



Examining the Models of Skills Integration to Foster Beninese EFL Beginners' Communicative Performance

Amadou SALAMI^{1*}; Mouhandou Issa Gbadebo Olouwafemi NONVIDE¹ & Kevin Agossa DAHEOU²

¹Department of English, Faculty of Letters, Languages, Arts and Communications (FLLAC), University of Abomey-Calavi, Benin Republic

²PhD Candidate, Pluridisciplinary Doctoral School, University of Abomey-Calavi, Benin Republic

ABSTRACT

This study aims at examining the models of skills integration to foster EFL beginners' communicative performance. To achieve this goal, it shows the benefits of the implementation of integrated-skill approach on EFL students' communicative competence during classroom activity. The methodology used is quantitative and qualitative. It consists in collected information from teachers and learners through the means of classroom observation, interviews and questionnaires distributed to ten (10) English teachers and one hundred fifteen (115) students of CEG de l'Unité. The results show that integration of the models of skills motivates the students to learn English and improve their communicative competence.

Keywords: *Integration, communicative performance, models of skills, EFL learners, foster.*

Citation: Amadou SALAMI; Issa NONVIDE; Kevin Agossa DAHEOU (2022). Examining The Models of Skills Integration To Foster Beninese Efl Beginners' Communicative Performance. *International Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Studies*, 4(3), 35-44.

INTRODUCTION

English language learning for long has been restricted to the mastery of the four basic skills, sorted in receptive and productive skills. Therefore, EFL teaching learning and evaluation processes mainly focus on building learners' academic proficiency over relevant communicative language skills. Clearly, after years of such mechanical teaching learning both EFL teachers and learners share frustrating experience resulting in merely poor achievement. Obviously, a real teaching learning process must integrate the language skills in natural and motivating instructions.

Teaching language is a comprehensive and complex process so in order to make this process effective and simple, skills integration is an advisable way of teaching language. The learners in English beginners' classes need to the models of the skills to perform adequately the communicative capacity to express themselves. But, any of the four English language skills is frequently done in isolation while explaining of the course. The question is to show how the integration of skills language affects the learners' communicative performance in EFL classes. Knowing integrating language skills helps language learners to develop their ability in using two or more of the four skills within real context and also in their real life. The difficulty to communicate easily English is caused by the lack of adequate methodologies used to apply the models of skills in conjunction. Therefore, this problem causes the learners' inability to use English language inside and outside the classroom.

The main purpose of this study is to identify effectively the integration of the four skills of the English language during a lesson in EFL beginner's classes. The specific purposes of this study are:

- To describe the methodologies used in the teaching of receptive and productive skills
- To define and to show the importance of the models of skills integration
- To compare the students' performance according to the integrated-skill approach during lessons observation
- To make suggestions based on data

This study has answered these research questions:

- What is the importance of skills' models integration for students' communicative competence?
- What are the techniques used to teach productive and receptive skills?
- What could be the impact of the implementation of the integrated-skills approach on EFL students' communicative performance during classroom activity?

1. Methodology of the Study

This study is based on CEG de l'Unité in Ouémé department just to know importance of the integration of the models of skills; the techniques used to teach productive and receptive skills and the impact of the implementation of integrated-skills approach on EFL students' communicative performance during classroom activity. Ten (10) questionnaires have been distributed to EFL teachers and one hundred fifteen (115) questionnaires to learners.

The sets of teachers' questionnaire and learners' questionnaire are put in the annex of this study. Furthermore, interviews and class observation have also been conducted.

2. Presentation and Discussion of the Results

In this part, the quantitative and qualitative data have been displayed.

2.1 Presentation of the findings

The presentation and analysis of the findings are related to EFL teachers, and EFL learners.

