SPEAKING TASKS AND TEACHING TECHNIQUES IN EFL 4È CLASSES IN NIAMEY 3 SECONDARY SCHOOL INSPECTORATE

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Abstract

This study explores the speaking tasks and the teaching techniques used by the teachers in EFL 4è classes, with the aim of determining whether they are effective in enabling students to communicate through the language. To achieve this objective, we adopted a qualitative approach, including data collection based on classroom observations and questionnaires. The results demonstrated the irrelevance of some tasks and some important weaknesses in the teaching of speaking activities, and this is mostly due to the teachers' way of teaching. In fact, there is a serious lack of exposing students to an English-speaking environment, which leads to their poor performance. The main causes of these challenges are the teachers' lack of initial training, the students' use of French or their mother tongues in the classroom, the insufficiency of didactic materials, the overcrowded classes and the use of inappropriate strategies and techniques to make students perform well in the classroom. In conclusion, this study highlights the teachers' ineffectiveness in teaching speaking and the difficult conditions they work in. Therefore, some recommendations have been proffered to help the system reach its goals in EFL education.
Keywords: *Skill; performance; teacher; training; strategy;*

Résumé

Cette étude explore les tâches orales et les techniques d'enseignement utilisées par les enseignants en classe d'anglais langue étrangère (EFL 4è), afin de déterminer leur efficacité pour permettre aux élèves de communiquer en anglais. Pour atteindre cet objectif, nous avons adopté une approche qualitative, incluant une collecte de données basée sur des observations en classe et des questionnaires. Les résultats ont mis en évidence la non-pertinence des taches, d'importantes faiblesses dans l'enseignement de l'expression orale, principalement dues à la méthode pédagogique des enseignants. En effet, l'exposition des élèves à un environnement anglophone

ISBN : 978-2-493659-12- 5 COLLECTION RECHERCHES & REGARDS D'AFRIQUE VOL 4 N ° 14 Septembre 2025

est insuffisante, ce qui entraîne de faibles performances. Les principales causes de ces difficultés sont le manque de formation initiale des enseignants, l'utilisation du français ou de leur langue maternelle par les élèves en classe, l'insuffisance de matériel didactique, la surpopulation des classes et l'utilisation de stratégies et de techniques inappropriées pour assurer la réussite des élèves en classe. En conclusion, cette étude met en évidence l'inefficacité des enseignants dans l'enseignement de l'expression orale et les conditions difficiles dans lesquelles ils travaillent. Par conséquent, des recommandations ont été formulées pour aider le système à atteindre ses objectifs en matière d'enseignement de l'anglais langue étrangère.
***Mots-clés** : Compétence ; performance ; enseignant ; formation ; stratégie ;*

Introduction

English language education has been introduced in the curriculum since 1965, and it has been taught from the secondary school level to the university level as a foreign language. In this study, we are going to examine the speaking tasks and teaching techniques in EFL 4è classes in Inspectorate Niamey 3. Speaking is an important method for communicating knowledge and expressing ideas. Being able to verbally communicate effectively to other individuals or to groups is essential in school, business, as well as in one's personal life.

Learning English in our Nigerien context requires the teaching of the four language skills which are listening, speaking, reading and writing. However, as a teacher of English, we notice by experience that the speaking skill is neglected by teachers whereas it should be developed if we want to teach our students the English language in the sense of having an effective use of it by enabling students to communicate through the language. This situation may be due to the fact that speaking is generally limited to the classroom environment as it is seldom spoken in our public places. Teachers strive to teach students the grammar, vocabulary, the different structures, the functions of the language through reading, listening, and writing. But they rarely design speaking activities. As a consequence, students

ISBN : 978-2-493659-12-5 COLLECTION RECHERCHES & REGARDS D'AFRIQUE VOL 4 N ° 14 Septembre 2025

find face serious challenges when it comes to speaking. In this study, we are going to investigate the causes of the challenges by looking into the different tasks the teachers give to their students and the teaching strategies they are using. This will enable us to identify the problems, propose solutions and eventually make some recommendations.

1. Problem statement

Learning involves a great deal of motivation. It is difficult for one to speak a language without first getting interested in that language. In our secondary schools, students in EFL 4è (third year) class encounter the same problem of speaking like their seniors. Therefore, motivating all the students in EFL 4è (third year) class to speak English in class can be a challenging task for any EFL teacher. In the learning process in our secondary schools, we come across many barriers such as:

- Using a mixture of French, English and even native languages during class by the students and even by the teacher
- Lacking activities reflecting real life situations
- Not emphasizing enough on teaching functions and misunderstanding how to teach them
- Missing opportunities to practice the language during and outside class sessions.

