

Exploring the Use of Oral Narrative Composition to Enhance Students Speaking Skill in EFL Beginners Classes: A Case Study of Some Secondary Schools in Benin

Dr Sourou Corneille TEBA

Doctor in English Didactics, Auxiliary Master of CAMES Universities, Faculty of Arts, and Humanities, English Department, Adjarra Campus, University of Abomey-Calavi, Cotonou, Benin

Abstract: *The aims of this paper are: firstly to know if using oral narrative composition has an impact on teaching and learning English as a foreign language, secondly to describe how oral narrative composition gives an influence on speaking skill of EFL beginners' classes in Benin. The methodology adopted during the investigation of this paper consists in collecting information from EFL teachers and learners through the means of classroom observation, interviews and questionnaires distributed to them to gather reliable data. The questionnaires were analyzed in terms of frequency and percentages by means of statistical packages. From the results the majority of EFL teachers do not make use of oral narrative composition as it must be to teach speaking skill in EFL beginners' classes. Positive improvement on students' active participation, confidence and fluency in speaking skill can be realized through the well implementation of oral narrative composition. Using it in the process of teaching and learning creates good and enjoyable circumstances, reduces the boredom and stress of learners.*

Keywords: Oral, Narration, Composition, Stress, Boredom

1. Introduction

Speaking is one of the basic language skills that have to be mastered by English foreign learners due to its significant and its use for communication. It is very important to be able to speak English regarding that it is the most commonly accepted language in the world so that it will be very beneficial for those who comprehend it not only to improve their knowledge and skills but also easier for them to get a job. More than that, they will not find it difficult to communicate and interact with people around the world when they travel. For example, a foreigner who goes to Ghana, Nigeria, China, USA, Liberia, etc. will be understood only if he speaks English. Moreover, English is the language used in the field of science and technology. In addition, most of the computer builders and manufacturers are English speaking people. So, one must understand English in order to read the instructions manuals of some electronic instruments such as calculators, typing machine or to read the notes of medicines manufactured in English speaking countries.

One way for teachers to take up the challenge of speaking skill is by introducing oral narrative composition in their English classroom as a pedagogical tool. There are many reasons why English teachers should consider using oral narrative composition in the course of their teachings. First, narration naturally motivates and creates a positive atmosphere that invites students to learn willingly. Secondly, through oral narrative composition, teachers can help students improve their speaking skill. Finally, not only does a narration allow the teacher to expand students' cultural knowledge but it is also a useful material when teaching vocabulary and sentences' structures.

Generally, majority of the EFL learners find it difficult to express themselves in English. Students preferred learning

English courses just for passing their examinations, and neglect speaking. They prefer memorizing all the grammatical structures but are unable to apply these rules when speaking. Consequently they are fail to apply the rules in their daily conversation. The second problem lays on the teaching method used by EFL teachers in giving courses. Some never force their students to express themselves in English. They never taught of using techniques in order to let learners in speaking English. They do not put a strategy in order to bring learners to speak English. Students end up their secondary school without being able to formulate a correct sentence in English.

The main goal on working on "using oral narrative composition to enhance students speaking skill in EFL beginners' classes" is to bring learners have an acceptable level and a good background in English language speaking skill.

Here are the research questions guiding my study:

- 1) What are the roles of EFL teachers while conducting oral narrative composition?
- 2) How is oral narrative composition effective for improving students speaking skill?

This paper helps:

- EFL teachers to prevent their learners from succeeding only in the writing activities but in the speaking too.
- to provide EFL teachers with practical techniques to face successfully the obstacles encountered by their learners
- to handle learners' hurdles regarding the speaking skill.
- EFL teachers to make the learners aware of techniques as well as strategies which can help them organize their ideas in order to build coherent sentences

Volume 8 Issue 8, August 2019

www.ijsr.net

Licensed Under Creative Commons Attribution CC BY

2. Methodological Approach

2.1 Research Population and Sampling

This work is carried out in some secondary schools. They are CEG Honvié, CEG Malanhoui and CEG Anavié. To observe the use of oral narrative composition, EFL teachers and learners were mainly implicated. In total one hundred and twenty (120) learners are chosen randomly and twenty-five (25) EFL teachers were sampled from the schools.

2.2 Research Instruments

2.2.1 Questionnaires

Questionnaires have been addressed to twenty-five (25) teachers selected from the schools selected, and to one hundred and twenty (120) students. Teachers' questionnaire is composed 08 questions. Same it is for the students. The unit of this work is focused on the use of oral narrative composition in improving the student speaking skill. Its aim was to bring the students to express themselves in English orally.

2.2.2 Interviews

Interviews have been conducted to cross check the results of the questionnaires. Teachers were just questioned orally about the topic. Their answers were jotted down about the most important questions and later compared the answers with those of the questionnaires.

