impede the learners' performance regardless of their competencies.
- Teachers are called to raise learners' awareness about oral communication strategies and conversational skills in oral expression classes. Learners might not be aware of the two notions.

1. Suggestions

A list of suggestions for teachers, policymakers, and further research has been documented:

- EFL teachers ought to be informed about the importance of CSS and conversational skills as parts of learners' speaking skills.
- EFL teachers are called to raise the learners' awareness about CSS and conversational skills used to develop their CC.
- Teachers are advocated to be alerted about the pedagogical demands set for oral expression classes.
- Educationists and policymakers are urged to design teaching programs that provide learners with CSS training and conversational

skills classes during the first year at university. Following that, educationalists are urged to integrate formal CSS training and create conversational classes as a mandatory component of the LMD curriculum.

- Policymakers ought to create spaces for learners where English is extensively practiced.
- Due to the limitations and the sampling procedures of the current investigation, it is suggested that future researchers will replicate the current study in a broader scope to generalize the findings to the broader population.
- Future researchers might focus on factors affecting the CSS and conversational skills, such as the individual differences to serve different learners at best.
- Future researchers might opt for an experimental design for the current study, where CSS and conversational skills affect the learners' oral performance is examined.

7. CONCLUSION

The current inquiry has explored some factors behind the learners' poor oral performance. It has focused on oral communication strategies use and conversational skills. The researcher has opted for a mixed-method approach to answering the research questions. Quantitative methods manifested in teachers' and students' questionnaires have been blended with the qualitative method of teachers' interviews. The research sample is 60 out of 283 third-year students of English and third-year oral expression teachers. The selection of the participants has been made randomly. Data gathered from students' questionnaires have been analyzed using SPSS.

Data analysis and interpretation have resulted in several findings. Teachers and students agree on the fact that third-year students face difficulties in oral expression sessions. Lack of use of oral communication strategies and conversational skills hinders the learners' oral performance. Although teachers give central importance to conversational skills and oral communication strategies, most learners agree that they don't know enough techniques to help them deliver their message.

Teachers have articulated that oral communication strategies and conversational skills are paramount to developing the learners' oral

performance. Experimental future research based on the current results may be significant, especially since the study has demonstrated a positive role of oral communication strategies and conversational skills to improve learners' oral performance.

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