After over twenty years of teaching, we noticed that students only learn English in order to pass their various exams (tests, mock examinations, BEPC, BAC etc.). We have discovered that many students attend English classes just because it is in the curriculum, and it is mandatory. In this situation one cannot expect them to speak the language properly as their motivation is highly impacted. The fact that they lack the

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opportunity to practice it is another important issue as most classes are really overcrowded. Therefore, students are less encouraged to use the language as an important communicative tool. This leads our students in secondary school to have difficulties to communicate in the target language. Also, the lack of self-confidence in their capacity to express themselves in English and the fear of being mocked at in public leads them to interact in French or in their mother tongues. Among the skills taught, we notice that speaking is less considered than the three others. This is the reason why we decide in this study to focus on "speaking tasks and teaching techniques in 4è level EFL classrooms". We will explore the different speaking tasks assigned, and the teaching techniques that teachers use to carry out their daily activities in 4è level. Therefore, the following research questions have been formulated:

1. What speaking tasks and teaching techniques in ELT do teachers use to make speaking activities more interesting and attractive for students?
2. What factors prevent students from speaking English?

The objective of the research is to identify the different speaking tasks and teaching techniques related to the opportunities to speak that teachers use in EFL (English as Foreign Language) 4è classes and also to identify the different barriers that prevent students from speaking in and outside of the classroom. Then, we will explore some opportunities for good a learning process and learning conditions to improve students speaking abilities and eventually make suggestions to reinforce EFL teachers' capacities on speaking tasks and appropriate teaching techniques during the teaching/learning process. Our hypothesis is that the daily types of tasks given by teachers for speaking and teaching techniques used in EFL 4è classes do not promote students speaking the target language in the classroom.

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2. Literature review

Speaking is the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts (A. L. Chaney & T. L. Burk,1998). It is a crucial part of second language learning and teaching as it is one of the four fundamental skills necessary to master a language. Despite its importance, for many years, teaching speaking has been undervalued and English language teachers have continued to teach speaking just as a repetition of drills or memorization of dialogues. S. Hassane (2006) has mentioned in his research dealing with some useful strategies that can help teachers conduct speaking activities in 4è classes with the focus on large classes, that bringing learners to practice speaking has been the concern of many studies. From experience, we have noticed that EFL learners' reluctance to speak English in the classroom is a problem commonly found in EFL contexts. This is due to the fact most students are given fewer opportunities to speak the target language. For other students, working with students who are reluctant to maintain and extend conversations limits their opportunities for language use. B. Bresnihan and B. Stoops (1996) points out that "one of the most difficult challenges in teaching a foreign language abroad is finding ways to help students improve their oral fluency." This is especially true in countries where students generally share a common mother tongue and have little or no exposure to English outside the classroom. Today, the goal of teaching speaking should be to improve students' communicative skills because only in that way, can they express themselves and learn how to follow the social and cultural rules appropriate in each communicative circumstance. Speaking activities provide opportunities for positive personal relationships to develop among the learners and between learners and teacher. These relationships can help

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to “humanize” the classroom and to create an environment that supports the individual in his efforts to learn (W. Littlewood, 1995).

2.1. What students need to communicate

To deal with communicative language teaching, we have to rely on the capacity of our learners to be involved in the activity. In a classroom, teachers should develop communicative competence in learners which is according to D. H. Hymes (1972) the aspect of our competence that enables us to convey and interpret messages and to negotiate meanings interpersonally within specific context. For W. Littlewood (1995), the following skills need to be taken into consideration:

-The learner must develop skills in manipulating a linguistic system, to the point where he can use it spontaneously and flexibly in order to express his intended message.
-The learner must identify that the forms he has mastered as part of linguistic system must also be considered as part of a communicative system.
-The learner must develop skills and strategies for using language to communicate meanings as effectively as possible in concrete situations.
-The learner must learn to use feedback to judge his success and if necessary, remedy failure by a using different language. He must become aware of the social meaning of language forms.

2.2. Roles of the teacher in communicative language teaching

During creative types of activity, (W. Littlewood, 1995 p.19) contends that unnecessary intervention on the teacher’s part may prevent the learner from becoming genuinely involved in the activity and thus hinder the development of their communicative skills. However, this does not mean that once an

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activity is in progress, the teacher should become a passive observer. His function becomes less dominant than before, but no less important. Therefore, it can be assumed that the teacher has no direct role in the activity. It is better to clarify the role of a teacher in communicative language teaching due to the complexity of communication. In fact, the roles of teachers and learners are, in many ways complementary. Giving the learners a different role (such as greater initiative in the classroom) requires the teacher to adopt a different role. According to D. Nunan (2003), the teacher has three main roles in the communicative classroom. The first is to act as facilitator of the communicative process in the sense that he initiates the activity and intervenes only when it breaks down altogether. The second is to act as a participant playing a role in setting the activity, and the third is to act as an observer and learner i.e. the teacher observes the students performing the activity and learns something from what the students do.

