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Exploring the Impact of Communicative Competence in Beninese EFL Advanced Learners' Performance: Case Study of Sèmè-Podji Secondary School.

Prof. M. Abdul Mottaleb,

Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Department of Chemistry/Physics,
Northwest Missouri State University 800 University Drive, Maryville
Area Specialist: Analytical and Environmental Chemist

Prof. Sreeramanan Subramaniam,

School of Biological Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Minden Heights
Georgetown, 11800, Penang, Malaysia.
Area Specialist: Plant Biotechnologist

Prof. Marco Antonio Russo, Department of Agrochemistry, University of Catania
Area Specialist: Agrochemistry

Prof. Anely Nedelcheva, Department of Botany, Faculty of Biology, Sofia
University "St. Kliment Ohridski" Blv. Dragan Tzankov, 81164 Sofia,
BULGARIA
Area Specialist: Botany

Prof. Tanweer,

Animal genomics group, Cell and Molecular biology lab, University College
Dublin, Ireland
Area Specialist: Animal genomics and Cell and Molecular biology

Prof. Dallas E. Alston,

Department of Marine Sciences, University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez, Call Box
9000, Mayagüez, PR 00680-9000 USA
Area Specialist: Marine Science

Prof. G. Elongo,

Department of Microbiology, Faculty of Agriculture , Annamalai University,
Annamalai Nagar, India.
Area Specialist: Agricultural Microbiology

Prof. Rafael Rangel-Aldao,

Digital Molecular Medicine, Dept. Biological & Biochemical Technologies, Simon
Bolívar University, Caracas, Venezuela
Area Specialist: Biochemistry, Biological Science and Molecular Medicine

Prof. Ivan SALAMON, Department of Ecology, Faculty of Humanities and Natural Sciences, Presov University in Presov, 01, 17th November St., SK-081 16 Presov, Slovak Republic

Area Specialist: Ecology, Humanities and Natural Science

Prof. Fernando José Cebola Lidon,

living at Rua Vasco de Lima Couto 23, Morgadinha, 2815-253 Charneca da Caparica, Portugal.

Prof. Hadi Arabshahi,

Physics Department, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran.

Area Specialist: Physics

Prof . Mohd Ikmar Nizam Bin Mohamad ISA ,

Faculty of Science And Technology, 2476 jalan permata 19, Taman permata, 53300 kuala lumpur, Malaysia.

Area Specialist: Science and Technology

Prof . Hakan ARSLAN,

Department of Basic Pharmaceutical , Sciences, Division of Chemistry, Faculty of Pharmacy, Mersin University, TR-33169, Mersin-Turkey.

Area Specialist: Pharmacy

Prof . Nageh K.Allam,

Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 77 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02139, USA.

Area Specialist: Engineering

Prof. ADI IRFAN CHE ANI,

Department of Architecture, Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 UKM Bangi, Selangor, MALAYSIA.

Area Specialist: Engineering

Prof. Şevket ÖZDEN,

Department of Civil Engineer Boğaziçi University, Turkey

Area Specialist: Engineering

Dr. Marlene Fouad Amin Shehata,

MANAGER, PHARMACY SERVICES, St. Thomas Elgin General
Hospital.Canada

Area Specialist: Medical

Dr. M. Govindarajan,

Department of Zoology, Annamalai University, Annamalai Nagar, India.

Area Specialist: Vector Control, Phytochemistry and Nanotechnology

Dr. Jean-Marc SABATIER,

Department of BIOCHEMISTRY, Chemin de Campbernard, 13790 – Rousset,
France

Area Specialist: Medical

Dr. SRIKUMAR CHAKRAVARTHI,

13-6, Sri Impian Condominium, Jalan Ang Seng, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Area Specialist: Medical

Dr. M.B. Hiremath,

KLES Kidney Foundation, KLES Dr.Prabhakar Kore Hospital & MRC Nehru
Nagar, Belgaum

Area Specialist: Medical

Dr. WAEL M.Y. MOHAMED,

Department of Biobehavioral Health , College of Health and Human
Development , East Health & Human Development Building , The Pennsylvania
State University , University Park , USA

Area Specialist: Medical

Prof. K.Pugazhendi

Department of Zoology, Annamalai University, Annamalai Nagar, India.

Area Specialist: Agricultural Microbiology

Prof. Mohamed Samer,

Leibniz Institute for Agricultural Engineering Potsdam-Bornim (ATB),
Department of Engineering for Livestock Management, Germany

Area Specialist: Agricultural Engineering

Prof. Kamal Kishore Chaudhary,

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Department of Microbiology, Faculty of Agriculture , Annamalai University,
Annamalai Nagar, India.

