

Integrated-Skills and Segregated-skills approaches in the teaching of Speaking for EFL Learners

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Abstract

The current study aims at exploring whether teachers follow the integrated-skills or the segregated-skills approach in the process of teaching the speaking skill in Oral Expression module. It also attempts to examine the learning/teaching process of the speaking skill and its integration with the other macro and micro skills. The study takes the case of first year students, at the Department of Arts and the English Language, Frères Mentouri Constantine 1 University. To achieve this aim, two questionnaires are adopted. The first is administered to one hundred twenty (120) first-year students, and a second one is assigned to twenty-one (21) teachers of Oral Expression. The obtained data confirmed that the macro and micro skills were combined to speaking with varying degrees, but they were arbitrarily integrated; that is why the integrated approach was not properly applied.

Keywords: Integrated-skill approach; Segregated-skill approach; Speaking skill; Macro and micro skills; Oral Expression

Ouided ARAB
Riad BELOUAHEM

University Frères
Mentouri Constantine 1
(Algeria)

Résumé

La présente étude vise à explorer laquelle des deux approches les enseignants suivent pour enseigner la compétence orale dans le module d'Expression Orale : l'approche des compétences intégrées ou l'approche des compétences séparées. Il tente en outre d'examiner le processus d'apprentissage/enseignement de la compétence orale et son intégration avec les autres macro et micro compétences. L'étude prend le cas d'étudiants de première année, au Département de Lettres et Langue Anglaise, Université Frères Mentouri Constantine 1. Pour atteindre cet objectif, deux questionnaires sont adoptés. Le premier est attribué à 120 étudiants de première année et un second à 21 professeurs d'Expression Orale. Les résultats obtenus ont confirmé que les macro et micro compétences étaient combinées, mais elles étaient arbitrairement intégrées ; c'est pourquoi l'approche intégrée n'a pas été correctement appliquée.

Mots clés : Approche des compétences intégrées, Approche des compétences séparées ; Compétence orale; Macro et micro compétences; Expression Orale.

ملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى اكتشاف أي من النهجين يتبعه المعلمون لتعليم مهارة التحدث في وحدة التعبير الشفوي: نهج المهارات المتكاملة أم نهج المهارات المنفصلة. كما تحاول دراسة عملية التعلم / التدريس لمهارة التحدث و طريقة دمجها مع المهارات الكلية والجزئية الأخرى. وتتناول الدراسة طلاب السنة الأولى، في قسم الآداب واللغة الإنجليزية، جامعة الأخوة منتوري قسنطينة 1. لتحقيق هذا الهدف، تم اعتماد استبيانين. خصص الأول لـ 120 طالبًا في السنة الأولى، والثاني مخصص لـ 21 مدرسًا للتعبير الشفوي. أكدت النتائج المتحصل عليها أنه قد تم دمج المهارات الكلية والجزئية في التحدث بدرجات متفاوتة، ولكن بشكل عشوائي؛ لهذا السبب لم يتم تطبيق النهج المتكامل بشكل صحيح.

الكلمات المفتاحية : النهج متكامل المهارات، نهج المهارات المنفصلة، مهارة التحدث، المهارات الكلية والجزئية، التعبير الشفوي

* Corresponding author, e-mail: ouided.arab@umc.edu.dz

1. Introduction

Living in the globalization era, people need to learn English for different objectives, such as international communication, business and trade, and studies...etc. Hence, they need to show some proficiency in English, especially in speaking to insure an effective oral communication (Richards, 2003, p.17). Thus, gaining speaking proficiency has become a major goal for many second/foreign language learners of English (Richards, 2003; Widiati and Cahyono, 2006; Zhang, 2009) since grammatical accuracy alone is not sufficient for successful communication (Yang, 2014, p. 57). Another important factor in assessing ESL/EFL learners' success or failure is determining their fluency and competence in using the language for communication purposes (Widiati and Cahyono, 2006, p. 270).

'*Mute English*', is a label used by Zhang (2009) to describe the speaking disfluency of the learners' of English as a foreign language even after spending many years studying English. Being slow and hesitant in conveying their messages has become a major handicap for them (Zhang, 2009). In fact, speaking has become a challenge for learners because they are required to master some sub-skills that occur simultaneously like pronunciation, stress, intonation, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary...etc (Zhang, 2009, p.32; Widiati and Cahyono, 2006, p. 279).

This problem is rooted in the fact that traditional methods do not only focus on initiating learners to intensive practice in grammar and vocabulary, but also on introducing them to reading, writing, and listening skills in a segregated way with the exclusion of the speaking skill (Zhang, 2009). The best solution for this situation is adopting an integrated approach in language teaching where all the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) are related together, and more attention is directed to oral production practices following the principles of the communicative approach (Zhang, 2009). Hence, the main concern of the current study is to investigate which approach is followed at the Department of Arts and the English language to teach aural oral skills: the integrated-skill approach or the segregated-skill one.

The Segregated-Skill Approach

The segregated-skill approach focuses on the mastery of discrete language skills such as listening and speaking reflected in the traditional language programmes. An example of the segregated-skill approach is the grammar-translation method where more attention was directed to grammar analysis for the sake of translation from one language to another. These courses "have language itself as the focus of instruction to the extent that excessive emphasis on rules and paradigms teaches students a lot about language at the expense of teaching language itself" (Brown, 2000, p. 218). The main focus of instruction under this method is teaching some listening, speaking, reading, or writing strategies linked only to one particular skill (Peregoy and Boyle, 2001). This type of learning does not allow the learners to be ready to use the language in every day interactions (Oxford, 2001); this is clearly stated by KIE (2002; in Beatrice, 2014, p. 255) which claims: "It has been established that teaching language structures in isolation is not only boring, but it also tends to produce learners who lack communicative competence".

