

**REVUE INTERNATIONALE DE LITTERATURE
ET DE LINGUISTIQUE APPLIQUEES (RILLA)**



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**Sous la direction du :
Pr Taofiki KOUMAKPAÏ &
Pr Cyriaque C. S. AHODEKON**



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LIGNE EDITORIALE ET DOMAINES DE RECHERCHE

1. LIGNE EDITORIALE

La Revue Internationale de Littérature et de Linguistique Appliquée (RILLA) est une revue scientifique spécialisée en lettres et langues. Les articles que nous publions sur les lettres et langues peuvent être écrits en français, en anglais, en allemand, en espagnol et en yoruba. Ces articles sont reçus au secrétariat du comité de rédaction de la revue et envoyés en évaluation. Ceux qui ont reçu des avis favorables sont sélectionnés pour une réévaluation par les membres du comité scientifique en raison de leur originalité, des intérêts qu'ils présentent aux plans africain et international et de leur rigueur scientifique. Après les travaux préliminaires du secrétariat, le spécimen du numéro à publier est envoyé au comité scientifique de lecture pour des corrections éventuelles et la vérification de la conformité des articles aux normes de publication de la revue.

Notons que les articles que notre revue publie doivent respecter les normes éditoriales suivantes :

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Volume : 18 à 20 pages ; interligne : 1,5 ; pas d'écriture (taille) : 12 ; police : Time New Roman.

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- Un TITRE en caractère d'imprimerie et en gras. Le titre ne doit pas être trop long ;
- Un Résumé fait dans la langue de publication (50 à 200 mots maximum') ;
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1. Pour le titre de la première section

1.1. Pour le titre de la première sous-section

1.2. Pour le titre de la deuxième sous-section de la première section etc.

➤ Pour le **Titre** de la deuxième section

2. Pour le titre de la deuxième section

2.1. Pour le titre de la première sous-section de la deuxième section

2.2. Pour le titre de la deuxième sous-section de la deuxième section etc.

➤ **Conclusion**

Elle doit être brève et insister sur l'originalité des résultats de la recherche

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Les sources consultées et / ou citées doivent figurer dans une rubrique, en fin de texte, intitulé :

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La Revue Internationale de Littérature et de Linguistique Appliquée (RILLA), publiée par l'Institut Universitaire Panafricain (IUP), est une revue ouverte aux chercheurs des institutions universitaires de recherche et enseignants-chercheurs des universités, instituts universitaires, centres universitaires et grandes écoles.

L'objectif du lancement de cette revue dont nous sommes à la dixième publication est de permettre aux collègues chercheurs et enseignants-chercheurs d'avoir une tribune pour faire connaître leurs travaux de recherche.

Le comité scientifique de lecture de la RILLA est présidé par le Pr Akanni Mamoud IGUE. Ce comité compte sept membres qui sont tous des Professeurs Titulaires. Aussi voudrions-nous informer les lecteurs de la RILLA, qu'elle devient multilingue avec des articles rédigés aussi bien en français, en anglais, en allemand, en espagnol qu'en yoruba.

Pr Taofiki KOUMAKPAÏ

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**THE PLACE OF DISCUSSION AND
CONVERSATION IN EFL LEARNERS’
INTERACTIVE SPEAKING SKILLS IN SOME
SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF BENIN**

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ABSTRACT

The current article attempts not only to inquire about English speaking skills, but also to analyse to what extent the adequate use of discussion or conversation can trigger many effective qualities and competences that can help EFL learners to learn and acquire this language in a successful way. It highlights the trustworthy prominence classroom interaction has as an educational strategy to improve learning and how it creates opportunities for the classroom community to develop knowledge and skills (Pourhossein, 2014). The purpose of this article is consequently to encourage EFL teachers in their

permanent struggle for making their learners fluent speakers, and also interactive users of the English language.

The results from the different instruments used during my investigations have revealed that effective interaction and discussion between EFL learners encourage them to speak the English language in class and in their daily life. My suggestion towards EFL teachers is to do their best to encourage learners in appropriate use of English discussion and conversation.