Area Specialist: Agricultural Microbiology

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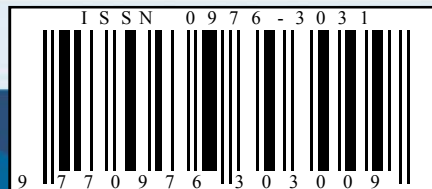
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EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN BENINESE EFL ADVANCED LEARNERS' PERFORMANCE: CASE STUDY OF SÈMÈ-PODJI SECONDARY SCHOOL

TEBA Sourou Corneille

Doctor in English Didactic, Assistant Professor of CAMES Universities, Faculty of Letters, Literatures, Arts and Communications (FLLAC), Department of English Studies, Adjarra Campus, University of Abomey-Calavi (Uac) Benin Republic

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ABSTRACT

Teaching and learning any language suppose that by the end of the training the learner should be able to express himself or herself fluently. Some feel shy and embarrassed when called on to speak, and others, while being fairly fluent, make so many errors that understanding their meaning can be difficult. The current paper explores the impact of communicative competence in EFL classes. It aims at seeking for more effective ways for improving students' communication skills so that they communicate effectively in real life contexts. The methodology adopted during this investigation is quantitative and qualitative one. It consists in collecting information from ten (10) EFL teachers and one hundred and fifty (150) advanced learners from *scientists C and D series* in Benin Context through classroom observation and questionnaires. The data obtained from questionnaires have been analyzed and discussed in order to draw out relevant conclusions. The results revealed the challenges teachers meet while dealing with communicative activities, especially in large classes. In order to reduce the challenges related to communicative competence, relevant suggestions have been made.

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INTRODUCTION

English nowadays has outstripped other languages and has become the leading means of communication worldwide. Gradually, it is being used by many people in almost every sector of activities such as business, politics, industry, education, and so on so forth. Due to the value of this language, many actors of education, curriculum researchers and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers assume that the more English is used, the greater the requisites must be to teach it. Progressively, non-native speakers are being trained to teach English in many countries, especially in Benin Republic.

The objective of language teaching is for teachers to seek for more effective ways for improving students' communication skills so that they communicate effectively in real life contexts. There is no doubt, however, in learning a foreign

language, it is necessary for students to acquire, in addition to phonological and lexico-grammatical knowledge, ways to communicate with others using their target language. The problem is how to do so. In this study, it has been, first, looked at how the notion of communicative competence has come to play an important role in the fields of sociolinguistics and Foreign Language Acquisition (FLA) over the years; it has been discussed how communicative competence should be incorporated into foreign language teaching in Beninese secondary schools. Then, has been figured out how EFL teachers can make their way to teach –advanced learner show to communicate effectively in the target language. Talking of advanced learners, it means students in their fifth, sixth, and seventh years of English in Beninese secondary schools. This research paper is mainly concerned with the advanced learners of *scientists C and D series* because of the value and the importance of the English Language after the admission to universities. Indeed, communication is an important part of

*Corresponding author: **TEBA Sourou Corneille**

Doctor in English Didactic, Assistant Professor of CAMES Universities, Faculty of Letters, Literatures, Arts and Communications (FLLAC), Department of English Studies, Adjarra Campus, University of Abomey-Calavi (Uac) Benin Republic

human civilization and it is a means of cultural transformation. The purpose of this paper is to investigate on how communicative activities are performed by teachers, the results that they obtain after performing these activities, and what makes learners have less interest in English.

The paper answers the following questions

- how do teachers develop their EFL advanced-learners' communicative skills?
- how are the activities used helpful in the development of learners' oral communication?

This study contributes to the awareness of some teachers on the way they teach EFL. It would help them acquire good strategies so as to improve their teaching practices. It can also help the educational system to take into account teachers' beliefs, performances which influence the teaching/learning process. This study also helps the whole educational system to recognize the constraints that exist in Beninese secondary schools with regard to implementation of the new course books in English on the one hand and the problem of large classes on the other.

Theoretical keystones

Communicative Competence

According to Canale and Swain (1980), the term 'communicative competence' refers to both the tacit knowledge of a language and the ability to use it effectively. It is also called communication competence.

Components of Communicative Competence

Canale and Swain (1980) identify these four components of communicative competence.

- Grammatical Competence includes knowledge of phonology, orthography, vocabulary, word formation and sentence formation.
- Sociolinguistic Competence includes knowledge of socio-cultural rules of use. It is the learners' ability to handle for example settings, topics and communicative functions in different sociolinguistic contexts
- Discourse Competence is related to the learners' mastery of understanding and producing texts in the mode of listening, speaking, reading and writing. It deals with cohesion and coherence in different types of texts.
- Strategic Competence refers to compensatory strategies in case of grammatical or discourse difficulties such as the use of reference sources, grammatical and lexical paraphrase, clarification, repetition, slower speech, or problems in addressing strangers when ensure of their social status or in finding the right cohesion devices.

The goal that EFL teachers are willing to attain in teaching learners' communicative skills is to increase their ease of contact with the target language speakers outside the class. But surprisingly, many EFL teachers focus mostly on reading and writing activities which are not helpful for learners' use of the target language. Therefore, in order to have English teachers know about the importance of communicative

competence in the learning of English, some pioneers have tried their best to write useful documents. The report of these documents will help us get much information regarding the exploring of communicative competence in the process of learning English as a foreign language.