2.1.1 Results from Students' Questionnaire

2.1.1.1 Learner's Enthusiasm to English Language

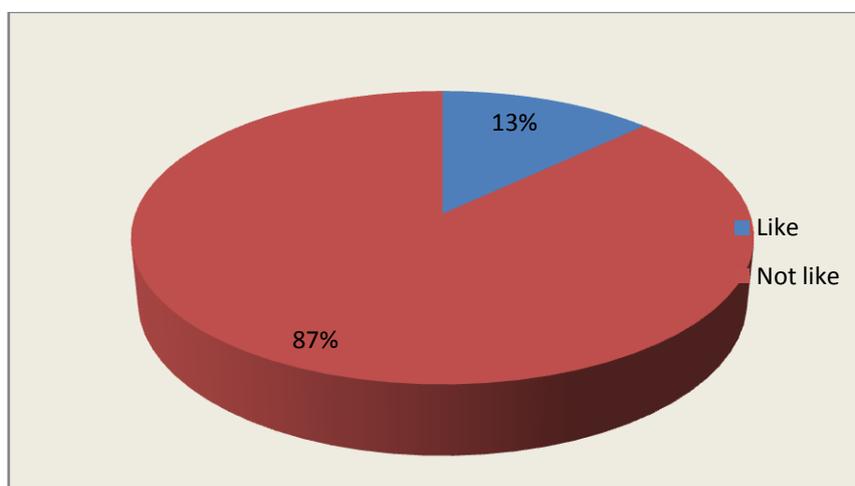


Figure 1: Learners' Enthusiasm to English Language

The results of figure 1 show that eighty-seven percent (87%) of the learners are not enthusiastic to English language. Only thirteen percent (13%) of them like it. So, the students are not interested in English language.

2.1.1.2 Learners' Appreciation on English Class

Table 1: Learners' Appreciation on English Class

Appreciation	Quantity	Frequency (%)
Extremely easy	5	4
Somewhat easy	10	9
Neutral	30	26
Somewhat difficult	20	17
Extremely difficult	50	44
Total	115	100

The results of table 1 show that sixty-one percent (61%) of the students consider English class as difficult; thirteen percent (13%) of them find it easy and the twenty-six percent (26%) remaining are neutral. Then, the majority of the students do not appreciate the English class.

4.1.1.1. The Place of Using English Language of the Students

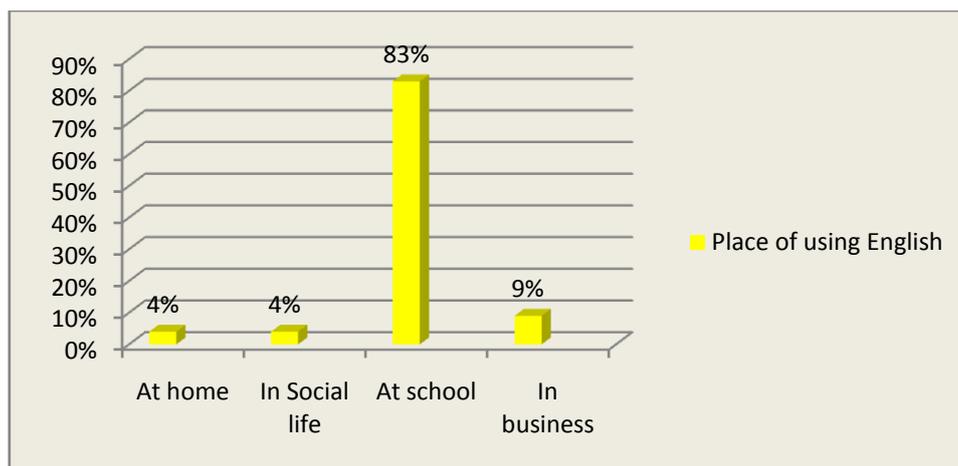


Figure 2: Place of Using English Language of the Students

In figure 2, it is noticeable that four percent (4%) of the students speak English at home; four percent (4%) of them speak it in social life; nine percent (9%) of them use it in business whereas the majority of them which is eighty-three percent (83%) only use English at school. It means that students do not try to speak English outside class.

2.1.1.2 The Kind of English Class which is liked by Students

Table 2: The Kind of English Class which is liked by Students

	Quantity	Frequency (%)
Teacher centered	20	17
Student centered	95	83
Total	115	100

In table 2, it is noticeable that seventeen percent (17%) of the students prefer when the English class is teacher centered whereas eighty-three percent (83%) of them prefer the student centered one.