Key words: to trigger good qualities; interaction; oral communication; role play.

RESUME

Le présent article essaye de se renseigner non seulement sur les compétences de l'anglais parlé, mais aussi d'analyser à quel point l'usage adéquat de la discussion ou conversation peut déclencher plusieurs qualités et compétences effectives en faveur de l'apprentissage et de l'acquisition de la langue anglaise par les apprenants de l'anglais, langue étrangère avec succès. Il met en évidence l'importance indubitable de

l'interaction des apprenants en tant que stratégie de l'éducation en vue d'améliorer l'apprentissage et comment cela crée des opportunités aux apprenants et enseignants pour développer le savoir et des compétences, selon Pourhossein (2014). L'objectif de cet article est par conséquent d'encourager les enseignants de l'anglais, langue étrangère dans leur lutte permanente et d'amener leurs apprenants à s'exprimer aisément et à être aussi des utilisateurs interactifs de la langue anglaise.

Les résultats obtenus à partir des instruments utilisés au cours de mes investigations ont révélé que l'interaction et la discussion effectives entre ces apprenants de l'anglais, langue étrangère, les encouragent à utiliser cette langue en classe et dans leur vie quotidienne. Ma suggestion à l'endroit des enseignants de l'anglais est d'encourager leurs apprenants à l'usage approprié de la discussion et de la conversation en anglais.

Mots clés: Déclencher, bonnes qualités; interaction; communication orale; jeu de rôle.

INTRODUCTION

Interactive oral communication is so necessary for EFL learners in such a way that it really shows how effectively they master the language through its efficient use. Interaction is worth triggering many effective qualities and competences that will in their turn help EFL learners to learn and acquire this language in a successful way.

The rationale for the choice of this topic is that in order for oral communication to really take place, it needs to be perceptible in many ways. Pourhossein (2014) states that classroom interaction is essential and useful as an educational strategy to improve learning because it creates opportunities for the classroom community to develop knowledge and skills. Before Pourhossein, Khadidja (2010) expresses that the concept of classroom interaction performs a vital role in the process of second language learning because many classroom activities which occur between teachers and learners and among learners, will finally shape individual learners' improvement. If interaction performs a vital role in the process of second

language learning, it will perform a vital role in the process of foreign language learning as well.

EFL learning has dwelt a striking and never-ending difficulty to several learners of the English language in Africa and especially in Beninese schools so far and with hardly any successful attempt of eradication due to these learners' lack of effective collaboration and the bad living conditions of the populations. The main purpose of the current article is not only to encourage EFL teachers in permanent struggle for making their learners fluent speakers but also interactive users of the English language, and the true implication of this is that these learners will be eager to practise the English language in class and in their daily life whenever interaction is required.

My research questions are multidimensional and will serve as signposts to the study.

1. How are discussion and conversation interrelated?
2. To what extent can they foster English oral communication skills interactively?

1. CRITICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Using Discussion or Conversation

The mastery of language is related to oral communication. English is very interesting and needs to be spoken fluently. Discussion and conversation are worth encouraging this language learning. I am going to comment on the place of discussion, conversation and role play in the development of English speaking skills. About Long's (1996) Interaction Hypothesis where he claims that to achieve speaking fluency in the foreign language a learner needs adequate face -to-face interaction, I notice that the latter plays a fundamental role in language teaching/learning, and language acquisition process. This interaction hypothesis has a lot of advantages for EFL learners because they will gain the courage to face their personal realities and struggle against fear, shyness and many other obstacles to language acquisition. Interaction will make language learner smart and they will usually succeed in solving their own problems and also help others to find appropriate solutions to theirs.

Ellis (1997), notes that in the interaction the input can be more complicated rather than encouraging. According to

Ellis, it can happen if speakers use lengthy summarization or give difficult meaning of a word without understanding, and he concludes by saying that in language acquisition the role of interaction is complex. Ellis may be right to state that speakers may use lengthy summarisation or give difficult meaning of a word, I do agree but, the simple fact of the matter is that, even if they give difficult meaning of a word without understanding, they will be corrected, without being frustrated, because language learners should neither be ashamed nor afraid and it is essential to get to know that mistakes have a positive effect in the process of learning.