Chomsky's Perspective on Competence

The conception of 'communicative competence came about in reaction to the following assertion made by generative-grammarians, Noam Chomsky (1965: 76)

Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitation, distraction, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance.

As it can be seen, Chomsky (1965) clearly makes a distinction between the description of language form (competence) and language use (performance) and establishes that the speaker-listeners' internal grammar that judges the grammaticality of sentence should be the main object of investigation for linguists.

Analysis from sociolinguists will shed light on what communicative competence brings about.

Perspectives from Sociolinguistics

Communicative Competence: Dell Hymes

It was not long before Chomsky's notion of idealized linguistic competence appeared. Dell Hymes, a sociolinguist as well as ethnographer of communication, was the first among many distinguished language scholars to introduce the idea of communicative competence in terms of the "appropriateness of socio-cultural significance of an utterance" (Canale and Swain, 1980). In fact, Hymes (1974), retaining the idea Chomsky's underlying grammatical competence, looks at contextual relevance as one of the crucial aspects of one's knowledge of language and claims that meaning in communication is determined by its speech community and actual communicative event in question, which consists of the following components he calls speaking (a mnemonic code word): Settings, Participants, Ends, Acts of sequence, Key, Instrumentalities, Norms of interaction and interpretation, and Genre. These are broadly considered speech contexts which real verbal interaction takes place. *For a person to say he or she knows a language, therefore, he or she must know when to speak, when not, what to talk about, with whom, when, where, in what manner* (Hymes, 1972:277), in addition to how to make a sentence grammatically. In other words, he maintains that the knowledge of language that Chomsky associated with competence should be taken more comprehensively to include knowledge about the above-mentioned components, namely the rules of language use. In the same vision with Dell Hymes, another ethnographer insisted on notion for communicative competence.

Ethnographical point of View: Saville-Troike

Saville-Troike, another ethnographer who is fundamentally in line with Hymes's notion of communicative competence, considers the issue from the viewpoint of second or foreign language contexts. She distinctly divides a central construct of communicative competence into three types of knowledge: linguistics, interactional, and cultural knowledge (Saville-Troike, 1989, 1996). The first one roughly corresponds to what Chomsky formulates as competence, with one lucid difference: the inclusion of linguistic features that may transmit social messages as well as referential meanings, in linguistic description.

Citing her own experience with a Japanese learner of English who used the phrase on term paper "and all that clap" to mean "etc". Saville-Troike(1996:56) argues that

Recognizing linguistic variations that carry certain social meanings sometimes pose serious problems for advanced students of English. Therefore, knowledge of the full range of the linguistic code, including those features that transmit social information, she concludes, needs to be viewed as part of one, s communicative competence.

The second property she considers necessary for communicative competence is interactional skills, namely the knowledge and expectation of social norms and conventions. Native speakers of English know how to do turn-taking naturally when talking to a friend or how to ask someone of a higher status to do something for them. These interactional skills are difficult for students to learn because in many cases they are not taught explicitly in the classroom. Besides the pronunciation of words, grammatical construction of sentences, and the use of vocabulary that learners are presented and learn. According to Saville-Troike (1989/1996), the interactional patterns are an essential part of communicative competence they need to acquire. Cultural knowledge, especially the social structure of language use, is the third component for Saville-Troike's communicative competence.

Perspective from Foreign Language Acquisition

In their often-cited article on communicative competence in relation to foreign language pedagogy, Canale and Swain (1980) propose a theoretical framework in which they outline the contents and boundaries of three of communicative competence: grammatical, sociolinguistic, and strategic competences. Sociolinguistic competence was further divided by Canale (1983) into two separate components. He defines communicative competence as '*the underlying systems of knowledge and skill required for communication*' (Canale, 1983:5). What is intriguing about their framework of communicative competence is that even the aspects of skills that are needed to employ the knowledge are now assumed to be part of one's competence.

The communicative competence is, then, distinguished from what Canale calls "actual communication", which is defined as:., "*the realization of such knowledge and skill under limiting psychological and environment conditions such as memory and perceptual constraints, fatigue, nervousness, distractions, and interfering background noises*"(Canale, 1983:5). If we are to compare Canale and Swain's constructs

of communicative competence with that of Chomsky's in a broad sense, Chosky's "competence" is equivalent to the "grammatical competence" mentioned by Canale and Swain, and all other areas of their framework are lacking in Chomsky's definition.

Role of Communicative Competence in Foreign Language Teaching

Adoption of the communication-oriented foreign language teaching, popularly known as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), in English classrooms has been repeatedly stressed by Foreign Language Acquisition (FLA) researchers, and indeed, there have been many studies attempting to determine its effects on Foreign Language learners. In discussing syllabus design, for example Canale and Swain (1980) justify the application of CLT by defending it against the claim that communicatively oriented syllabus tends to be disorganized in terms of acquisition of grammar. They believe that there are no empirical data support it and that the functionally organized communicative approach is more likely than the grammar-based approach '*to have positive consequences for learners motivation*' (Canale and Swain, 1980:32) as it provides a form of in-class training that makes learners feel more comfortable, confident, and encouraged, with a clear, visible purpose for Foreign Language Learning, namely successful communication.