2.1.1.3 Students' Motivation Degree

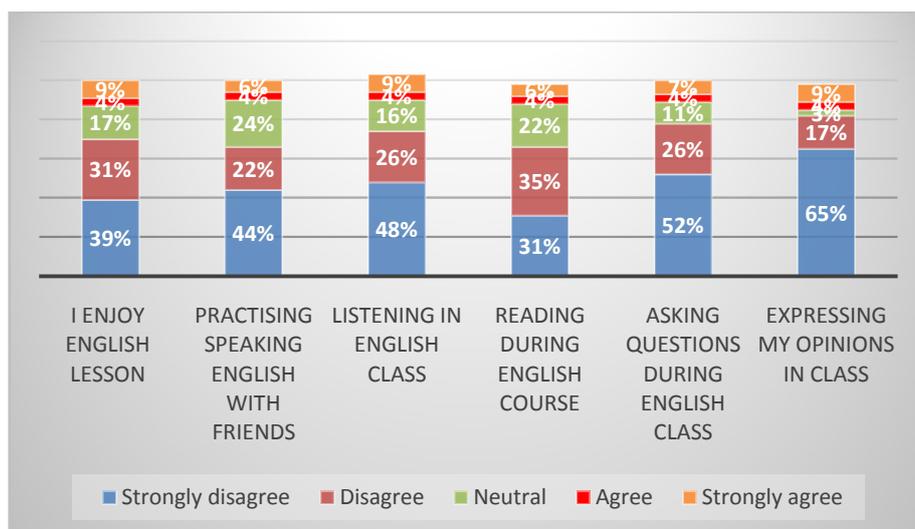


Figure 3: Students' Motivation Degree

The results of the figure 3 show that in all motivations, the major part of the students are disagreeing either seventy percent (70%) of them for enjoyment of the English lesson; sixty-six percent (66%) of them for practicing speaking English with friends; seventy-four percent (74%) for listening in English class; sixty-six percent (66%) for reading during English course; seventy-eight percent (78%) for asking the questions during English class; eighty-two percent (82%) for expressing your opinions in class. So, the students are not motivated to English lesson.

2.1.2. Results from Teachers' Questionnaire

2.1.2.1. Teachers' Qualification

Table 3: Teachers' Qualification

Qualification	Quantity	Frequency (%)
Licence	3	30
BAPES	2	20
Maîtrise	3	30
CAPES	2	20
Total	10	100

The results in table 3 show that thirty percent (30%) of the teachers have a License; twenty percent (20%) of them have BAPES; thirty percent (30%) of them have Maîtrise and twenty percent (20%) have CAPES. This means that most of the teachers are qualified to do the job as it must be.

2.1.2.2 Teachers' Length Service

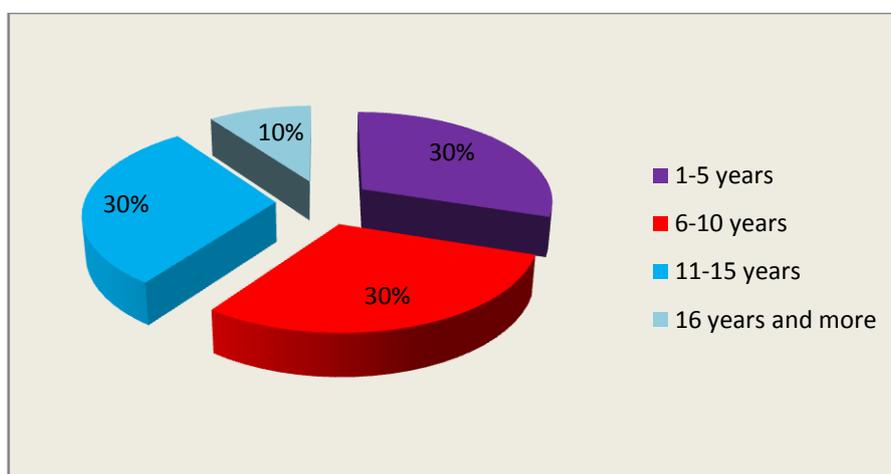


Figure 4: Teachers' Length Service

In figure 4, it is noticeable that only thirty percent (30%) of the teachers have at most five years of professional experience whereas the major part of them (70%) have more than five years length. It means that the teachers are sufficiently practiced to teach well the students.