2.3. Accuracy and fluency

An important issue in language performance is the distinction between accuracy and fluency. Both fluency and accuracy are fundamental components of speaking proficiency and have been extensively studied across diverse linguistic contexts (W. Wang et al., 2024). They add that in addition to fluency and accuracy, higher-order thinking skills such as CT have been recognized as crucial in language acquisition. It is now very clear that fluency and accuracy are both important goals to pursue in communicative language teaching (CLT) and/or task-based language teaching (TBLT). While fluency may, in many communicative language courses, be an initial goal in language teaching, accuracy is achieved to some extent by allowing students to focus on the elements of phonology, grammar, and discourse in their spoken output. The fluency/accuracy issue often boils down to the extent to which

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our techniques should be message oriented (or, as some call it, teaching language use) as opposed to language oriented (also known as teaching language usage). Current approaches to language teaching lean strongly towards message orientation with language usage offering a supporting role.

2.4. The criteria of communicative activities

Communication through speaking implies more than one person. There must be someone to transmit a message and someone to receive it and react. In a classroom situation, the first communication happens between the teacher communicating with his students during the lesson for the sake of linguistic competence. C. Prator (1993, p. 249) in *Landmarks of American Linguistics* defines a communicative activity by comparing it to the manipulative one where the learners receive words and structures from the teacher or the textbook. The good communicative language lesson should derive input from authentic resources, involve learners in problem solving activities, be based on fluency and incorporate tasks which relate to learner's real life communication needs, (D. Nunan, 2003). Every activity should concern the learners' real-life situations and interests. Learners and teachers are required to adopt a range of roles and use language in a variety of settings in and outside of the classroom. Teacher acts as initiator and participant whereas the learners are full actors of the activity since they are encouraged to develop skills in learning how to learn and develop competence in all the skills and put communication forward in language learning.

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Table 1: Difference between a communicative activity and a noncommunicative one

Speaking tasks	Non-speaking tasks
• Fluency • Derive input from authentic resources • Learners' real life communicative needs • Learners – centered • Involves learners in creative language use • Use of language communicatively in variety settings in and out of the classroom	✓ Accuracy ✓ Repetition of what teacher says ✓ Activity based on the life of English people ✓ The teacher commands all the activity ✓ Learners use models or modify them ✓ Specific use of language for linguistic competence

This table shows the difference between a communicative activity and non-communicative one. It is clear that a non-communicative activity focuses on the language forms whereas the communicative one is based on the use of the language by the learners to communicate which is commonly accepted as the ultimate goal of learning a language.

3. Methodology

This study is a qualitative approach as our data collection is based on observations and questionnaires which formed the basis of the quantitative analysis. We went into classrooms to observe the ten randomly selected teachers of the inspectorate. To collect the data, we have designed a checklist composed of

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sections that will help us record what the teacher is doing i.e. the teacher's interaction and the student's response. This checklist will indicate the presence or the absence of specified characteristics such as speaking activities, tasks assigned to learners, the verbal flow, the role play, and the teacher's attitude to error correction and the different barriers that prevent students from speaking in the classroom. A fourteen-item questionnaire for teachers and a seventeen-item questionnaire for advisers were devised in order to analyze the tasks and the teaching of the speaking skill in this inspectorate. The study was conducted in two public secondary schools (CEGI, CEG II), one private (CES Lumière) and one semi private (Collège Mariama). The participants included the ten randomly selected and observed teachers, the fifteen chosen ones for filling the questionnaires and the five ELT advisers working for the Inspectorate Niamey III. The different data were collected from them and analyzed thoroughly.

4. Results and findings

4.1. Data description and their interpretation from observation

Section A: Description of participants' identification

Table 2: Area of research

Schools	Teachers observed
Collège Mariama	3
CES Lumière	1
CEG 1	3
CEG 2	3
Total	10

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The above table shows the scope of our research. We have observed ten teachers of English at least twice and filled the checklist.

Figure 1: Teachers' administrative positions

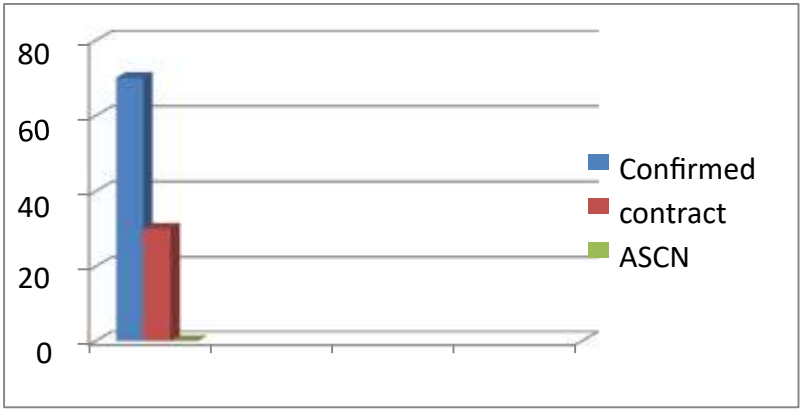

Figure 1 shows that of the ten teachers observed, three are contract teachers (30%), seven confirmed (70%) and no ASCN (National Youth Service or *Appelé du Service Civique National* in French) (0%). This high rate of confirmed teachers will allow us to gather enough information because of their experience in teaching.