Speaking has become the focus of the language under the Audio-lingual method, and attention was directed towards the structural analysis of the spoken language. Mimicry, memorization, and practice of language patterns were considered as the basic tools to learn a language (Widiati and Cahyono, 2006, p. 271). During this era, it was believed that "language behaviour is not a matter of solving problems but of performing habits so well learned that they are automatic" (Brooks, 1961, p.3, cited in Savignon, 1983, p.19). Hence, it is worth mentioning that under the audio-lingual method, speaking has gained its significance, but although speech was adopted to master the basics of the language, learners' objectives in using the language were not so clear (Brooks, 1961, p.3, cited in Savignon, 1983, p.19).

The Communicative Approach

Communicative language teaching (CLT) emphasizes that language will not be effectively learned unless it is used for communication purposes (Oxford, Lavine and Crookall, 1989; Savignon 1991; and Larsen-Freeman (2000). In fact, the communicative approach came as a reaction to the traditional methods where teaching the language to facilitate authentic communication was totally neglected. Hymes, a proponent of the communicative competence, highlights the significance of the communicative competence; he contends that learning a language does not only require the linguistic competence but also the communicative one (Hymes, 1972). Advocates of whole language (Goodman, 1986; Weaver 1990; Edlesky, Altwerger and Flores 1991; Schwarzer 2001; and Brooks-harper and Shelton 2003) stress that language, either used in the written mode or the oral mode, should achieve a meaningful communication in order to fulfil authentic purposes.

The Integrated-skill Approach

The integrated-skills approach, which is the by-product of the communicative approach and holistic language, follows the principles of communicative language teaching, and instruction is founded on the philosophy that in normal communication, oral and written languages are not isolated from one another (Finocchiaro and Bonomo, 1973; Perego and Boyle, 2001; Oxford, 2001; Mohan, 1986). Integration means “No language skill should be taught in isolation, listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills should complement each other” (Beatrice, 2014, p.2).

In their everyday interactions, people simultaneously use a combination of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) since “communication, by definition, requires the integration of the main four skills” These skills relate to each other in two ways: the mode of communication, i.e., oral or written and the direction of communication, i.e., receptive or productive. Listening and reading are receptive skills whereas speaking and writing are productive ones. Listening and speaking are tightly related because when we listen, we are required to understand what we hear (Aydoğan and Akbarov, 2014, p.673). Although reading can build up independently, it often develops alongside the other skills as it assists in expanding vocabulary later needed in listening comprehension, speaking and writing (Aydoğan and Akbarov, 2014, p. 674).

Since the ultimate goal of EFL teaching is improving learners’ communicative competence, an integrated approach whereby all the four skills are integrated is necessary (Moghadam and Reza Adel, 2011, p 1). The integrated approach is based on breaking down the walls between the four skills and making connections between them. Furthermore, it associates both linguistic skills and communicative abilities together (Moghadam and Reza Adel, 2011, p. 1). This provides the learners with more motivation and assists their mastery and retention of language skills altogether (Moghadam and Reza Adel, 2011, p.1). Oxford (1990, pp. 5,6) claims: “acquiring a new language necessarily involves developing the four primary skills of listening, reading, speaking, and writing in various degrees and combinations. These four skills also include associated skills, such as knowledge of vocabulary, spelling, pronunciation, syntax, meaning and usage”

Oxford’s tapestry (2001, p. 1) is the metaphorical picture of teaching English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL). This tapestry is woven from many threads, such as the characteristics of the teacher, the learner, the setting, and the relevant languages. To render this tapestry more beautiful, strong, and colourful, a significant strand is to be added. The latter consists of the four primary skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Unless these skills are combined, optimal ESL/EFL communication will not be achieved. This is known as the integrated-skill approach. If the four language skills are not intertwined together, this results in a set of segregated skills; this is known as the segregated-skill approach where learning for communication is not emphasized (Oxford, 2001, p. 1).

Because language use is holistic in authentic communication, language teachers are required to expose learners to situations where all the four skills are combined (Schurr et al., 1995; in Aneela and Aneela, 2010, p. 4). In contrast to the purely segregated-skill approach, the integrated-skill approach main concern is confronting students with authentic situations where they are required to use the language spontaneously to achieve communicative purposes (Oxford, 2001, p. 1). In addition, it demonstrates the complexity of the language as it is used in natural interactions, and enables the teachers to follow their students' improvement in various skills simultaneously (Oxford, 2001, p. 1).

Zhang (2009, p. 33) elaborates on the benefits of the integrated-skill approach stating that listening and speaking go together since in any true speaking activity listening completes speaking. Once speaking is accompanied by reading and writing; this allows learners to incorporate three skills altogether. Haste, Woodward, and Boorke (1984) as cited in (Moghadam and Resa Adel, 2001, p. 1644) states that "each time someone reads, writes, speaks or listens, this language encounter feeds into a common data pool. In subsequent encounters with language, the person can draw on this pool". This integration of language skills assists in covering learners' different capacities and provides them with a variety of topics that leads them to practise both receptive and productive skills, and offers to them many opportunities to use the language in real situations. Not only this, this amalgamation makes the learners more energetic by motivating them to take part in a variety of activities and interactions (Aneela and Aneela, 2010, p. 2).