2.2.3 Classroom Observations

Classroom observations have been undertaken in the targeted (6eme and 5eme) classes in the aforementioned schools. The objectives of these class observations were to know about the conditions in which students work and whether these conditions are good to enhance EFL students' skills through oral narration in a real communicative approach of English teaching and learning.

2.3 Procedures of Data Collection and Analysis

This is focalized on the overall procedure of the study. It consists in pre-questionnaire administrated to the research target to investigate their points of view about the subject. The data collected through the different research instruments are organized, classified and tabulated before they can serve any worthwhile purpose. The information obtained from the questionnaires was quantified. Tables and figures were drawn for questions. Percentage method was used to analyze the collected data. Under the tables or figures, a comment was given to show the number of responses to a particular question.

3. Results

After collecting the data, they were analyzed for consistency of responses and presented in tables and figures.

3.1 Presentation of the Findings

3.1.1 Teachers' highest Academic and Professional Qualifications

Table 1: Teachers' Academic and Professional Qualifications

Teachers' Qualifications	Frequency	Percentage (%)
DUEL	09	36
Maitrise	05	20
Licence	07	28
BAPES	04	16
Total	25	100

Through the results of this table, thirty-six percent (36%) of teachers are teaching English with Duel and twenty percent (20) of them had Master 1 certificate, and twenty-eight percent (28%) of them is doing the teaching job with License, and sixteen percent (16%) of them had BAPES. This means that majority of the teachers only have academic degree. The results of this table show that all the teachers are performing teaching with academic qualification; this means that they are not professionally trained to do the teaching job efficiently.

3.1.2 Teachers' Point of View about Speaking Skill Teaching

Table 2: Teachers' View about Teaching Speaking

Teachers' Views	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Important	11	44
Useless	00	00
Compulsory	08	32
Optional	06	24
Total	25	100

Through the results of the table above, it is noticeable that forty-four percent (44 %) of teachers are aware of the importance of teaching speaking skills to learners. Thirty-two percent (32 %) of them find the teaching of speaking skills compulsory and twenty-four percent (24%) of them say that its teaching is optional. None of them finds the teaching of speaking skills useless. This shows that the majority of EFL teachers know that speaking plays an important role in EFL teaching and learning process.

3.1.3 Teachers Teaching Speaking Skill

Table 3: Teachers Teaching Speaking Skill

Teachers' teaching speaking	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sometimes	15	60
Rarely	10	40
Never	00	00
Total	25	100

The results of this table show that sixty percent (60%) of teachers sometimes teach speaking skill to learners and only forty percent (40%) of them rarely deal with it. None of them says that they never do it. This means that the majority of teachers know that the teaching of speaking skill is not useless.

3.1.4 Teachers Ways of Teaching Speaking

Table 4: Teachers Ways of Teaching Speaking

Ways of Teaching Speaking	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Through Debate	13	52
Through Games	07	28
Through Narration	05	20
Total	25	100

The results in this table show that fifty-two percent (52%) of teachers teach speaking skill through debate; twenty-eight percent (28%) of them said that they use games for speaking activities whereas twenty percent (20%) of them said that they use narration to teach speaking skill in EFL classes.

3.1.5 Learners' Reactions when Teachers use Oral Narration

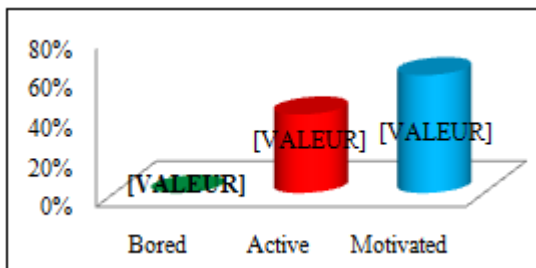


Figure 1: Learners' Reactions when Teachers use Oral Narration

The results of the figure 1 show that sixty percent (60%) of teachers notice that their learners are motivated whenever they use songs while teaching them listening skill and forty percent (40%) of them said that learners are active and take part in classroom activities. None of them says that learners are bored. This means that oral narration arouse learners' interest and motivation and lessen learners' anxiety.

3.1.6 Advantages of Teaching Speaking through Oral Narrative Composition

Table 5: Advantages of Teaching Speaking through Oral Narrative Composition

Advantages	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Make learners better their pronunciation	08	32
Used to teach vocabulary and grammar along with sounds and stress.	07	28
Convey meaning and tell memorable stories	05	20
reduce anxiety and provide a harmonious classroom	05	20
Total	25	100

In the table above, thirty-two percent (32%) of EFL teachers recognized that using oral narrative composition can make learners better their pronunciation. Twenty-eight percent (28%) of them affirmed that using oral narrative composition can help them to teach vocabulary and grammar along with sounds and stress. Indeed, twenty percent (20%) of them recognized that they can convey meaning and tell memorable stories through using oral narrative composition, twenty percent (20%) of them said

that using songs can reduce anxiety and provide a harmonious classroom.