Developing Communicative Competence as a Primary Focus Foreign Language Teaching

Brown (1994a), viewing CLT as an approach (that is, a theoretical position about the nature of language and of language teaching), rather than a specific method of teaching, describes four underlying characteristics in defining CLT in a foreign language classroom, which are summarized below

- focus in a classroom should be on all of the components of communicative competence of which grammatical or linguistic competence is just part;
- Class room activities should be designed to engage students in the pragmatic, authentic, and functional use of language for meaningful purposes.
- Both fluency and accuracy should be considered equally important in a foreign language learning classroom. And they are complementary.
- Students have to use their target language, productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts under proper guidance, but not under the control of the teacher. It is clear from these characteristics that CLT is a major departure from earlier pedagogical approaches, particularly grammar translation methods that pay special attention to over presentation of grammatical rules and translation. And yet, it seems to be a little consent as to what actually to present to the learners or what lesson methods to use to enhance their communicative competence and not just their grammatical commands through CLT. Moreover, Brown (1994b) lists six key words of CLT to better understand what it aims at: learner-centered, cooperative (collaborative), interactive, integrated, content-centered, and task-based.

Methodology of the Research

Research Population and Sampling

The investigations took place at Sèmè-Podji Secondary School in Sèmè-Podji district. To observe the use of oral communicative performance, EFL teachers and learners were mainly implicated. In total, one hundred and fifty (150) advanced- learners are randomly selected from the C and D series. These series are related to science subjects and mathematics. Ten (10) EFL teachers were sampled from the school.

Research Instruments

Questionnaires

Questionnaires have been addressed to ten (10) teachers selected from the school, and to one hundred and fifty (150) student from the series C and D. Teachers' questionnaire is composed ten (10) questions.

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.

Classroom Observations

To succeed in research design, it has been negotiated with some English teachers who willingly accepted to be visited in their advanced classes. Some planning has been elaborated with them and an agreement on what was to be observed. Their observations themselves concern the size of the classrooms; the number of students gathered in each classroom; how teachers develop student communicative competence, the way teachers motivate students to speak in class. A special attention is also paid to aspects of using warming-up exercises, pictures description, and stories telling which is very important in teaching/learning process.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

Results from Teachers' Questionnaires

Teachers' Qualification

Table1 Teachers' Qualification

Teachers' Qualifications	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Baccalaureat	00	00
Duel	00	00
Licence	03	30
Bapes	02	20
Maitrise	04	40
Capes	01	10
Total	10	100

According to table1, teachers' academic qualifications are variable. None of them teach with Baccalaureat, even DUEL. Twenty percent (20%) of teachers assert that they teach English with BAPES, fifty percent (50%) of them use Maîtrise and finally ten percent (10% of teachers get CAPES.

Teachers 'Answers on Training as Teacher prior to their Recruitment

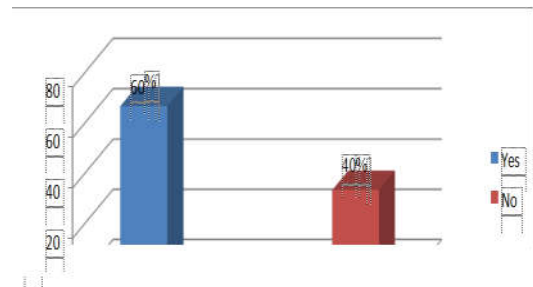


Figure1 Teachers' Response on Training as Teachers of English

According to figure 1, forty (40%) of English teachers are trained for teaching English against sixty percent (60%) who are not.

Teacher on when they have been teaching English

Table 2 Teacher on when they have been teaching English

Years	Answers	Percentage (%)
01-10	07	70
11-20	02	20
21-30	01	10
Total	10	100

Table 2 reveals that seven (7) teachers out of ten (10) have been teaching between one and ten years. Two (2) out of ten (10) have been teaching between eleven to twenty years. Finally, only one (1) teacher has been teaching between 21 and 30 years.

Teachers' Answers if their Students like speaking English

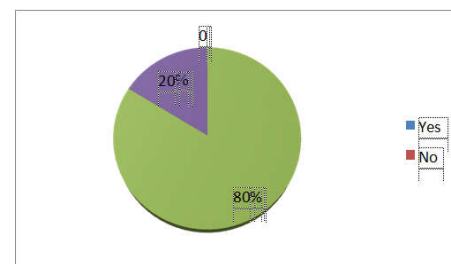


Figure 2 Teachers 'Answers if they Students like speaking English

Through figure 2, almost of the teachers' responses suggest that students like speaking English according the percentage of eighty percent (80%) and the minority of them think the contrary with a ratio of twenty percent (20%).