2.1.2.3 Reasons for Students to learn English Language

Table 4: Reasons for the Students to learn English

The reasons	Effective	Frequency in %
As a matter of study	4	40
For communication	6	60
Total	10	100

In table 4, it is noticeable that forty percent (40%) of the teachers find that their students learn English as a matter of study and sixty percent (60%) of them find that students learn English for communication. It means that teachers lead their students to use English as a communication way.

2.1.2.4 The Strategies to expose Students to Authentic Communication

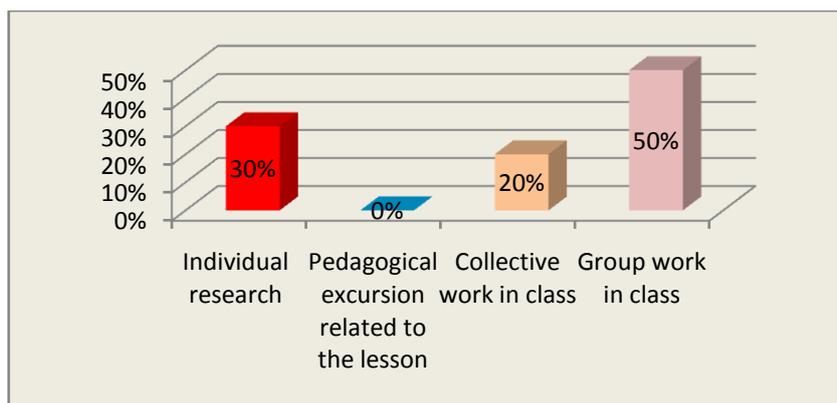


Figure 5: Strategies to expose Students to Authentic Communication

The results of figure 5 show that thirty percent (30%) of teachers use individual research as strategy to expose students to authentic communication; none of them use pedagogical excursion; twenty percent (20%) of them use collective work in class and fifty percent (50%) of the teachers use group work in class. This means that the major part of teachers find that the right way for students to experiment authentic communication is to interact in class.

2.1.2.5 The Teachers have an Idea on Integration of the Models of Skills

Table 5: Idea on Integration of the Models of Skills

Position	Effective	Frequency in %
Yes	10	100
No	0	0

The table 5 shows that all of the teachers (100%) have an idea on Integration of the Models of Skills.

2.1.2.6 The Difficulties met by Teachers in Integration of the Models of Skills

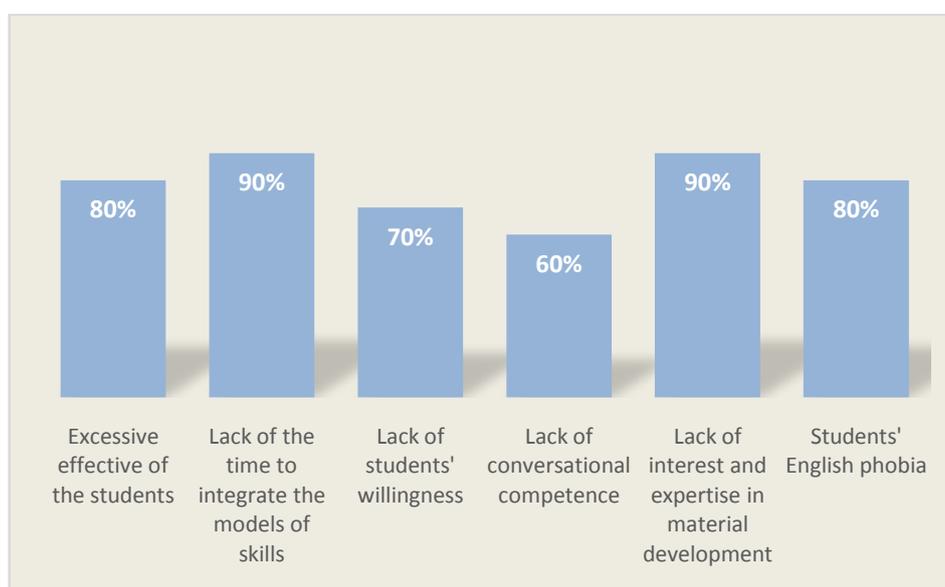


Figure6: Difficulties met by Teachers in Integration of the Models of Skills

In figure 6, it is noticeable that all of the teachers encounter different types of difficulties in their work.