Table 3: Teachers' qualifications

Diploma	Frequency	Percentage
BAC	0	0%
DAP/CEG	1	10%
Bachelor of Arts	7	70%
Master of Arts	2	20%

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Total	10	100%

Table 3 shows us that teachers with a DAP/CEG degree represent 10% whereas the majority (70%) hold a bachelor of arts degree and those with a master of arts degree represent 20%. From this table, we notice that most of the teachers observed have a bachelor' s degree, and only one is trained at the school of education (ENS).

Table 4: Teachers' experience

Years of teaching	Frequency	Percentage
1 to 5	3	30%
6 to 15	5	50%
16 to 30	2	20%

Table 4 deals with the participants' experience. Three have from 1 to 5 years of teaching (30%), five (50%) have between 6 and 15 years of experience, and the two (20%) most experienced ones have between 16 and 30 years of teaching. We expect teachers' experience to have an impact on the quality of the teaching. It can be assumed that from 6 to 15 years of teaching, a teacher may acquire enough experience that will help provide necessary efforts and strategies to enable students to develop certain competence.

Section B: Learning activities

Table 5: Do teachers use visual aids when conducting their lessons?

Teachers observed	Results		Percentage
10	Yes	7	70%

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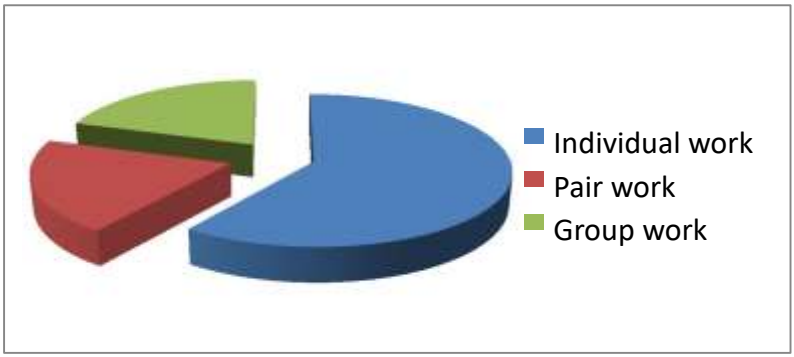
	No	3	30%

This table shows that 7 (70%) out of 10 teachers use visual aids to conduct their teaching while 3 (30%) do not. Using visual aids is considered to be an effective tool to motivate language learners as they are of a great help in stimulating the learning of a foreign language. Unfortunately, not all teachers contextualize their teaching through visual aids. This may be caused by ignorance or a lack of initial training or both.

Figure 2: Types of strategies used by teachers



According this figure, 6 teachers out of the 10 observed assign individual work while only 2 assign group work and the remaining 2 choose pair work. This shows that students are used to communicating with the language. It is the reason why students have problems interacting between themselves or with other people. Teachers should assign more pair or group work as our classes are getting larger and larger and this will enable students to get opportunities to interact and practice oral fluency. This way, the students will be used to speaking English naturally even in real life.

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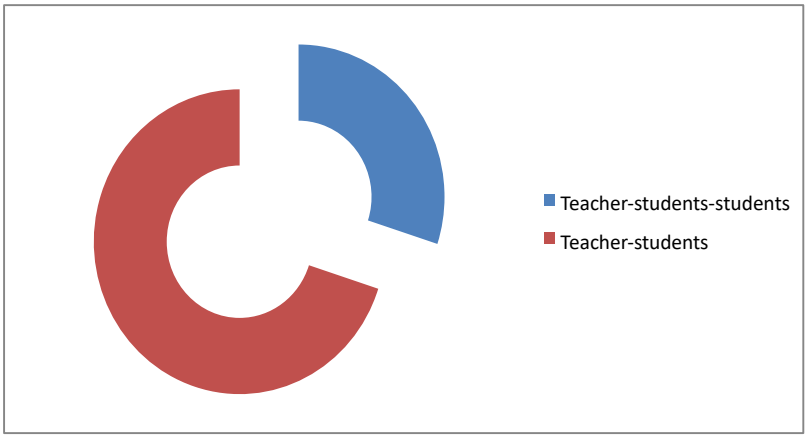
Section C: Students' participation