3.1.7 Teachers Teaching Speaking according to Learners

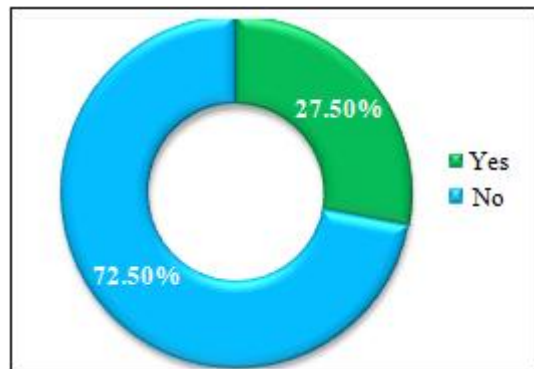


Figure 2: Teachers Teaching Speaking according to Learners

From the results of the figure above, most of the students, that is seventy-two point fifty percent (72.50%) of them say that their teachers do not often teach is speaking skill whereas twenty-seven point fifty percent (27.50%) of them say that their teachers teach it to them.

3.1.8 Teachers Teaching Speaking Skill through Narration

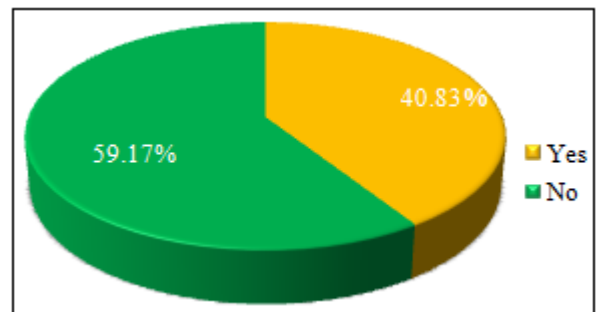


Figure 3: Teachers Teaching Speaking Skill through Narration

The results of the present figure show that forty point eighty-three percent (40.83%) of teachers use narration to teach speaking skill according to learners whereas fifty-nine point seventeen percent (59.17%) of teachers do not use narration to teach speaking skill. The fact is that most of teachers lack training and adequate teaching materials.

3.1.9 Learners Narrating Orally in English

Table 6: Learners Narrating Orally in English

Listening to Songs	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Once a week	38	31.67
Everyday	04	03.33
Rarely	41	34.17
Never	37	30.83
Total	120	100

Through the results in the table above, I notice that thirty-one point sixty-seven percent (31.67%) of learners listen to English songs once a week, three point thirty-three percent (3.33%) of them said that they listen to English songs every

day. Indeed, thirty-four point seventeen percent (34.17%) of them rarely listen to English songs and thirty point eighty-three percent (30.83%) of them said that they never listen to English songs. Moreover, thirty-five percent (35%) of them said that they have poor listening performance. So, the problems most of the learners encounter in understanding the songs they listen to are related pronunciation and vocabulary weaknesses.

3.1.10 Learners' Feeling during Speaking Activities through Narration

Table 7: Learners' Feeling during Speaking Activities through Narration

Learners' Feeling	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Feel happy	108	90
Feel Bored	12	10
Feel angry	00	00
Total	120	100

The results of the table 7 show that the majority of learners involved in my research work feel happy when their teachers use narration to foster their speaking skill; this is justified by ninety percent (90%) of them whereas ten percent (10%) of them said that they feel bored but none of them affirmed that they feel angry.

3.1.11 Interest in Speaking English by Narrating Stories

Table 8: Interest in Speaking English by Narrating Stories

Interest in Speaking English by narrating stories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
To help students speak good English	53	44.17
To have a good accent and pronunciation	46	38.33
To know more about English concepts	21	17.50
Total	120	100

The results in this table show that forty-four point seventeen percent (44.17%) are interesting in speaking English by narrating stories because it helps them speak good English, thirty-eight point thirty-three percent (38.33%) of them said that it makes them good accent and pronunciation. Seventeen point fifty percent (17.50%) of them said that their interest in speaking English by narrating stories is to know more about English concepts.

3.2 Interviews

Interviews were also carried out. The remark made is that the EFL teachers have been teaching in EFL classes for many years and they do not use oral narrative composition to conduct their speaking skills exercises sometimes. This is why the students' improvement in English language remains a problem. Also, for the insufficient time they had made them not to carry some communicative activities due to the large number of students they had in their classes. Furthermore, there is the lack of sophisticated teaching materials.