2.2 Results from Interviews

According to the interviewed teachers, the major challenge they encounter is due to low communicative competence of learners. This is due to the fact that students do not participate at integrated-skills language in class and do not evaluate on their oral performance in classroom and use of the language. Most of the interviewed teachers define the integration of the skills language as the linking of the four skills of language learning: reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Secondly, most of the interviewed teachers know that the integration of four skills language is very important to students' communicative performance. They also mention that the problem of fostering students' communicative performance is always raised that is why they must teach them language so as they will be able to speak it correctly, and it will be good to give some strategies and techniques so as to solve this problem.

2.3 Results from Classroom Observation

At this level, some irregularities have been noticed toward students' behaviour. Some students are able to write correctly a sentence but they are unable to use correctly the same sentence in a conversation, it has also been noticed that most of the students has the difficulty to speak fluently English, another dichotomy is students with good marks in English but unable to utter a single word in the language. It has also been observe that students have been exposed to little real spoken language interaction other than instruction-focused teacher talk. Another irregularity is that sometimes, the students seem to understand the English course and they cannot pronounce one sentence in English. The second part of my observation deals with the willingness of students who do not like the English course so they do not adapt the English language; there is a significant gap between their level of integration of language skills and the level of students who just learn English in classroom without the integration of models of skills. Extreme they have some communications activities, they do not rule well the criticism, and do not have profit of their daily speaking among themselves. Talking about the teacher, it has been found that the courses and even the examinations do not emphasize on the oral aspect of the language.

2.4 Discussion of Findings

2.4.1 Importance of Skills' Models Integration for Students' Communicative Competence

Through the findings of learners' results, I notice that the major part of the students do not enjoy the English class either eighty-seven percent (87%) and do not motivate to English. According to [1], the importance of using this Approach lies on the fact that, when facing a real communicative situation, *“more than one skill is used to communicate and integrated skill approach provides opportunities to develop these skills at the same time.”* Hungyo & Kijai [1] state that one of the advantages of using this approach is that teachers *“can build the lesson plan around a theme or a topic based on the interest of learners and also on topics that are relevant to them,”* which contributes to make lessons more dynamic and engaging for learners, who participate in different kinds of activities and interaction. They also state that *“According to Ommen [2], language tasks involve more than one skill and so segregated skill approach never quite completes a lesson.”* According to Salami & Dahéou [3], one of the most relevant advantages of using the Integrated-skill Approach is that it *“exposes English language learners to authentic language and challenges them to interact naturally in the language.”* They also comment that exposing students to communicative situations helps them to get an idea of the *“richness and complexity of the English language.* In addition, Barbuzza et al. [4] mentions that in recent decades the experts *“have realized that by emphasizing what learners can do with the language, rather than using the forms of language, EFL instructors can incorporate any or all of the language skills that are relevant into the classroom arena.”*

2.4.2 Techniques used to teach Productive and Receptive Skills

Before to know techniques, according to the results of finding of the learners, I notice that eighty-three percent (83%) of the students prefer the student centered English class. Hungyo & Kijai [1] state that the *“activities used by teachers in the integrated approach are real-life activities and situations and thus create an interactive learning environment.”* In other words, when using the Integrated-skill Approach, teachers face their students with communicative situations that have to as real as possible so that students realize the importance of learning the foreign language. Salami [5] states that there are two types of integrated-skill instruction which are Content-Based Language Instruction and Task-Based Instruction: In Content-Based Instruction, students practice all the language skills in a highly integrated, communicative fashion while learning contents such as science, mathematics, and social studies. Content-based Language Instruction is valuable at all levels of proficiency, but the nature of the content might differ by proficiency level. For beginners, the content often involves basic social and interpersonal communication skills, but past the beginning level, the content can become increasingly academic and complex.