Teachers' Responses in Making Students Fluent in Speaking

Table 3 Teachers' Responses in making Students fluently in speaking

Teachers' Responses in making Students fluent	Frequency	Percentage (%)
YES	09	90
NO	01	10
Total	10	100

Table 3 relates the position of teacher in making learners to speak English fluently. Almost of the EFL teachers say that

they try to make learners to speak fluently according the percentage of ninety (90%). And only ten percent (10%) of teachers think the opposite.

Teachers' Responses on Frequency of Speaking Session given

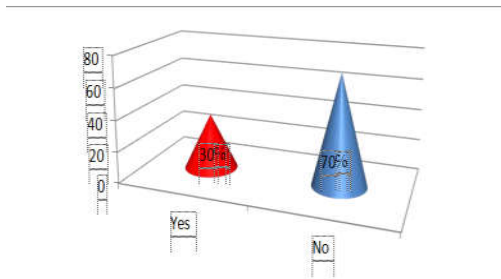


Figure 3 Teachers' Responses on Frequency of Speaking Session given with figure 3, seventy percent (70%) of teachers say that they do not frequently give speaking sessions to their learners. Only thirty (30%) of teachers say the opposite.

Teachers' Response on Teaching Speaking Skills to Learners

Table 4 Teachers' Response on Teaching Speaking Skills to Learners

Teachers' Response on Teaching Speaking Skills	Frequency	Percentage (%)
YES	10	100
NO	00	00
Total	10	100

The results of table 4 show that one hundred percent (100) teach speaking skills to their learners, whatever the frequency of doing it.

Teachers' Response on the frequency of teaching Speaking skill to their Students

Table 5 Teachers' Response on the frequency of teaching Speaking skill to their Students

Response on the frequency of teaching Speaking skill to their Students	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Regularly	2	20
Sometimes	7	70
Occasionally or Rarely	1	10
Never	00	00
Total	10	100

The results of table5 show that the majority of teachers, that is, (70%) assert that they sometimes teach speaking skill to their learners. Twenty (20%) and ten (10%) respectively regularly and rarely deal with speaking skill with their learners.

Learners' Response

Learners Love for English

Table 6 Learners Love for English

Learners' love for English	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	120	80
No	30	20
Total	57	100

Table 6 above that eighty percent (80%) of learners like English and twenty percent (20%) of them do not like it. Those who do not like English do not perhaps have intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

Learners' Years of Learning English.

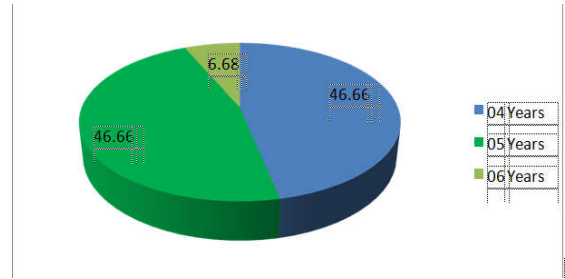


Figure 4 Learners' Years of Learning English

The results of figure 4 show that forty-six point six six (46.66%) of learners have been learning English for four years. The same results from learning since five years. For those of six years, it is six point six eight percent (6.68%) as a ratio.

Learners' Answers on trying to speak English

Table 7 Learners' Answers on trying to speak English

Learners' Answers on trying to speak English	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	110	73.33
No	40	26.66
Total		

Table 7 confirms that the majority of learners try to speak English according a ratio seventy-three point three and three percent (73.33%) and few of them do not do effort of speaking according to twenty-six point six and six percent (26.66%).

Learners' Answers on Number of having English Session on the week

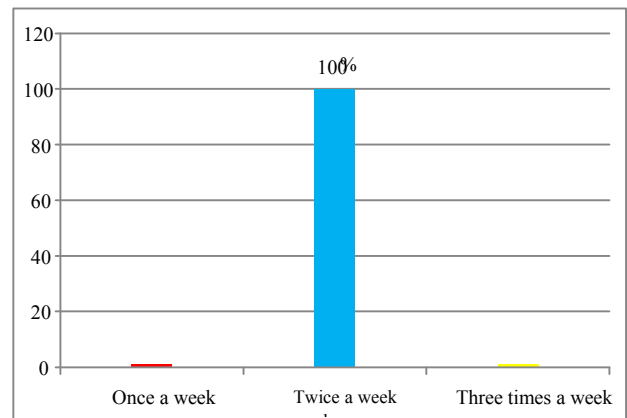


Figure 5 Learners' Answers on Number of having English Session on the week

Through figure5, all learners prove that they have English session twice a week according the percentage of 100%.

Learners' Responses on having a book of program

Table 8 Learners' Response on having a book of program

Responses on having a	Frequency	Percentage (%)
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book of program		
Yes	70	46.66
No	80	53.33
Total	150	100

The results of table 8 show that most of learners involved in my research work do not have a book on program according to the percentage of fifty-three point three and three percent (53.33%) who says *No*. Only forty-six point six and six percent (46.66%) who have book on program. This means that students lack of book sometimes when activities are carried out.