Rivers (1987), states that learners' language store can be increased by using the authentic linguistic material or students can participate in discussions, joint problem-solving tasks, or dialogue journals through interaction. It is important that EFL learners participate in discussions whenever these discussions really take place provided that the teacher sets up discussion opportunities in his or her classroom so as to create effective interaction. As effective interaction occurs in the learning setting, EFL learners will be able to use the English language successfully if the

teacher really takes into account the audience and contextualises the teaching and learning process. Byrne (1986, 67), states that "by discussion is meant by any exchange of ideas and opinions either a basis, with you (teacher) the mediator and to some extent as the participator or within the context of group with the students talking among them". Consequently, while learners are discussing and exchanging ideas among themselves, they can express themselves freely basing on the main topic of the exchange. For this interaction to take place, the teacher needs to play his or her role of mediator and participator.

In addition, Miss Kaddour Khaoula Imane (2015-2016, 16), states: "In a language classroom, discussion is the most common speaking activity. It is, then, one form of communicative interaction activities. In general, it is the activity in which students talk about something and tell each other their opinions or ideas." Consequently, it is obvious and logical to say that the place of discussion in a language class is undeniable, and in Beninese EFL learning / teaching context, a lot of supplementary efforts need to be made by EFL teachers. Moreover, It is an

exchange of views for the sake of “the communication and of the communicative continuum” (Harmer, 2001, p. 273).

Kidsvatter (1996: 242), states that a small group discussion in dividing the large classroom into small groups of students to achieve specific objectives, permits students to assume more responsibility for their own learning. This strategy will certainly be profitable for Beninese EFL learners and teachers especially because the number of the learners is extremely considerable in most Beninese classes and exploiting this small group discussion after dividing these large classes, will have learners gain a lot and EFL learning and teaching will be more and more successful. In the same sense, Littlewood (1999), adds that classroom discussion makes learners more able and appropriate to use EFL as well as to talk about their experiences. When EFL learners are given opportunities to talk about their experiences, true discussion will occur inside the classroom and this will still go on outside the classroom.

Furthermore, most educators agree that “the best discussions in class are those that arise spontaneously, either because of something personal that learners report

or because of a topic” (Thornbury, 2005. 102). The particularity with Thornbury is the presence of spontaneity in discussion and to my mind this spontaneity is not enough to create interaction and true oral communication. Besides spontaneity, the speakers must encode and decode the contents of the messages they are transmitting to each other in a comprehensible way. According to Harmer (2001), “one of the best ways of encouraging discussion is to provide activities which force students to reach a decision or a consensus” (p. 273). For such activities to force students to reach a decision or a consensus, they should be quite interesting and well-elaborated to captivate learners’ attention. Furthermore, “it can provide some enjoyable and productive speaking in language classroom” (Ibid, 1998, p. 46). All these reasons justify the great number of advantages Beninese EFL learners and teachers can get from the English language discussion. Revell (1979), exposes below some of the advantages of discussion:

Participants are engaged in different talks where they learn to analyze appropriately on the spur of the moment and explain their own ideas and utterances. There is a cooperation of information which reinforces the language

development. Learners use their own knowledge of language into communicative use. There is always a scope for additional communicative use of discussion sessions especially during reports.

If language learners are able to analyse their own ideas and utterances freely in the right way, they can make adequate decisions at the appropriate moment.

2.2 Role play

Role play is to be rated due to its numerous profits which are recognised by many researchers. According to Ur (1984), “role play [...] is used to refer to all of activities where learners imagine themselves in situation outside the classroom [...], sometimes playing the role of someone themselves, and using the language appropriate to this new context” (p. 131). In my opinion, the EFL learners who will imagine themselves in situation outside the classroom will use effectively the English language outside the classroom, which is very important for Beninese learners of English. In this logic, learners pretend they live in various social situations and have various roles which can be either “realistic” or “fantasy” short scenes (Klippel, 1988, 121).