2. Methodology

The main concern of the current study is to explore whether teachers, at the Department of Arts and The English Language, University-des Frères Mentouri, Constantine 1, adopt an integrated-skill approach to teach the speaking skill or they rely on a segregated-skill approach. Hence, the questionnaire has been used as a major tool of research to serve this aim. Two questionnaires were administered: one to a sample of 120 first-year students and another one to 21 teachers who teach the Oral Expression module to first-year students. By means of the students' questionnaire, the informants revealed awareness of the importance of the speaking skill, evaluated their level in speaking, and mentioned the difficulties they face while speaking. Via teachers' questionnaire, the participants assessed the learners' speaking level and stated the reasons why speaking is a major hindrance for them. The last section of the questionnaires elicited both teachers and students' opinions about the teaching/learning of speaking giving more space for teachers to give more details about the assigned tasks, the intended objectives, and adopted materials.

2.1 Description of the Students' Questionnaire

The students' questionnaire includes three sections. The first section provides information about students' level of proficiency in English and their inclination to speak in English. It includes questions mainly related to their mark of English in the Baccalaureate exam, and their liking for speaking English inside as well as outside the classroom. The second section is pertinent to learners' speaking skill. It entails 8 questions linked to their interest in studying Oral Expression module, their level in speaking, and the difficulties that hinder them from participating in Oral Expression lessons. The last section includes fourteen questions mainly concerned with how students learn the speaking skill, which is the focal centre of interest of the current study, taking into account which method is being used, how tasks are assigned, how skills are combined and which materials are selected.

2.2 Description of the Teachers' Questionnaire

The teachers' questionnaire is divided into two sections. Six questions in the first section seek information about teachers' attitudes towards students' speaking skill. The first question is meant to evaluate the students' level in speaking. Further questions track learners' willingness to participate in Oral Expression lessons, what makes them feel enthusiastic, and what hampers the silent students from taking part in the classroom. Teachers' opinions about the significance of speaking proficiency for having a good level of proficiency in English are the target of the last question in this section. The second part of the questionnaire entails 20 questions aiming at scrutinizing which approach teachers do follow in the teaching of aural oral skills-The integrated-skill or the segregated skill approach, the tasks teachers assign in each of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), and the objectives for their selection, how the four skills are integrated, how teaching materials are selected, how students sit to work together and which language they use constitute the heart of the questionnaire. A final question was meant to check teachers' preference to teach speaking via an integrated or a segregated method for promoting learners' speaking proficiency.

2.3 Results and Discussion

2.4 Analysis of the Students' Questionnaire

A thorough analysis of the students' questionnaire provides as with valuable insights with regard to their interest in speaking English, their level in speaking, and the difficulties they face while speaking, on the one hand, and how they actually learn speaking in the classroom taking into consideration the method, the activities, language skills, and the materials involved, on the other hand. This is summarized in the following section.

- **Students' Level**

When asked about the mark they got in English in the Baccalaureate exam, 40.83% of the participants stated that their marks ranged between 13 and 15.5. 34.14% scored (16-18.5), and 4.17% got (19-20). 19.17% obtained (11-12.5) and only 0.83% got (10-10.5). One student did not mention his mark. By combining the results, we may say that the majority of the sample (79.17%) represented good, very good, and excellent students. Hence, we expect them to have good speaking abilities.

Marks	Students	
	N	%
Average (10-10.5)	1	0.83
Above average (11-12.5)	23	19.17
Good (13-15.5)	49	40.83
Very good (16-18.5)	41	34.17
Excellent (19-20)	5	4.17
Unstated	1	0.83
Total	120	100

Table 1: Students' Marks of English in the Baccalaureate Exam

- **Students' Interest in Speaking English**

The fact that about 80% of the sample obtained good, very good, and excellent marks in the Baccalaureate exam (table1) implies that these students, belonging to generation 'Z', are becoming more and more interested in learning English as they are aware of its importance as a worldwide language. Not only this, they seek to become competent speakers to cope with the demands of the 21 century. Asking them whether they like speaking English, 98.3% of the participants replied "yes", which justifies their choice of English as a major, and 1.7% claimed that they did not like it probably because these students are of average or above average abilities who face difficulties in speaking.

Options	Students	
	N	%
Yes	118	98.3
No	2	1.7
Total	120	100

Table 2: Students' Interest in Speaking English

➤ **Significance of the Speaking Skill**

The students are becoming aware that gaining speaking proficiency has become a prerequisite for having a good level of proficiency in English. When we asked the participants to order the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) from the most to the least important one, and after comparing the skills which were ranked first, it has been revealed that 36.67% of the informants placed 'speaking' in the first position, followed by 'listening' in the second position with 33.33%, reading came in the third place with 23.33%, and 'writing' was ranked the last with 6.67%. This means that speaking and listening gained primacy with 36.67% and 33.33%, respectively. Considering the skills which occupied the fourth and last position, it was clear that writing was considered the least important by the participants; that is why it was represented by 38.33% of the sample. By comparing these percentages, we can conclude that speaking came on top with 36.67%, followed by listening with 33.33%, then reading with 25.83%, and lastly writing with 38.33%.