Figure 3: What is the direction of the verbal flow**?**



Based on the results recorded in this figure, only 3 teachers out of the 10 observed involve students in their activities as they use student-student chain in carrying their activities. Seven do not involve students in their activities because the verbal flow is always teacher-students. This shows a lack of students' exposure to good English-speaking environment. The students' amount of participation is minimized by 70% of the teachers observed. The 30% that are using teacher→ students→ students limit learning to drills. They did not give the opportunity to really use English because they limit their drills to mechanical ones. By doing so, students do not demonstrate their knowledge of the use of the new materials. These teachers must follow the order of mechanical, meaningful and finally communicative drills to help students speak English in real life situation, and their activities must have connections with real situations. To sum up, the verbal flow is greatly

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neglected, and this does not favor students to communicate in and out of the class and clearly help understand the problem of teaching the speaking skill. In these schools.

Table 6: Role play

Teachers observed	Results		Percentage
10	Yes	4	40%
	No	6	60%

Table 9 shows that 4 teachers out of 10 are interested in role play activities whereas 6 aren't. Role play is useful to maintain a balance between realistic activities and imaginative situations. It provides learners opportunities to practice correct and appropriate use of a wide range of functions, notions, structures in a variety of context. Even shy students can benefit from group practice because they may be afraid of speaking in front of a whole class. Unfortunately, this activity seems to be neglected by a great percentage of teachers as they do not conduct it during their teaching time. The role play allows learners to practice through communicative activities with more spontaneity and fluency. If the learners are not used to role-playing in class, it will be hard for them to do it in real life situations especially in English, a foreign language that is for students mostly heard only in class. In such conditions, it can be deduced that students cannot fluently speak English in and out of the class.

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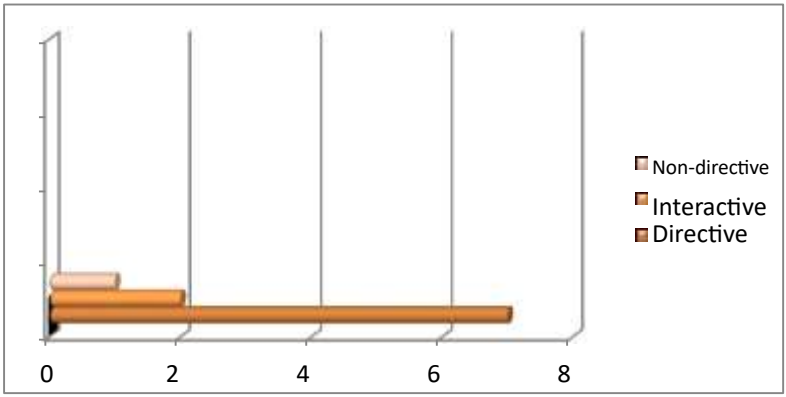
Figure 4: The teaching style



In this figure, we realize that 20% of the teachers observed have an interactive style of teaching which is a way to get 50% of the students' participation and 50% of the teacher's talk. Teachers using a non-directive teaching style represent 10% and the seven teachers out of the 10 teachers observed are carrying out their teaching without involving their learners. The figure also shows that most of the teachers (70%) observed have a teaching style that is directive which is rather teacher-centered. An ancient Chinese proverb states that:

Tell me, I forget.
Show me, I remember.
Involve me, I understand.

In general, the more speaking practice you get, the better you understand the language. Unfortunately, the percentages shown in table 10 indicate that the majority of the teachers (7 out of 10) do not involve their students in their teaching. Therefore, the interactive communicative pattern is not promoted. We can

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deduce that their approach is rather teacher-centered, and this leads the students to lose interest in learning English and may, therefore, prevent them from enjoying speaking it.

Section D: The teachers' attitude towards error correction

Figure 5: How do teachers treat errors?