Learners' Reactions on how important English is for them.

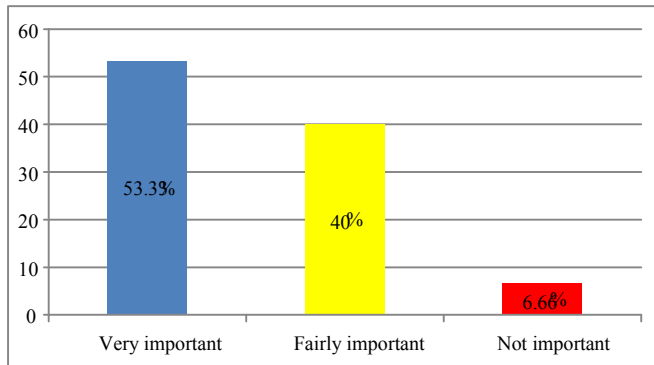


Figure 6 Learners' Reactions on how important English is for them.

Through figure 6, fifty-three point three and three percent (53.33%) of learners confess that English is very important on their program. Forty percent (40%) of learners see it as fairly important and few of them consider it as not important according to the percentage of six point six and six (6.66%).

Learners' Response on how Teacher makes practice with them

Table 9 Learners' Response on how Teacher makes practice with them

Responses on Practicing English activity	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Individually	50	33.33
In pairs	40	26.66
In groups	60	40
Total	150	100

Table 9 reveals that teacher use practicing English individually as a ratio of 33.33%, but the best used is the one of the groups according to the percentage of 40%. The percentage of 26.66% confirms also the practicing English in pairs

Learners' Answers on liking speaking English fluently

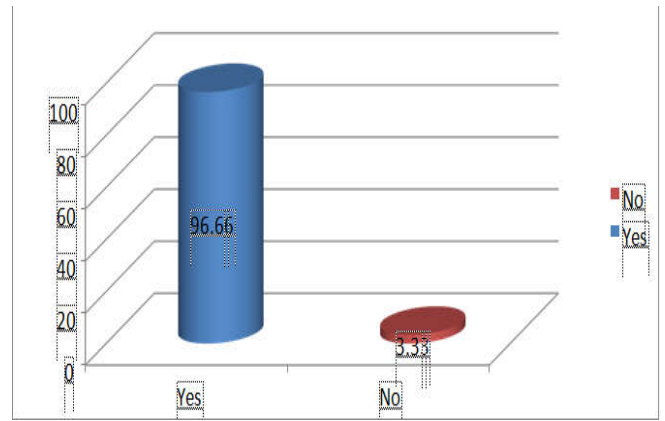


Figure 7 Learners' Answers on liking speaking English Fluently.

Through figure 7, the majority of learners like to speak English according the results of 96.66%. The ratio of 3.33% does not like, may be the reasons of ignorance.

Learners' Answers on Material that Teacher uses in Communicative Activities

Table10 Learners' Answers on Material that Teacher use in Communicative Activity.

Material used in Communicative Activity	Frequency	Percentage %
Books	80	53.33
Visual aids	50	33.33
Tape recorder	05	3.33
Others	15	10
Total	150	100

Table10 shows that most of teachers use books in communicative activities according the results given by learners as a ratio of 53.33%, the others use visual aids, the percentage of 33.33%, few of them for tape recorder (3.33%) and other materials for 10% of using.

Learners' Answers on reading English books or listening English program on TV.

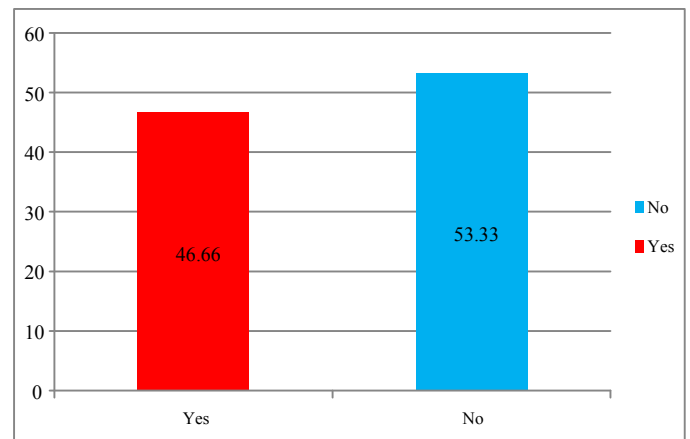


Figure 10 Learners' Answers on reading English books or listening English program on TV.

The results of figure 10 show that forty-six point six and six point (46.66%) of learners confess that they usually read books or listening TV program, and 53.33% of them do not do the same.