Rank	Skills							
	Listening		Speaking		Reading		Writing	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	40	33.33	44	36.67	28	23.33	8	6.67
2	29	24.17	28	23.33	26	21.67	27	22.5
3	24	20	27	22.5	27	22.5	29	24.17
4	17	14.17	16	13.33	31	25.83	46	38.33
Unstated	10	8.33	5	4.17	8	6.67	10	8.33
Total	120	100	120	100	120	100	120	100

Table 3: Students' Ranking of the Four Skills in Terms of Importance

The students confirmed their preference for the speaking skill when they were asked whether or not they agree on the fact that mastering the speaking skill is a prerequisite to have a good level of proficiency in English. They chose the two options "I strongly agree" and "I agree" with a majority of 85.83% against a minority (12.5%) opting for "I can't decide" with 8.33%, and "I disagree" with 4.17%. This justifies why the participants granted 'speaking' the first in the previous question.

Options	Students	
	N	%
I Strongly Agree	36	30
I agree	67	55.83
I can't decide	10	8.33
I disagree	5	4.17
I strongly disagree	0	0
Unstated	2	1.67
Total	120	100

Table 4: Importance of Speaking Proficiency for a Good Level of Proficiency in English

➤ **Students' Self-Evaluation of their Speaking Skill**

Asking the participants to evaluate their level in speaking, 63.34% of the sample considered themselves good and excellent speakers (table 6 below). 35.83% stated that their level is average, and only 0.83% answered that their level is even poor. This self-evaluation seems logical since nearly 80% of the students got a mark ranging between

13 and 20 in the Baccalaureate exam (question 1), yet the good marks the students gained in English do not necessarily guarantee a good level of speaking proficiency.

Options	Students	
	N	%
Excellent	8	6.67
Good	68	56.67
Average	43	35.83
Below the average	1	0.83
Total	120	100

Table 5: Students' Self-Evaluation of Their Speaking Skill

➤ Students' Speaking Difficulties

'Fear of making mistakes' and the 'lack of vocabulary' were two essential causes behind speaking difficulties, according to the respondents. The former came in the first position with 53.4% and the latter in the second position with 39.8%. 'Fear from the teachers' remarks' was ranked third with 16.1% and 'Fear from classmates remarks' was the last one, with 12.7%. We can conclude that the difficulties that hinder the students from speaking are either related to poor linguistic abilities such as lack of vocabulary or to some other affective factors like fear or lack of self-confidence. Some students reported other causes; some are purely psychological such as shyness or introversion, and others are related to the lack of knowledge about the topic at hand, or poor pronunciation.

Options	Students	
	N	%
Lack of vocabulary	47	39.8
Fear of making mistakes	63	53.4
Fear from the teacher's remarks	19	16.1
Fear from the classmates' reaction	15	12.7
Total	168	100

Table 6: The Causes behind Students' Speaking Difficulties

➤ Learning Aural Oral Skills

One of the items of the questionnaire aims at checking on which skill/s Oral Expression lessons are based. The participants were offered four options to choose the activity/ties they achieve in class to check whether the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) are integrated or not. 59.2% of the participants stated that Oral Expression lessons relied basically on group discussions, 42.5% opted for free debates, and 37.5% chose oral presentations, 19.2% selected vocabulary games, and only 8.3% indicated role-plays. This reveals that the activities adopted by the teachers basically involve two skills: listening and speaking. Role-playing which requires the integration of the four skills is used by teachers to a very limited extent. Few students mentioned other activities like listening to audios, watching videos, and learning idiomatic expressions.

Options	Students	
	N	%
Free debates	51	42.5
Group discussions	71	59.2
Oral presentations	45	37.5
Role plays	10	8.3
Vocabulary games	23	19.2
Total	168	100

Table 7: Learning Aural Oral Skills

➤ **Skills and Sub-Skills Integration**

Knowing which skills and sub-skills are integrated with the speaking skill is so important in order to discern which approach is followed: the integrated or the segregated one. It has been found that the skills and sub-skills which are generally combined with speaking are listening and pronunciation with 72.5% each and vocabulary with 55.8%. Reading, grammar and writing are also integrated with speaking to a less extent with 32.5%, 30%, and 15.8, respectively. Teachers probably focus on pronunciation and vocabulary to enrich students' lexis and improve their speaking skills. Reading, grammar, and writing are not stressed in Oral Expression lessons may be this is due to the fact that this module requires the learners to listen and speak more than they read and write.

Options	Students	
	N	%
Listening	87	72.5
Reading	39	32.5
Writing	19	15.8
Vocabulary	67	55.8
Pronunciation	87	72.5
Grammar	36	30
Total	120	100

Table 8: Skills and Sub-Skills Integration

• **Listening**

From learners' responses, we came to the conclusion that speaking is learnt in combination with other skills with varying degrees (as explained in the previous section), so knowing to what extent each skill is integrated in oral expression is also one of the concerns of the current study. As far as the exposure to the native language is concerned, 24.17% of the students stated that they regularly listened to native speakers' audios, 22.5% of the participants 'sometimes' did, while 53.34% rarely or never did. This confirms what students indicated concerning the activities involved in Oral Expression lessons, which are based on free debates, group discussions, and oral presentation. This means that the listening skill was not deliberately included in the lessons.