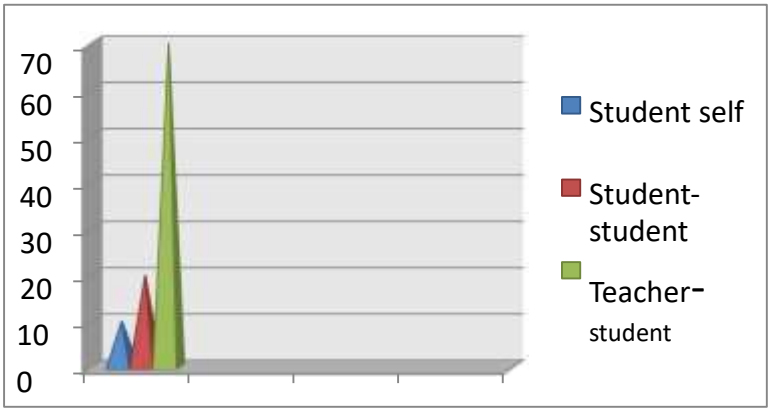

Figure 5 shows the teachers' attitude towards correcting errors from the students. Seven teachers (70%) correct students' errors themselves, two teachers (20%) encourage peer correction (student-student correction) whereas only one teacher (10%) allows students to correct themselves. Normally a student is encouraged to correct himself when he makes errors. If he does not succeed in doing it, his classmates may be asked, and the teacher should be the last to intervene. Unfortunately, 70% of the teachers we observed do not mind this scheme and proceed as they please. From experience, we believe that when students are given opportunities to correct themselves, they understand better and will retain forever. But, sometimes, some teachers' attitudes (humiliation, sarcasm, rebuke…) towards correction discourage learners. In this figure, we can notice that cooperation is not

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promoted because the teaching does not help students develop the speaking or communicative ability.

4.2. Data analysis for ELT teachers' questionnaire

To conduct our research, a questionnaire was submitted to fifteen teachers. Twelve questionnaires have been filled up and returned back to us. The results are examined as follows:
Section A: Participants' identification

Table 7: Area of research

Schools	Number of participants
Collège Mariama	4
CES Lumière	1
CEG 1	3
CEG 2	4

Table 7 shows that we selected 2 public schools (CEG 1 and CEG 2) 1 semi-private school (Collège Mariama) and 1 private one (CES Lumière) where there is only one 4è class which justifies the only participant.

Table 8: Participants' training institutions

Institutions/Schools	Frequency	Percentage
FLSH	9	75%
ENS	3	25%
Abroad	0	0%

This table provides information about the participants' training. Nine (9) teachers (75%) were trained at the Faculty of

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Arts and Humanities (FLSH) of Abdou Moumouni University, three (3) participants (25%) got their training at the School of Education (ENS) and no teacher (0%) was trained abroad. From this table, we can see that the majority of teachers received their training at the faculty or arts (FLSH). Though most of students at the English department of the faculty of arts end up teaching, they are not as qualified as those from the school of education (ENS) who receive enough pedagogical practicum. Therefore, it is not surprising that they encounter problems in the teaching of the language skills.

Table 9: Participants' administrative positions

Status	Frequency	Percentage
Confirmed	9	75%
Contract	3	25%
ASCN	0	0%

Table 9 shows that 75% of the participants are confirmed, 25% are contractual teachers, and none is an ASCN. We expect confirmed teachers to do better than contractual ones, but from our observations, we notice that each one has his/her own experience and his/her way to conduct his lessons.

Table 10: Participants' experience as teachers

Years of teaching	Frequency	Percentage
1 to 5	4	33.33%
6 to 15	6	50%
16 to 30	2	16.66%

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Table 10 talks about the participants' experience. Noticing that eight (8) out of twelve have more than five years' experience in teaching, we expect these teachers to provide good teaching by including students' participation and performance in speaking the language. On the contrary, the first group (33.33%) considered as beginners should improve their performance through collaboration and cooperation among teachers.

Table 11: Are there enough teaching materials in the schools?

Participants	Results	Percentage
12	Yes: 2	83.33%
	No: 10	16.66%

According to this table, 10 teachers (83.33%) said that they have insufficient didactic materials while only 2 (16.66%) said yes. From that result, we can conclude that didactic materials are not sufficient in the schools (especially in the public ones) whereas didactic materials are very important and necessary tools in the teaching/learning process, and their insufficiency negatively impacts teaching.

Table 12: Main didactic materials mostly used by teachers

Materials	Participants	Percentage
Textbooks	12	100%
Handouts	0	0%
Tape recorders	0	0%
Others	4	33.33%

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Table 12 shows that all teachers use textbooks, none of them (0%) uses tape recorders or handouts, and only 33.33% look for other sources as maps, drawings, pictures etc. We can say that all teachers (100%) rely on textbooks to conduct their lessons. As mentioned, textbooks are not sufficient in the schools; to compensate this lack, teachers must be creative by using handouts or tape recorders in their classrooms. Though we know the importance of tape recorders as they bring students to listen to native speakers in order to perform their listening-speaking activities, none of the teachers use them. To conclude, it can be noticed that just four teachers make an effort to use realia such as pictures, maps, drawings in order to benefit their students.

Table 13: Sources of the materials

Sources	Results	Percentage
Schools	Yes: 6	50%
	No: 6	50%
Own	Yes: 7	58.33%
	No: 5	41.66%
NGOs/Other partners	Yes: 1	8.33%
	No: 11	91.66%

Table 13 highlights the source of the didactic materials. Six participants (50%) said that their materials are provided by their schools, seven (58.33%) provided their own materials, and only one (8.33%) reported that the books were granted by NGOs and other partners. From this table, we can notice that teachers do not have enough textbooks for their teaching. They try to get some by themselves. In private schools, students and teachers have to look for their own textbooks while in the public schools,

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teachers and students have to wait for the ministry of education to provide them with school supplies.