In Task-Based Instruction, students' basic pair work and group work are often used to increase student interaction and collaboration. For instance, students work together to write and edit a class newspaper, develop a television commercial, enact scenes from a play, or take part in other joint tasks. More structured cooperative learning formats can also be used in task-based instruction. Task-based instruction is relevant to all levels of language proficiency, but the nature of the task varies from one level to the other. According to Harmer [6], productive work should not always be imitative. Students are greatly helped by being exposed to examples of writing and speaking which show certain conventions for them to draw upon. Harmer [6] also states that skill integration is a major factor in lesson planning. Weaving threads of different skills and topics is a major art of teachers who plan for a sequence of lessons. Skill integration also happens when students are involved in project work, which may well involve researching (through reading or listening), speaking (e. g. in discussions or when giving a presentation) and writing (e.g submitting a report).

2.4.3 Impact of the Implementation of the Integrated-Skills Approach on EFL Students' Communicative Performance during Classroom Activity

Through this study, it has been remarked that all teachers either one-hundred (100) have an idea on integration of the models of skills or they know the importance of one on students' performance. These teachers suggest the different activities to improve the communicative performance which can be the pedagogical excursion, the group work. So, the advantages of this approach on students' communicative performance in EFL classrooms are:

- Helps learners carry over their skills and declarative knowledge from one skill to another which facilitates and simplifies the improvement of the other skills.
- Creates a dynamic and exciting classroom environment
- Enables learners to have a more realistic access to authentic language learning, whereas a segregated approach does not offer a meaningful understanding of language or a motivating style to learning a foreign language
- Leads to focus on realistic language and can therefore lead to the students' all-round development of communicative competence in English
- Was enthusiastically accepted by students and most of them had a positive attitude toward this approach
- Leads to better comprehension of material by students

Having taken the advantages of the integrated skills approach into account, the researchers believe that this approach can alleviate the problem of communicative incompetence among EFL learners.

3. Suggestions

This section intends to draw the attention of both authorities and teachers to some solutions that can help the teaching/ learning of EFL classes in Benin. It deals with recommendations and suggestions to EFL teachers and students.

3.1 Suggestions to Teachers

Teachers who integrate the models of the skills language move beyond teaching structural rules of the target language, and create opportunities for learners to use the target language in a meaningful way. The first role of teachers is to facilitate the communication process between all participants in the classroom, and between these participants and the various activities and texts. The second role is to act as an independent participant within the learning-teaching group. The teacher must be a researcher to contribute in terms of appropriate knowledge and abilities, actual and observed experience of the nature of learning and organizational capacities. He/she should know how to manage or handle his/her learners, by setting up a favorable learning environment and discipline first at the beginning of the school year. The latter of course, is a key determinant in classroom management. The teachers should provide authentic materials for exposure to language.

So, everything the EFL teachers does, has implications for classroom management, including creating of setting, decorating the room, arranging the chairs; speaking to children and handling their responses, developing rules and communicating those rules to the learners.

3.2 Suggestions to students

Learners have important role to play in achieving success. Most of times, learners do not come to the EFL classroom with their own belief, except some very few who are willing to learn English just to communicate with peers. In this context, Harmer [6] proposed the roles of students with integration of skills language classroom are supposed to be "those *negotiators for meaning, communicators, discoverers, and contributors of knowledge and information*" Learners should take their EFL teachers as a model and a resource person and submit him/her any concerns related to the English language. Learners should learn their EFL courses, do their home works. The students should respect their teachers; follow strictly instructions given by their teachers and listen carefully when the teacher is talking.

CONCLUSION

The communicative approach has become the mainstream in language teaching. It has been noticed that students are very positive recipients of knowledge. This study aims at exploring the integration of the models of skills language to foster the communicative performance of the students. This study also tends not only to reveal the importance of the models of skills integration but also to know the different aspects of integrated-skills language on communicative performance of the students. This study will help the EFL teachers who will favor the amelioration of communicative competence of the students by integration of the models of skills.