Options	Students	
	N	%
Always	15	12.5
Often	14	11.67
Sometimes	27	22.5
Rarely	11	9.17
Never	53	44.17
Total	120	100

Table 9: Listening Integration in OE Lessons

With regard to watching videos, only 6.66% of the learners indicated that they watched videos regularly while 75% rarely or never did. Although listening was combined with speaking in the debates, discussions, and oral presentations, it was not purposely planned for by teachers. 16.67% 'sometimes' or 'rarely' did, and more than half of the sample confirmed that they have never been exposed to native speakers' videos. Although the module is named "Comprehension de l'Oral", listening is not emphasized in OE lessons; it naturally and spontaneously happens in class debates and discussions.

Options	Students	
	N	%
always	1	0.83
Often	7	5.83
Sometimes	20	16.67

Rarely	20	16.67
Never	70	58.33
Unstated	2	1.67
Total	120	100

Table 10: Speaking Integration in OE Lessons

- **Reading**

With regard to reading, almost half of the sample 49.16% were never or rarely required to do reading assignments, 24.17% sometimes did, and 25% did it regularly. Learners perform the act of reading probably to prepare for oral presentations and classroom discussion and debates.

Options	Students	
	N	%
Always	13	10.83
Often	17	14.17
Sometimes	29	24.17
Rarely	7	5.83
Never	52	43.33
Unstated	2	1.67
Total	120	100

Table 11: Reading Integration in OE Lessons

- **Writing**

Asking the learners how often their teacher gave them writing assignments, 70% indicated that they never or rarely fulfilled writing tasks in Oral Expression. 18.33% ‘sometimes’ did, and only 10.8% regularly performed writing activities. Hence, writing is not intentionally included in Oral Expression lessons.

Options	Students	
	N	%
Always	4	3.3
Often	9	7.5
Sometimes	22	18.33
Rarely	14	11.67
Never	70	58.33
Unstated	1	0.83
Total	120	100

Table 12: Speaking Integration in OE Lessons

- **Collaborative Learning**

Concerning the way the students were organized in the classroom to achieve the given tasks, the sample was split into three approximate parts. 36.67% represented the students who worked individually, 36.67% worked in pairs, and 40.83% studied in small groups. The results indicate that teachers do engage students in collaborative learning; working alone or with classmates is probably dictated by the nature of the activity at hand.

Options	Students	
	N	%
Individually	44	36.67
In pairs	44	36.67
In small groups	49	40.83
Unstated	5	4.17
Total	120	100

Table 13: Students’ Involvement in Collaborative Learning

➤ **Language**

Collaborative learning is important to improve learners' speaking skill, and talking only in English is so important for its enhancement. Asking the students which language they use while achieving activities with classmates, 46.67% responded that they speak only in English while 51.67% replied English mixed with Arabic and French. One student claimed that he/she uses Arabic. Since students are majoring in English, they should be encouraged to use it while speaking to develop their speaking abilities.

Options	Students	
	N	%
Only English	56	46.67
Arabic	1	0.83
English mixed with Arabic and French	62	51.67
Unstated	1	0.83
Total	120	100

Table 14: The Use of English in Students' Collaborative Activities

• **Materials**

Concerning the materials used by teachers in OE lessons, 44.17% stated that teachers relied on textbooks, 20% on literary texts, 8.33% on magazines and newspapers. Although teachers tend to use literary texts, other authentic materials such as newspapers and magazines are used to a minimum.

Options	Students	
	N	%
Textbooks	53	44.17
Audios/videos	10	8.33
Magazines and newspapers	10	8.33
Literary texts	24	20
Unstated	10	8.33
Total	168	100

Table 15: Material Used in the Teaching of Oral Expression

➤ **Integrating the Four Skills**

As far as the necessity of integrating the speaking skill with the other skills is concerned, the vast majority of the informants (90.83%) stated that learning speaking in combination with the other skills would be better while 9.17% stated the opposite. The learners admitted the necessity of integrating the four skills together since receptive skills (listening, and reading) are important to improve the productive ones (speaking and writing). Many students justified that the four skills are combined, and they cannot learn only one of them without the others since each skill completed the other. Others contended that learning speaking combined with the other skills, especially listening and reading is necessary to enrich their vocabulary. One student was in favour of integrating the four skills because it gives him/her more self-confidence.

Options	Students	
	N	%
Yes	109	90.83
No	11	9.17
Total	120	100

Table 16: Students' Attitudes towards Integrating the Four Skills

2.5 Analysis of Teachers Questionnaire

• Learners' Speaking Proficiency Level

Asking the teachers about the students' level of speaking proficiency, No one answered that students had an excellent or a good level in speaking. The vast majority (90.48%) replied that learners were of an average ability while 9.52% claimed that the students were poor speakers. Hence, Teachers should consider that and think of different methods, tasks, and materials they could use to improve learners' speaking abilities.

Options	Oral Expression Teachers	
	N	%
Excellent	0	0
Good	0	0
Average	19	90.48
Poor	2	9.52
Total	21	100

Table 17: Teachers' Assessment of Learner' Speaking Proficiency

• Learners' Enthusiasm to participate in OE

When the teachers were asked what made learners feel more enthusiastic about taking part in Oral Expression lessons, they confirmed with a majority of 90.48% that the selection of the topics to be dealt with attracted the learners' attention and made them motivated to participate. More than half of the sample (61.90%) attributed learners' enthusiasm to the teaching method. 47.62% of the teachers emphasized the role of the teacher in making the students more interested in the lessons, and 66.67% pointed to the classroom atmosphere as a motivating factor. Hence, teachers should choose care about the selection of the topics to be dealt with in OE to make the lessons more interesting for students.