3.3 Classroom Observations

The objectives of these classroom observations are to know about the conditions in which learners work and whether these conditions are good to enhance EFL students speaking skills through oral narrative composition in first and second forms in a real communication approach of English teaching and learning. The atmosphere of the class was the first remark noted during the observations. Firstly, students were reluctant to take floor in my presence. During the visit an overall view on what an English class is like in schools was done. A situation whereby thirty (30) to more than fifty (50) learners worked in small group composed of 5 learners with the teacher in front of them was noticed. Thus, they must sit for two hours with their attention and behavior under the guidance and control of the teacher. The number of students gathered in these classes cannot be favorable for the acquisition of English language even though adequate strategies of teaching learning process are implemented, only few students can emerge, the others will likely fail in oral communication.

Indeed, through classroom observations the paucity of teachers that have been visited are used to oral narration to make learners feel free in expressing themselves in English. They do not teach speaking skill to learners through narration and even the narrations used do not have a link with the daily lesson they perform. Teachers just asked learners to narrate any event that comes to their mind. I have realized that teachers do not use oral narration to promote speaking skills but just to motivate learners when they realize that learners are not active.

4. Discussion

4.1 Teachers Roles when Conducting Oral Narration

Generally, teachers should create a pleasant atmosphere in order to motivate their students and let them speak freely. The result of my investigation revealed that all the teachers do not know their role when conducting oral narration. If the teachers do not know their roles, it is because 84% of them are not professionally trained. So therefore, they cannot succeed in doing what a trained teacher can do properly. That is the reason why Mac Ber, (2000: 45) stipulates that:

A good teacher is kind, is generous, listens to students, encourages them, has faith in them, keeps confidences, likes teaching children, likes teaching their subject, takes time to explain things, helps them when they are stuck, tells them how they are doing, allows them to have their say. Do not give up on them, cares for their opinion, makes them feel clever, treat people equally, stands up for them, makes allowances, tells the truth and is forgiving. All these qualities are in trained teachers.

The qualities mentioned by Mac Ber (2000) in the above quote can never be found with an untrained teacher. The investigating result shows that 10% of the students feel bored, if these students feel bored it may be because the students are not motivated. Furthermore, I can also deduct that the students feel boring in the class for the fact that the teacher talking time is more than the students talking time, there is no room for interaction between teacher and students, and students among students. So it is reasonable

that the students feel bored in the class. Then, the teacher in the case becomes an actor repeating the same play at a repetitive way. When the same action is repeated several times it becomes boring. Although 72.50% of the students complained that their teachers have never carried out such activity in their classroom. But the teachers said that they have carried the activity in their classes. With these two points of views, I can strongly believe the students because they are not involved, or they do it without knowing what they have done with their teachers. If the teachers had known their roles when conducting oral narration in their various classes they would not have gone through this complained.

4.2 Effectiveness of Oral Narrative Composition to Enhance Speaking Skill

The data collected from the questionnaires, classroom observation and interviews show that when teachers use oral narrative composition in EFL classes, learners practice pronunciation or speech patterns and increase their oral fluency. It is noticed that 30% of the teachers confessed that it helps them to teach pronunciation to students, and it is also a tool for teaching vocabulary and grammatical rules. While using oral narration the students are able to apply the different grammatical rules being taught in the class, even though if they had no opportunity to speak English outside the classroom, they can exchange their ideas with their mate in the class, besides 32% of teacher knows that the use of oral narrative composition reduces anxiety. So it enables the students to speak without fear. The teachers know the effect of using oral narration reason why 52% of them said that they used to organizing debate in order to bring the students to share their ideas on a given topic, 28% of the teachers make use of games to see how the Students speak in English, and 20% of them used to narrate story and also tell the students to narrate stories or events that occurred in their surroundings. This will help EFL teachers to improve the speaking skill of their learners.

5. Conclusion

Speaking is act of performing and producing the oral language to convey a message in different situation and in appropriate context. This idea shows that it is through speaking that learners are able to say what they have listen, read and written through spoken language in an appropriate way. As such, learners should be interested in the speaking activities because through speaking they can express their feelings.

This paper brings out some difficulties related to learners' failure with regard to the speaking activities. They include: over cloudily of the classroom, teachers insufficient time in carrying out speaking activities, lack of teaching materials, teachers have problem of pronunciation, students do not like to express themselves in English because they are shy in making mistakes, they are not motivated in speaking English, they preferred studying English for passing their examinations.

The recommendation formulated to the government is that it organizes regular in-service training for teachers which take

into account the methodology and techniques for a good speaking teaching. It also has to reduce the number of learners per class to the limit required by the CBA and supply adequate didactic materials in sufficient number to both EFL teachers and learners. Teachers should also often teach learners speaking skills accordingly.

References

- [1] Bygate, M. (1987). *Speaking*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- [2] Byne, D. (1980). *English Teaching Perspective*. Singapore: Longman Singapore publisher.
- [3] Nunan, D. (1991). *Designing tasks for the communicative classroom*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- [4] Thornbury, S. (2008). *How to teach Speaking*. Pearson Education Limited