In addition, the models of skills integration in English class have many advantages and benefits on learners' communicative competence. First, grammar is one of the most important factors in language learning and teaching which is ignored in this approach. This caused the damage of students' grammar performance while speaking English in real life situation. To achieve this goal, CEG de l'Unité in Ouémé region has been chosen as sample. Indeed, questionnaires

have been addressed to ten (10) teachers and one hundred fifteen (115) students selected from this school. Interview and classroom observation have also been conducted to know if the data collected from the investigations are valid.

All these data and the analysis of each of them help me to answer all my research questions. Based on the findings, the integration of the models of skills is an approach which develops the learners' performance in listening comprehension, speaking, reading, writing and learning of English language. In the same line, teachers recognize the integration of skills' models language as a technique that creates interaction between students and teachers, greatly improves the students' interest in language learning and help them to improve their level in English speaking.

Finally, my work has dealt my suggestions to EFL teachers and learners. Then, to solve the speaking problem to which students is exposed, teachers should integrate the skills language to those they used. Teaching approach should also be evaluated regularly so as to see the drawbacks of the approach on learners' performance. Teachers must regularly evaluate their students' speaking skill; changes the classroom environment teaches.

REFERENCES

1. Hungyo, R. and Kijai, H. (2008). *Task-based Language Teaching and Learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2. Ommen, J. (2021). *A Framework for Task-Based Learning*. Longman.
3. Salami, A. and Daheou, A. K. (2019). Developing Communicative Competence in Beninese EFL Upper Sixth Level Students. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning (INJO.TEL)*. December 2019. Vol.1, N°15. pp. 137-172.
4. Barbuzza, D. et al. (2008). *Teaching Oral English*. New York: Longman.
5. Salami, A. (2021). Scrutinising the University EFL Students' Phobia of Errors Making in Speaking: A Case Study of Adjarra University Center. *Editions Francophones Universitaires d'Afrique (EFUA)*. Juillet 2021. Vol.1, N°1. pp.11-32.
6. Harmer, J. (2007). *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. London: Longman Group UK. Limited.

Questionnaires addressed to EFL learners

1. Do you like English?
 Yes No
2. How do you find the English course at school?
 Extremely easy
 Somewhat easy
 Neutral
 Somewhat difficult
 Extremely difficult
3. Where do you use English?
 At home
 In social life
 At School
 In business
4. What kind of English class do you like?
 Teacher centered
 Students centered

Students' motivations	1	2	3	4	5
I enjoy English Lesson					
I speak English with my friends to practice					
I listen to the teachers in class					
I read the text during English course					
I use English to ask questions during English class					
I express my opinions during English course					

Questionnaires addressed to EFL teachers

1. What is your professional qualification?

Licence Maitrise

BAPES CAPES

2. Since when have you been teaching English?

1-5 years 6-10 years 11-15years

16years and more

3. According to you, why do your students learn English?

As a matter of study

For communication

4. How do you expose the students to authentic communication?

Individual research related to the lesson planning

Pedagogical excursion related to the lesson planning

Collective work in class

Group work in class

5. Do you have an idea about the models of skills integration?

Yes No

6. What are the activities you use to integrate the models of skills?

.....

7. What are the difficulties you face in integration of the models of skills?

1. The excessive effective of students
2. The lack of time to integrate the models of skills
3. The lack of students' willingness
4. The lack of the conversational competence
5. Lack of interest and expertise in material development
6. Students' English phobia

8. What are your suggestions to improve learner's performance using integration model?

.....

Interview Schedule

1. What are the challenges encountered while teaching English the way it is done now (without integration of the models of skills)?
Thoughts:
2. What is Integration of models of skills?
Thoughts:
3. According to you, what are the advantages of the models of skills integration?
Thoughts:

Classroom Observation Checklist

- School's Name.....
- Form.....
- Class Size.....
- Teacher's performance.....
-
- The Atmosphere in the Class.....
- Kinds of activities performed
- The duration of the lesson.....
- The learners' reactions.....