Options	Teachers	
	N	%
The teacher	10	47.62
The teaching method	13	61.90
Classroom atmosphere	14	66.67
Selected topics	19	90.48
Total	21	100

Table 18: Teachers' Attitudes towards Learners' Enthusiasm for Participating in OE

• Learners' Speaking Difficulties

Asking the participants about the causes behind learners' speaking difficulties, 85.71% stated that 'fear of making mistakes' is the major factor that hampered students from speaking. 57.14% of the teachers stressed that the 'lack of vocabulary' is the major cause. 'Fear from classmates' reaction' was also mentioned by a considerable portion of the participants (61.90%), and 'Fear from teachers' remark' was declared by 42.86%. It could be asserted that students face difficulties while speaking not only because of their limited vocabulary repertoire, but also because of other psychological factors which were directly linked to fear of making mistakes and fear from their classmates' and teacher's reactions (same conclusion found in the students questionnaire). The informants added other reasons such as lack of information about the topic at hand, lack of interest, shyness and low self-confidence.

Options	Teachers	
	N	%
Lack of vocabulary	12	57.14
Fear of making mistakes	18	85.71
Fear from the teachers' remarks	9	42.86
Fear from the classmates' reaction	13	61.90
Total	21	/

Table 19: Teachers' Attitudes towards Learners' Speaking Difficulties

- **Significance of the Speaking skill**

Concerning the teachers' attitudes towards the importance of speaking proficiency for gaining a good level of proficiency in English, 80.96% of them agreed that speaking is significant for having a good overall proficiency in the language, but 14,29% could not decide. The teachers justified their answers stating that speaking is the principal means of communication which reflects the speakers' communicative and grammatical abilities. Furthermore, both "accuracy" and "fluency" are required to reach a good level of proficiency. One teacher stated learners' primary goal is to be competent speakers, that is why speaking is considered a prerequisite for gaining a good level of proficiency in English. Although none of the teachers denied the importance of speaking proficiency for having a good overall level of proficiency in English, some of them were hesitant and could not have a clear-cut point of view. They emphasized that some affective factors may prohibit good learners from being fluent speakers referring mainly to shyness, fear from teachers' reactions, lack of self-confidence and introversion.

Options	Teachers	
	N	%
Strongly Agree	8	38.1
Agree	9	42.86
Undecided	3	14.29
disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0
Unstated	1	4.76
Total	21	100

Table 20: Teachers' Attitudes towards the Importance of the Speaking Skill

- **Teaching Oral Expression**

When asked about the activity/ies they focus on in Oral Expressions lessons, the majority of the informants (71.43%) indicated that lessons are based on oral presentations, and two equal proportions 66.67% each declared that they focused on free debates and group discussions. Role-plays and vocabulary games were also adopted each by 42.86% of teachers; Henceforth, the activities mostly used by teachers were oral presentations, free debates, group discussions, and vocabulary games and role plays are used to a lesser extent. Some other activities were also mentioned by teachers, such as "speaking activities and games", "listening activities and discussions over oral or written input", "speaking games, and pronunciation activities, and "Simulations, listening, songs and lyrics".

Options	Teachers	
	N	%
Free debates	14	66.67
Group discussions	14	66.67
Oral presentations	15	71.43
Role plays	9	42.86
Vocabulary games	9	42.86
Total	21	/

Table 21: Activities involved in Oral Expression Lessons

- **Teaching the Speaking Skill**

The teachers were also asked how they teach the speaking skill. Although 19.05% confirmed that they teach it in isolation, the majority (80.95%) asserted that the speaking skill is taught in combination with the other skills (listening, speaking, and writing), so speaking is not taught via a segregated method.

Options	Teachers	
	N	%
In isolation	4	19.05
Integrated with the other skills	17	80.95
Total	21	100

Table 22: Teaching the Speaking Skill

- **Skills and Sub-skills Integration**

With regard to the combination of speaking to the other skills and sub-skills', all the teachers (100%) indicated that they teach speaking with listening. More than 70% focused on the integration of vocabulary and pronunciation in Oral Expression. Reading and grammar were also introduced by 52.38% and 38.1%, respectively. Writing was the skill that was the least included and was used by only 14.29% of the participants. Hence, the skills and sub-skills being integrated hand in hand with speaking are ordered as follows: listening, vocabulary, pronunciation, reading, grammar, and writing.

Options	Teachers	
	N	%
Listening	21	100
Reading	11	52.38
Writing	3	14.29
vocabulary	16	76.19
Pronunciation	15	71.43
Grammar	8	38.1
Total	21	100

Table 23: Skills and Sub-skills Integration

- **Listening**

Knowing how frequently learners are exposed to native language through audios and videos is among the queries of the current investigation since exposure to the native language is so important for promoting learners speaking skill.

- **Audios**

As far as listening to audios is concerned, 38.1% of the teachers stated that they 'often' or 'sometimes' provide students with materials to listen to, only 9.52% 'always' gave audios to their students, and 14.29% 'rarely did. This implies that audios are used by 76% of the teachers frequently or from time to time. Listening is included by teachers, yet it is not regularly adopted.