In this activity, students, be they accurate or not, fluent or not, are expected to use all their knowledge about the English language in contexts that look like real settings. What is favourable in this context of the English language learning is that they will find themselves really wearing the coats of other people even if these people are imaginary, and play these people's roles if they want or not. According to Revell (1979), role play is: "an individual's spontaneous behaviour reacting to others in a hypothetical situation." There are two types of role playing: role cards and cue cards. In the former, the teacher shows the students their roles to act freely without giving them any speech or orders on how to act or speak, whereas in the latter students should be restricted to what was prepared from the teacher. Both role cards and cue cards are very useful in such a way that each of them play an important role.

For example role cards can prepare learners to act freely and express themselves freely in the English language. This role playing is very helpful to learners so as to master English successfully. Cue cards can also help EFL learners even if this role playing is mechanical. It will

help them acquire the language and practise it easily and quickly whenever it is used in the right way. "Role play has become increasingly common in management courses "(Rocvers, 2007, p. 199). If role play has become increasingly common in management courses, a good ambiance and atmosphere will be created in the classroom and good students will be given the opportunity to practise English and the students with lower proficiency levels will imitate the best students to play and enhance their English language. Role play is an enjoyable activity which is worth fostering interaction in EFL classroom. All in all, role play is “a classroom activity which gives the students the opportunity to practise the language, the aspects of role behaviour and the actual roles he may need outside the classroom.” Livingstone (1983:3). It is undeniable that practice makes perfect, so learners who keep on practising the English language effectively will gain fluency.

2. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The instruments I have used to collect the data are questionnaire sheets distributed to thirty (30) EFL teachers selected randomly in some Beninese secondary schools,

and different interviews I have realised either directly or by phone calls, and messages through email and Whatsapp, without forgetting the classrooms observations. I have summarised the results I have got from those who have really and willingly submitted their sheets.

2.1. Research Instruments

2.1.1. Questionnaire

The questionnaire administered to thirty (30) EFL teachers is presented as follows:

- 1- What do challenge questions ask about?
 - a) Assumptions
 - b) Conclusions
 - c) Interpretations
- 1- What do Relational questions describe?
 - a) Comparisons of themes.
 - b) Comparisons of ideas
 - c) Comparisons of issues
- 2- Do diagnostic questions ask about motives and causes?

- 3- Do action questions call for conclusion and action?
- 4- Do cause-and-effect questions ask about causal relationships?
- 5- How do you view extension questions?
 - a) Extend discussion into new areas
- 6- What do hypothetical questions imply?
 - a) Change in the fact
 - b) Change in issues
- 7- Do priority questions identify the most important issue(s)?
- 8- What do summary questions elicit?
 - a) Synthesis
 - b)

2.1.2. Interview Schedule

I have asked six questions to the forty (40) learners selected for the issue:

- Can you have an oral conversation and discussion in your English classes?
- How does your teacher of English make you speak with your classmates?

- Does your teacher like the way you speak English during his/her lessons?
- Do you feel happy or ashamed when you converse and discuss in English?
- Justify your happiness or shame.
- Do you continue conversing and discussing in English after the classes outside and at home or elsewhere?

2.1.3. Class Observations

I have observed five (5) classes. At the very beginning of each class, I have reassured the learners by telling them to feel free and that I just wanted to follow their lesson in order to see their performances and that I have not come to mark them. What I have noted down from these class observations can be summarised as follows:

- The way the teacher makes learners converse and discuss
- Learners' true involvement
- The vivacity of the class
- Particularity of conversational classes

- Learners' global feeling about the use of conversation and discussion during the classes.
- Learners' performances in the use of discussion and conversation.