Table 14: Have you ever tried a speaking activity?

Participants	Students' interest	Percentage	Speaking activities	Percentage
12	Yes: 11	91.66%	Yes: 10	83.33%
	No: 1	8.33%	No: 2	16.66%

The table above shows that 83.33% of the teachers have tried to conduct a speaking activity while 16.66% have never done it. According to the results, we can assert that their learners have opportunities to be exposed to the language. Nevertheless, teachers may take into account adequate techniques and tasks during their teaching activities. The great majority (11) of participants (91.66%) agreed that their students are interested in speaking activities whereas only one answered no. This leads us to notice students' desire about using the language. Then, teachers should encourage them to practice the language. The teacher who answered "no" explained that his students were "lazy" and found English difficult to understand and to speak.

Table 15: What speaking activities have you ever carried out once or frequently?

Activities	Results	Percentage
Role play	6	50%
Simulations	3	25%
Information gap	2	16.66%
Brainstorming	3	25%

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Story telling	6	50%
Interviews	1	8.33%
Reporting	1	8.33%
Picture describing	8	66.66%
Picture narrating	2	16.66%
Story completion	1	8.33%
Playing cards	0	0%
Discussions	7	58.33%

The above table is about the different types of speaking activities that the teachers tried. Most of the twelve teachers (66.66%) have tried picture describing while six of them (50%) have tried role play while seven out have tried discussion. Fewer of them have tried each of the other activities. The results we obtained lead to say that teachers do their best to expose learners to some activities which favor speaking, but they should also continue to try the others such as brainstorming and reporting which are also excellent ways to enable students to participate easily during these speaking activities.

Table 16: Students' reluctance to speak English

Reasons for reluctance	Participants	Percentage
Level of task difficulty	6	50%
Teacher's negative attitude towards students	2	16.66%

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Inappropriate learning environment	6	50%

Table 16 deals with the students' reluctance to speak English in classroom. Among the three reasons stated above, six teachers say that the students' reluctance is a problem related to the level of task difficulty and the remaining six assert that it is due to an inappropriate learning environment. We have to specify that two out of the twelve think that an inappropriate learning environment and the negative attitudes towards students cannot help or motivate them to speak English in the classroom.

4.3. Discussions of the results of the questionnaire submitted to ELT advisers

The results of the analysis of the questionnaire submitted to the English teaching advisers are as follows: Questions 1 through 4 are about the advisers' identification, qualification, experience and number of teachers they are in charge of.

For question 5 that deals with the preference of some proposals of activities, all the advisers prefer the following two activities: classroom observation and monitoring workshops. The question number 7 asks advisers if they have the opportunity to carry out easily their task. In their answers, most of them four (4) disagreed while only one (1) agreed with the statement. We notice that funds are scarcely allotted to advisers as transportation fees in case the inspectorate does not have a vehicle. If advisers always rely on these fees to conduct their mission, they will hardly visit more than two or three teachers a year. About question 8, all the advisers agreed with the four language skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing). The four skills are then integrated as wished by the method. For question 9, most of them answered listening and reading.

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Adviser 4 attests that the most widely taught is only reading arguing that speaking is developed throughout the other skills, which may not be necessarily be true. Regarding question 10, all of them answered affirmatively. However, most of them blamed teachers on giving unclear instructions. We realize that being a confirmed teacher does not necessarily mean being an effective one.

Questions 11 and 12 refer to the techniques used by teachers while conducting their speaking activities and whether these techniques help them reach their objectives for speaking activities. Three advisers attest that teachers record a passage and play it in class or read the passage while two state that teachers play the role of a tape or can read a passage. Four advisers (4) affirm that these techniques are suitable while one adviser says that the techniques do not help teachers reach the objectives of the speaking activities.

Answers to question 13 show that all advisers (100%) are unanimous in noticing difficulties from the teachers in conducting their speaking activities. Three of them say that the difficulties lie in the implementation of the techniques and in how they conduct their tasks. The other two affirm that the difficulties are related to the way the instructions are given. If there is no clarity in the instructions, advisers could also be blamed as they are supposed to train the teachers who are mostly experienced ones.