Options	Teachers	
	N	%
Always	2	9.52
Often	8	38.1
Sometimes	8	38.1
Rarely	3	14.29
Never	0	0
Total	21	100

Table 24: The Frequency of Listening to Audios

- **Videos**

As for watching videos, 38.1% of the informants stated that they ‘sometimes’ exposed students to videos while 28.57% ‘rarely’, and 4.76% ‘never’ did it. Only 4.76% selected ‘always’ and 23.81% opted for ‘often’. On the whole, about 62% of the teachers involved learners in watching videos every now and then probably because of the fact that they relied basically on group discussions, free debates, and oral presentations.

Options	Department Teachers	
	N	%
Always	1	4.76
Often	5	23.81
Sometimes	8	38.1
Rarely	6	28.57
Never	1	4.76
Total	21	100

Table 25: The Frequency of Watching Videos

Requesting the teachers about the activities they require learners to do after exposing them to audiovisual aids (audios or videos), we remarked that answering comprehension questions got the lion’ share with 71.42%. Filling the gaps and group discussion and debates received 33.33% each, vocabulary activities and pronunciation got equal portions too with 19.04%, oral summary got 23.80%, note taking 9.52%, and role play 4.76%. Henceforth, understanding audios and videos and discussing them are the primary objectives of most teachers. Vocabulary and pronunciation activities are relatively adopted while note taking activities are hardly included, and role plays are almost not used. Once again, listening and speaking are highly emphasized in Oral Expression lessons; however, activities requiring the integration of the other skills and sub-skills as vocabulary, activities, note taking, and role plays are not accentuated.

Answers	OE Teachers	
Answering Listening Comprehension questions	15	71.42
Oral Summary	5	23.80
Fill in the gaps	7	33.33
Vocabulary activities	4	19.04
Group discussion and debates	7	33.33
Pronunciation	4	19.04
Note taking	2	9.52
Role play	1	4.76

Table 26: The Frequency of Watching Videos

- **Reading**

With regard to the act of reading itself and/or the reading assignments being integrated by the teachers or given to students, Nearly half of the sample (47.62%) indicated that they ‘sometimes’ give students reading assignments. 9.52% did it ‘often’, 23.81% ‘never’ did, and no one ‘always’ did it. Once again reading is adopted in OE but to a limited extent.

Options	OE Teachers	
	N	%
Always	0	0
Often	2	9.52
Sometimes	10	47.62

Rarely	4	19.05
Never	5	23.81
Total	21	100

Table 27: the Frequency of Reading Integration

Although 19.04% of the sample did not reply to this question, two parts of the teachers represented by 47.61% and 23.80%, respectively, stated that reading assignments are principally meant for enriching learners' vocabulary stock or gathering information about the topics selected for oral presentations or class discussions. About 19% aimed at improving learners' pronunciation probably by asking them read out loud, while reading to work out role plays was not involved at all (0%).

Answers	Teachers	
Improving vocabulary stock	10	47.61
Gathering information about a topic	5	23.80
Improving pronunciation	4	19.04
Preparing role plays and simulations	0	0
Unstated	4	19.04

Table 28: Objectives of Reading Assignments

- **Writing**

52.38% of the teachers never gave their students writing assignments, and 23.38% did it 'rarely'. 19.05% chose 'sometimes while only 4.76% selected 'often' and no one opted for 'always'. In a nutshell, writing is rarely or almost not introduced by teachers in OE lessons (76.19%); this is mainly because teachers emphasized more on the listening and speaking skills as was indicated by 100% of the teachers.

Options	Teachers	
	N	%
Always	0	0
Often	1	4.76
Sometimes	4	19.05
Rarely	5	23.81
Never	11	52.38
Total	21	100

Table 29: Frequency of Writing Integration

➤ **Collaborative Learning**

Requesting the teachers how they organize students while achieving the required tasks, 71.43% indicated that they ask learners to work in pairs, 61.9% in small groups, and 33.33% individually. On the whole, collaborative learning does appear in OE lessons. Teachers may decide how to organize students to work depending on the task at hand.

Options	Teachers	
	N	%
Individually	7	33.33
In pairs	15	71.43
In small groups	13	61.9
Total	21	100

Table 30: Collaborative Learning Incorporation

➤ **Language**

More than half of Oral Expression teachers (52.38%) stated that learners used code-switching, i.e., they spoke in English mixed with French and Arabic while achieving the tasks given to them in pairs or in groups. 42.86% declared that students used only English, and 4.76% indicated that they conversed in Arabic.

Options	Teachers	
	N	%
English	9	42.86
Arabic	1	4.76
English mixed with Arabic An French	11	52.38
Total	21	100

Table 31: Language involved in Collaborative Learning

➤ **Materials**

The majority of the teachers (66.67%) relied on textbooks while newspapers and magazines, and literary texts are used to the same extent (19.05%). 38.09% included audios and videos in their lessons; however, The teachers relied heavily on textbooks while authentic materials are not stressed in Oral Expression. The more authentic materials are used, the more real situations they will confront, and the more authentic language students tend to learn. This in fact, will enhance their speaking skill and communicative competence. Thus, the use of authentic materials is highly recommended.

Options	Teachers	
	N	%
Textbooks	14	66.67
Audios and videos	8	38.09
Newspapers and magazines	4	19.05
Literary texts	4	19.05
Total	21	100

Table 32: Materials Being Used by Teachers' in OE Lessons

➤ **Importance of Integrated-skills Approach in promoting learners' speaking skill**

All the teachers (100%) of OE unanimously agreed that the integration of speaking with the other skills and sub-skills would better develop students' speaking proficiency than teaching it segregated from them. The teachers justified their responses stating that speaking is a process that primarily requires the mastery of the language components (grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation). Without developing the listening skill, speaking is not likely to be enhanced. In addition, Reading and writing enable students to build up their vocabulary, promote grammar and pronunciation. So, integrating such skills in the teaching of speaking seems to be a very sound decision.