2.2.Results

2.2.1. Teachers' Responses

Table 1: Kinds of Question and description

N°	Kinds of questions	Ask about	Ask about	Ask about	Total %
1	Challenge questions	Assumptions Yes 15/50% No 15/50%	Conclusions Yes 17/56.66% No 13/43.33%	Interpretations Yes 15/50% No 15/50%	30/100%
2	Relational questions	Comparisons of themes. Yes 30/100% No 00/00%	Comparisons of ideas Yes 30/100%	Comparisons of issues Yes 30/100% No 00/00%	30/100%

			No 00/00%		
3	Diagnostic questions	Motives Yes 15/50% No 15/50%	Causes Yes 25/83.33% No 5/16.66%	-	30/100%
4	Action questions	Conclusion Yes 17/56.66% No 13/43.33%	Action Yes 30/100% No 00/00%	-	30/100%
5	Cause-and-effect questions	Causal relationships Yes 30/100% No 00/00%	-	-	30/100%
6	Extension questions	Discussion into new areas Yes 15/50% No 15/50%	-	-	30/100%
7	Hypothetical questions	Change in the fact	Change in issues	-	30/100%

		Yes 25/83.33% No 5/16.66%	Yes 15/50% No 15/50%		
8	Priority questions	The most important issue(s) Yes 17/56.66% No 13/43.33%	-	-	30/100%
9	Summary questions	Synthesis Yes 30/100% No 00/00%	-	-	30/100%

Table 2: Favouring discussion and conversation

Functions	Yes %	No %	Total %
Expressing implications	30/100%	00/00%	30/100%
Giving explanations	30/100%	00/00%	30/100%

Providing meanings	30/100%	00/00%	30/100%
Telling differences and similarities	30/100%	00/00%	30/100%
Solving problems	30/100%	00/00%	30/100%
Agreeing and disagreeing	30/100%	00/00%	30/100%
Giving assumptions	30/100%	00/00%	30/100%

2.2.2. Class Observation Data Analysis

From the five (5) classes observed, two (2) of them have tried to make their learners discuss and converse and I have come up with some deductions.

3. The way the teacher makes learners converse and discuss in English is not satisfactory because they are unable to snatch a few minutes conversation with their mates.
4. Learners have not shown their true involvement in English learning and this lack of involvement is due to

the teacher's incapacity to conduct the classes appropriately.

5. The class was not vivid and learners got bored.
6. These class observations permit me to value conversational classes that should favour English learning.
7. Learners feel unhappy and annoyed about the use of discussion and conversation during the classes.
8. Learners' performances are low and very poor as far as the use of discussion and conversation is concerned.

2.2.3. Students' Responses

From the forty (40) students interviewed, none of them (00 percent) can make an oral conversation and discussion in their English classes. Thirty (30) students (75 percent) have said that their teacher make them speak by forcing them, vociferating, and insulting them. The forty (40) students (100 percent) have said their teacher does not like the way they speak English during his/her lessons. While ten of them (10), 25 percent, have expressed their happiness, thirty (30), 75 percent, have said that they feel ashamed when they

converse and discuss in English. Those who feel happy have said this happiness is due to their interests in the English language whereas the ashamed learners justify their shame by the behaviours of their teacher who get used to taunting them every time they speak English badly. None of them continue conversing and discussing in English after the classes outside and at home or elsewhere, they have said that they usually try to use the language in class.

3. INTERPRETATIONS OF DATA

In the questionnaire administered to the thirty (30) EFL teachers, I can notice that:

- Table 1 presents some question types and their descriptions. Challenge questions are said to interrogate assumptions, conclusions, or interpretations. They will permit learners to express their opinions and make decisions, while relational questions ask for comparisons of themes, ideas, or issues. Through this kind of questions, learners will learn how to make

comparisons in order to establish appropriate relationships. Diagnostic questions are considered to probe motives or causes. When they succeed in identifying motives or causes of some problems, they will be able to guess and find concrete and relevant solutions to them.

- Action questions call for a conclusion or action so, they can encourage decision making. As for cause-and-effect questions, they explore causal relationships and will help in diagnosing problems and finding related solutions whereas extension questions expand the discussion into new areas and will consequently favour true discussion. Hypothetical questions pose a change in the facts or issues, which will make learners, predict facts and issues be they good or bad and act accordingly towards them. Priority questions identify the most important issue(s) and summary questions elicit synthesis. In this case, learners will be prepared for the most important achievements and have

the ability to synthesise and choose the best and most useful ones.