Question 14 deals with the different attitudes developed by teachers during observation. Four out of the five advisers notice that the teachers are self-confident and develop self-control. The remaining one states that most of the teachers are not self-confident and they seem to do everything by themselves as teachers. About the question 15, all the advisers answered negatively while for question 16 dealing with the way the teaching of speaking activities is conducted, four of them answered that the teaching is directive whereas only one

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answered that it is interactive. In question 17, advisers make suggestions to help teachers become effective in conducting speaking activities. They are summarized in the following table:

Table 17: Advisers' suggestions

Inspectorate Niamey 3	Suggestions
Adviser 1	We request teachers to go on internet (if this is possible) to have some sample to follow and adapt. Teachers can help themselves by planning activities in their UP.
Adviser 2	Teachers have to plan their speaking activities in order to help students to communicate in and outside the classroom. They should emphasize speaking for communication because speaking for communication (fluency) is more important than accuracy. They should involve their students in teaching new grammar and structures and should conduct the class from guided to freer activities.
Adviser 3	Teachers should allow more time for speaking activities in class and should have more materials such as tape recorders, flash cards, pictures etc.
Adviser 4	Speaking should be developed through a listening material. It should be a cross skill in between listening, reading and writing. In fact, teachers should bring students to generate their own sentences and avoid frequent error corrections.
Adviser 5	Teachers should use more interactive methods so that students will be able to practice what they have learned in realistic situations.

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4.4. Synthesis of the findings

By the end of the research, our analysis of the data shows that there is a great failure in the teaching speaking activities, and this lies mostly on the teachers' way of doing because there is a lack of exposing students to an English-speaking environment. The main reasons invoked by these teachers to justify their reluctance to carry out speaking activities are: the size of the classes, the fact that the speaking activities are time consuming and the heavy workload (the speaking activities are too demanding and the classroom furniture inhibits the students' movement). From the findings, the factors that make speaking difficult are the students' use of French or their mother tongues in the classroom, the insufficiency of didactic materials, the overcrowded classes and the use of inappropriate strategies and techniques to make students perform well in the classroom. In fact, most of the teachers rarely focus on varying the speaking activities, organizing pair and group work, providing students with clear task instructions, boosting students' self-confidence and on bringing the tasks within their students' experience by giving them more time to do the tasks. Therefore, one of the biggest challenges for them is how to operate changes that will best suit their students' needs in order to enhance their speaking skills.

5. Recommendations

The teaching/learning of English in our environment is not an easy task. In order to help teachers with effective strategies that favor students to improve their abilities to speak English, the following recommendations have been made:

- ❖ Allot a time limit for each and every speaking activity. Take into consideration those activities

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that involve either group or pair work.

- ❖ Keep the activity fun and simple and make sure the instructions are also very clear.
- ❖ Involve each student in every speaking activity, practice different ways of student participation.
- ❖ Avoid overdoing speaking activities in one lesson.
- ❖ Reduce teacher speaking time in class while increasing student speaking time.
- ❖ Make sure there is a balance between speaking and listening.
- ❖ Have a back-up plan for the entire class and for individual students
- ❖ Always reflect on what can be done to help students improve their speaking skills.
- ❖ Capitalize on students' interests and ideas.
- ❖ Involve students when planning instructional activities.
- ❖ Communicate the value of every lesson to students otherwise they may be reluctant to participate.
- ❖ Avoid scolding students but rather give them positive feedback to encourage them.
- ❖ Be creative by using authentic materials like charts or flashcards whenever available.
- ❖ Involve students speaking activities not only in class but also out of class especially in English Clubs where they are created.
- ❖ Provide and explain the vocabulary beforehand that students need in speaking activities.

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- ❖ Plan speaking activities through pedagogical units (Ups), seminars, workshops to share experiences.
- ❖ Read books extensively and be a permanent researcher.

As for the government, it should allocate more financial resources to education that would allow to provide enough teaching materials for teachers, train more qualified teachers and advisers and give enough means for the achievement of their tasks.

Conclusion

Learning to speak a foreign language requires the knowledge of the language and its application. In mastering the speaking skills, the teacher must train and endow the learners with a certain degree of accuracy and fluency in understanding, responding and in expressing themselves in the language in speech. The study reveals that teachers encounter many difficulties selecting the appropriate tasks and techniques to conduct their speaking lessons. The findings clearly show that the main causes of teachers' problems to carry out speaking activities are their lack of initial training, the size of the classes, the fact that they found speaking activities too time-consuming and demanding and the lack of teaching materials such as tape recorders, flash cards, pictures etc. Another aspect is the classroom environment that is unsuitable for good learning. All these seriously prevent teachers from reaching their instructional objectives. Thus, our hypothesis is confirmed throughout the study as teachers' instructional practices do not fully allow students to speak the target language fluently. Since the study is limited to the Niamey inspectorate 3, more research could be conducted on exploring students' weaknesses in speaking skills.

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Finally, to help the system reach the educational goals assigned to it, some recommendations and suggestions were proffered to teachers, to the advisers, and to the government These include allocating enough financial resources in education so that more teachers and ELT advisers can be trained adequately and provide the schools with sufficient didactic materials.

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ISBN : 978-2-493659-12-5 COLLECTION RECHERCHES & REGARDS D'AFRIQUE VOL 4 N ° 14 Septembre 2025