Results from Interviews

Some revelations have been got from the interviews with an EFL teacher adviser and with some teachers. These revelations can be summarized as follows:

For the English Language Teacher's adviser: „*our students' difficulties to speak or to require speaking skills are largely due to their teachers' methods and to some extent to the environment.*” Some teachers keep on rising the traditional method of teaching “the trial and error”. Method of teaching which consists in making the student face the actual difficulties and guiding him to find the solutions by himself is not seriously taken into account in Beninese schools. Another problem is the lack of authentic materials. In fact, the interview respondents of EFL teachers also complained about the deficiency of authentic resources to create a communicative classroom. Mr. Adélèyè, an EFL teacher at Sèmè-Podji Secondary School, acknowledged that working for a state placed him at a disadvantage position in terms of access to extra resources. He added this: „*We have course books that have listening activities, but we don't have the CDs in our hand. We don't have any LCD projector, TV, or such equipments. I really have a lot of problems while carrying out a speaking or a listening activity*”.

The EFL teachers are also faced to large classes size challenges. Having large classes is one of the key problems in Beninese educational system in general. The questionnaire data have revealed that high number of students in classes is also a serious concern in the use of CLT in English classes; the majority of EFL teachers in this school have notified that. For them, in order to succeed in applying CLT in schools, the classes need to be much smaller than they actually are.

Results from Classroom Observations

The class atmosphere was the first thing which drew some attention during the observations. About seventy-five percent (75%) of the speaking lessons have been carried out in bad atmosphere. The teachers seem to be strange to the students while speaking English. Students were not interested in the lesson, some were sleeping, and laughing and others were expressing themselves in their native language or in French. In seventy-five percent (75%) of the classes where investigations were carried out, more than sixty-five point five percent (65.5%) of the students were passive during the speaking session. Teachers also preferred to call on the students who want to speak or answer only. The ratio of book per number of students and the quality of the document were disproportional in ninety percent (90%) of classes observed. The attendance books of eighty percent (80%) of the classes visited, revealed that the absence rate to English lessons is important in Beninese secondary schools. The students, especially the advanced learners did not show up in English classes. During investigations many students particularly advanced students who confessed that English lessons in general and speaking activities in particular were difficult and they did not want to be laughed at while talking.

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

Teachers' Management in developing Advanced- Learners' Communicative Skills in Classes

First of all, more than the half of English teachers does not always speak English in their classes. They usually speak French and even their mother tongue. This reveals that even in English class, learners are not exposed to the language all the time. As a consequence, they also fail in achieving success in speaking English. As far as teachers' qualification is concerned, it can be noticed that thirty (30%) of teachers are really qualified, trained for teaching. Most of them that is seventy percent (70%) are not qualified, trained for teaching. The drop in the students' standard can also be explained by the lack of trained or qualified teachers. As results, learners are not interested in the language and even their level will fail. It is clear that there is a problem and one could speak on miracle if the students are good at English despite the difficulties they face. Educational stakeholders must train teachers and teachers too in turn must invest in their self-professional development.

The results of this investigation reveal that most of these activities are performed by EFL teachers. In fact, in Beninese schools about 40% of EFL teachers do group discussion, through riddles, songs, games, role-play etc. Thanks to those different strategies used by teachers, students' performance improved significantly. But unfortunately, when considering the English curriculum, communicative competence is not well implemented in Benin secondary schools. In order to encourage teachers in their vocation to teach communicative and entertainment activities, more times should be devoted to English classes especially to advanced-learners of scientists' series where scientific subjects are highly graded. As far as the students' responses are concerned, it can be noticed that more than ninety percent (90%) of advanced- learners like English and would like to speak it fluently. In order to encourage learners, teachers should then take a sincere commitment to well organize and create a good atmosphere which is very useful in the learning of the acquisition of the language.

The problems hindering communicative competence in learning English as a foreign language in advanced learners' classes need consistent remediations. Results show that eighty percent (80%) of advanced learners would like to speak English. This is probably due to the fact that English is recognized as international language and the presence of the English language in every domain at universities. Unfortunately, the time allotted, two hours per week to teach English and the teaching conditions and the materials used during the English course have negative impact on the whole learning process. It can also be noticed that some EFL teachers do not use appropriate strategies to improve learners' oral fluency. This shows that most teachers of English are still attached to the traditional method that is grammar translation method technique. What is obvious is that they do not teach speaking and even do not provide the opportunities that can bring benefits to their learners in real life situation. Simply put, the real success of students depends on the qualification; the experience and largely the competence of the teacher.

After years of English learning, most Beninese learners are not capable to speak accurately and fluently. Findings have shown that speaking skill has been a failure. This failure is related to the teachers' lack adequate strategies and classroom techniques. Teachers do not select relevant materials which

meet learners' needs and expectations. Interest in topics plays a very vital role in students' active participation in classroom activities. According to Brown (2010:55), *when something isn't interesting, most people are not willing to talk about it, while one can talk as much as he/she can on his/her interests*. Add to this aspect, the unavailability of authentic and relevant materials adds to the overcrowded classes do not allow teachers to be effective.

Activities used to develop Advanced Learners' Oral Communication Performance.