- Table 2 points out language functions that favour discussion and conversation. Any moment EFL teachers make their learners express implications, this will require them to think deeply in order to argue correctly. While giving explanations, they should be able to give convincing arguments. Providing meanings is also a matter of good and adequate reflections. When learners are able to tell differences and similarities, it is obvious that they could think well and express their opinions. As far as problem solving is concerned, learners who can solve problems are to defend themselves in the right way in front of any complex situations. Agreeing and disagreeing also permit them to give their positions about some particular cases. Giving assumptions is very important for adequate discussion and conversation.

- The interviews conducted with learners have shown that very few learners can make an oral discussion and conversation in their English classes. They are forced to speak with your classmates. Their teacher hardly likes the way they speak English during his/her lessons. Some of them feel happy and others feel ashamed when they discuss and converse in English. They justify their happiness or shame by saying that the early good love to English has helped them endeavour in the use of English. They feel ashamed to speak English because they are afraid of being taunted by their teacher and their mates. They seldom continue conversing and discussing in English after the classes outside and at home or elsewhere because they do not remember what they have learnt.
- The Class Observations have pointed out that the way the teacher makes learners converse and discuss is not always relevant and pleasant

for these learners. Learners are not really involved in the learning process. The vivacity of the class is poor and this lack of vivacity makes me deduce that conversational classes are necessary for the English language learning. Learners usually dislike the use of discussion and conversation in class because they have not been prepared for. Learners can perform well if teachers carry out discussion and conversational classes successfully.

- The current study reveals that assumptions, conclusions and interpretations are positive for language learning. Learners who can make comparisons of themes, ideas and issues are already successful language learners. Learners who can give motives and causes, conclude and make actions and causal relationships are to discuss and converse in the right and suitable way. In addition, those who extend discussion into new areas and make change in the fact as well as in issues and succeed in identifying the most important issue(s) and are really able to

elicit synthesis can be rated as excellent EFL learners.

- EFL learners' incapacity to make an oral conversation and discussion.
- EFL teachers do not motivate their learners to discuss and converse in English.
- Teachers' anger with regards to learners' poor performance.
- Learners' less happiness and much shame to use English.
- The little use of the English language is limited to the classroom settings.
- Poor use of discussion and conversation in English classes.
- Learners' need of involvement in English learning.
- Absence of English class vivacity.
- Importance of conversational classes
- Teachers need to interest learners in the English language learning
- Learners' performances in the use of discussion and conversation are worth

improving, so teachers still have a lot to do for the success of the English language teaching process.

4. SUGGESTIONS

The main suggestion is to encourage EFL teachers to teach the

English language successfully:

- They need to encourage and motivate EFL learners' conversation and discussion in English.
- Teachers should correct learners' poor performance.
- Teachers have to strengthen learners' interests in English and avoid frustrating them.
- They should encourage learners to use the English language in class and in their daily life situations.
- Teachers should satisfy learners' need of involvement in English learning.
- Teachers should struggle for English class vivacity.

- EFL teachers must promote conversational classes.
- Teachers need to interest learners in the English language learning and improve their performances accordingly.

CONCLUSION

Language interaction hardly occurs in EFL classrooms and this affects English teaching/learning, and acquisition in Beninese secondary schools. Miss Kaddour Khaoula Imane (2015- 2016, 16) states: “In a language classroom, discussion is the most common speaking activity. It is, then, one form of communicative interaction activities. In general, it is the activity in which students talk about something and tell each other their opinions or ideas.” So, discussion and conversation play a fundamental role in the language teaching/learning process and language acquisition. The research instruments I have used are questionnaires, interviews, classroom observations. The results I have got have enabled me to get a clear idea about the importance of

discussion and conversation in classroom setting as well as in EFL learners' real life situations.

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