Options	Teachers	
	N	%
Yes	21	100
No	0	0
Total	21	100

Table 33: Importance of ISA in Promoting Learners' Speaking Skill

3. Discussion of the findings

A thorough analysis of the students' and teachers' surveys brought about some outstanding conclusions that served the aims of the current study, and which are summarized as follows:

- About 80% of the sample included good, very good, and excellent students whose marks ranged from 13 to 20 in the Baccalaureate Exam.

- Although 63.34% of the learners overestimated their speaking abilities considering themselves good or excellent speakers, 90.48% teachers stated that students, in general are of an average speaking ability.
- Almost all the students like speaking English and believe in its importance placing it on top of the other skills (listening, reading, and writing). Furthermore, they confirmed that being a competent speaker is a prerequisite to gain a good level of proficiency in English, which was also supported by 80.96% of the teachers.
- Both teachers and learners agreed that fear of making mistakes and lack of vocabulary are the two principal causes behind students' speaking difficulties in addition to other affective factors such as fear from teacher's or classmates' reactions, shyness, and lack of confidence.
- Oral Expression lessons were based on group discussions, free debates, oral presentations. Pronunciation and vocabulary activities were more emphasized than grammar, reading writing, according to the teachers and learners.
- The majority of the students (82.5%) and the teachers (80.95%) confirmed that speaking skill is taught in combination with the other skills. Listening came in the first place, then vocabulary, and pronunciation; however, grammar, reading, and writing were not stressed. Hence, although speaking was not taught in a segregated manner, the integration of the four skills and sub-skills was not deliberate, and listening was 100% integrated as it spontaneously occurred in the class discussions and debates.
- The teachers incorporated listening in their lessons from time to time; this is probably due to the fact that they relied basically on group discussions, free debates, and oral presentations. This was confirmed by the students since 53.34% claimed that they rarely or never listened to audios while 75% rarely or never watched videos. Furthermore, understanding audios and videos and discussing them were the primary objectives of most teachers.
- Reading is adopted in OE but to a limited extent, and reading assignments are principally meant for enriching learners' vocabulary stock or gathering information about the topics selected for oral presentations or class discussions. Writing, on the other hand, is rarely or almost not incorporated by teachers in OE lessons.
- Collaborative learning did appear in OE lessons, and learners spoke either in English or English mixed with French and Arabic.
- Teachers relied heavily on textbooks while authentic materials are not stressed in Oral Expression.
- 90.81% of the learners and all the teachers (100%) of OE unanimously agreed that the integration of speaking with the other skills and sub-skills would better develop students' speaking proficiency than teaching it segregated from them.

In short, the results revealed that teachers of Oral Expression, at the department of English, Frères Mentouri Constantine 1 University, do, in fact, integrate the speaking skill with the other skills and sub-skills. However, listening proved to be the most combined skill with it. Furthermore, reading is relatively incorporated while writing is completely neglected. As far as the other sub-skills are concerned, it has been displayed that vocabulary and pronunciation activities are stressed at the expense of grammar, reading, and writing. As a result, the integration of skills and sub-skills is arbitrarily realised, and the guidelines of the integrated-skill approach are not appropriately followed.

Conclusion

It is beyond the shadow of doubt that the speaking skill is by far the most important skills; this is what teachers as well as learners, in the current study, believe in, especially after showing a great awareness that being a proficient speaker is one of the important criteria that determine EFL learners' overall proficiency in English. They further granted the speaking skill the first position on top of the other skills: listening, reading and writing. Learners had positive attitudes and even overestimated their level of speaking stating that they have a good, very good and even excellent speaking level which was contradicted by their teachers who confirmed that they rather had an average level. The students have showed their willingness to speak English although they confirmed that Lack of vocabulary and fear from making mistakes are two essential reasons that hinder them from participating in the classroom. This implies that teachers should consider the teaching method they should adopt to improve the learners' speaking skill. The obtained results revealed that teachers tend to focus more on the listening skill, but the latter is not included as such; it spontaneously occurs in the class as a natural reaction in the discussions, oral presentations, and free debates. The learners confirmed that listening to audios or watching videos takes place rarely while teachers stated that this happened sometimes or often probably because of the lack of equipment. Teachers could deal with this situation by relying on online learning as an option to send learners audios and videos to expose them to the native language which is necessary to learn a language and master it. Furthermore, vocabulary or pronunciation activities are arbitrarily included, let alone reading which is restrictively integrated and writing which is almost not adopted. In fact, integrating the macro skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing hand in hand with the other micro skills (grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary) would assist learners to enhance their speaking abilities, especially if this integration is deliberately planned for by following the guidelines of the integrated-skill approach. Role-play is a good instance of activities that integrate the four skills and engage the learners in collaborative learning. This activity was not regularly used in class. It could be a good option, particularly for introvert learners as it would help them interact with their classmates, which may help them learn from each other, regain their self-confidence, and minimize their stress and anxiety. Teachers also should be alert to the affective factors that the learners face from speaking; encouragement, praise, and positive feedback will assist shy students or those with low self-confidence to feel more comfortable to integrate with their classmates.

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