For this paper, questionnaires have been designed to students and various answers have been collected, which helps a lot to reach the goal of this topic. For instance, the answer for this question: Do you like speaking English? Eighty percent (80%) said they like English very much. Some of them simply like English, others like it because of their teacher's behavior, whereas some others like it because of its importance for their future career. This means advanced learners of *scientist series C and D* are yearning of learning the English Language as a foreign one. Seventy-three point three and three percent (73.33%) confessed that they like speaking English even if they are making mistakes. Which is normally encouraged since practice makes perfect. The learners advocated that their bad results can be linked with the lack of books because 53% of learners do not possess the appropriate documents. This percentage shows the lack of adequate materials, that is, books and others teaching equipment which can help to teach or learn well the speaking of English as a Foreign Language.

From this investigation, more than fifty-three percent (53.33%) of students recognize the importance of English in their learning and teaching process. This shows the importance of English language speaking in Beninese educational system. Indeed, as teachers, all of learners must be motivated to like the English language. If some do not like at all what they are taught, this means that the goal is not totally reached. To allow all of learners to communicate fluently with English, it is very important to make them work in group as required by the Competency-Based Approach involved in Beninese educational system.

In addition, more than ninety percent (90%) of learners want to speak fluently English. This means learners have great interest to learn the language. Thirty-three point three and three percent (33.33%) of English teachers use visual aids, thirty-three point three and three 33.33% of them use tape recorder meaning that the communicative goal to be reached is so far. In addition, the great majority of learners neither read English books nor listens to English program; which contribute a lot in the failure of learning and teaching efficiently English as a Foreign Language.

Communicative competence should be well developed in EFL classes mainly *scientist series C and D*. This is supported by Bryne (2009:87) who states that *"The development of communicative competence is a good source of motivation for most learners who are normally much concerned about the ability to speak and understand a foreign language"*. It is generally acceptable that the main purpose of learning a foreign language is to speak the target language. So, teachers should be aware that encouraging students to say progressively what they have in mind and allowing them to

narrate events orally encourages the elimination of anxiety. Furthermore, motivation can often be improved in large classes by placing greater emphasis on the receptive skill of listening. This has the additional advantage of getting the students accustomed to understanding the language without reference to a written text as well as proving opportunities for meaningful repetition of known materials.

Obviously, among the four skills learned, oral communication seems to be the most important one since the main objective of English teaching/learning is to arouse students' communication the language. That is, it aims at improving the students' communication skill. Learners should therefore master all the speaking components: fluency, accuracy and comprehensibility as Richards & Renandya (2012:121) stipulate: *a large percentage of the world's language learners study English in order to develop proficiency in speaking*. Unfortunately, Beninese students in *scientist series C and Dare* not able to develop this proficiency, that is, they are unable to speak fluently the English language for at least three minutes. The worst is remarked at the upper sixth learners' level.

CONCLUSION

The classroom provides an ideal 'protected' environment in which learners can develop confidence in speaking English. Teachers need to provide a variety of speaking activities to reflect the variety of speaking activities learners will engage in real life situation. This can increase their confidence, and therefore boost their performance when they have to speak in real world situation.

To reach my goal, firstly some knowledge is expanded on the topic by going through some pioneers' books related to the role of communicative competence in learning English as a foreign language. The data gathered from those productions shed light on how advanced learners of *scientist series C and D* can be helped to develop their communicative competence in Beninese secondary schools. Teaching communicative skill is a central part of foreign language learning. The ability to communicate in a foreign language clearly and efficiently contributes to the achievement of learner in school and achievement later in every stage of life. This research paper about the role of communicative competence in the learning of English in advanced *scientist series C and D* classes is meant to contribute to the improvement of teachers for the acquisition of communicative competence by the learners.

It has helped to discover that in Benin secondary schools, advanced *scientist series C and D* learners show the desire to speak English fluently. But, due to the inadequate materials, the insufficient time allotted to English Language teaching, the environment and specially the teacher's behavior hinder the learners to like the language, master it and be able to practice it in real life situation. It has helped me to master more the importance of training teachers with regard to how to teach communicative competence to students in general and particularly to scientist advanced- learners of *C and D series* in Benin context where the Competency. Based Approach is implemented. Teachers need to expand their professional growth in the speaking field. Many difficulties related to the lack of classrooms, the inadequacy of hours allocated to English lessons are found throughout this investigation. All

those challenges hinder the learners' motivation to learn effectively the language.

From the findings, EFL teachers do not have sufficient opportunities to speak English and meaningful communicative activities. They are not enough motivated. To better this situation, both teachers and learners must be motivated. In the same way, many secondary schools fail in putting at the disposal of teachers and students equipped libraries and English laboratories in order to make research and get more knowledge apart from what they acquire in the formal setting.

The research also allows to understand the great problem teachers in *scientist series C* and *D* faced while teaching in large classes. In fact, how can one person teach efficiently to more than 70 students in one class of that size and get good results at the end? Because of large classes, the application of communication competence, in Beninese public schools especially at Sèmè-Podji Secondary School for example without using radio/ TV set or appropriate materials is very difficult.

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