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DEPARTEMENT D'ANGLAIS

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MEMOIRE DE LICENCE

OPTION: DIDACTIQUE DE LA LANGUE ANGLAISE

THEME

**Sustaining Interaction through Group Work for Oral
Communication in Beninese EFL Intermediate Classes:
Case Study of CEG2 Adjarra**

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Année académique: 2019-2020

Dedication

I dedicate this research work to:

- My dear father Mr. Paulin Ayenan

- My dear mother Mrs. Madeleine Voka

Acknowledgments

I thank the Almighty God, Creator of Heaven and Earth who helps me throughout this study in order to succeed.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Dr Corneille S. Teba, my supervisor, who has accepted to supervise this work and spare any effort for its success. I am grateful to him. May God bless him!

I am so grateful to all my lecturers for their effective teachings, practices, training and advice. May God bless all of them!

I am also grateful to my senior brothers and friends for their participation in the development of this research work.

I am grateful to all principals (the Headmaster and Teachers) of the school (CEG2 Adjarra) who has helped me to collect data for this research work.

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List of Acronyms

BAPES: Brevet d’Aptitude au Professorat de l’Enseignement Secondaire

CAPES: Certificat d’Aptitude au Professorat de l’Enseignement Secondaire

CEG: Collège d’Enseignement General

CL: Cooperative Learning

CLL: Cooperative Language Learning

CLT: Communicative Language Teaching

DUEL: Diplôme Universitaire d’Etudes Littéraires

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

GW: Group Work

Abstract

EFL students have difficulties to communicate in English and for this reason, I have undertaken this research work which aims at exploring the impacts of using group work on EFL intermediates students' speaking skill. This research work describes how group work as means of interaction among students in the class can enhance their oral proficiency. To achieve this goal, I have used mixed method. Questionnaires have been elaborated for 10 teachers and 100 students. Interviews and classroom observations have also been carried out. The analysis of these data reveals that communicative activities are implemented in classes. Then, students are motivated to learn and communicate in English language. Therefore, the findings have shown that some teachers do not implement communicative activities in classes because of the lack of time and the lack of necessary materials. So, I have suggested to the authorities to provide teachers with necessary materials, for a good quality of teaching.

Key words: Group Work, Oral Communication, Oral Proficiency, Interaction.

Résumé

Les élèves ont de difficultés à communiquer en anglais, et pour cette raison, j'ai entrepris ce travail de recherches qui porte sur les impacts de l'utilisation du travail de groupe sur les compétences en communication orale des élèves de classes intermédiaires de l'Anglais. Ce travail de recherches décrit comment le travail de groupe en tant que moyen d'interaction au sein des élèves peut augmenter leur niveau de communication orale. Pour atteindre cet objectif, j'ai utilisé la méthode mixte. Des questionnaires ont été élaborés pour les 10 enseignants et 100 élèves. Des interviews et visites de classes ont été effectuées. L'analyse de ces données révèle que les activités de communication sont exécutées en classe. Alors, les élèves sont motivés à apprendre et communiquer en Anglais. Cependant, les résultats de recherches ont montré que certains enseignants n'exécutent pas les activités de communication à cause du manque de temps et de matériels nécessaires. Je suggère aux autorités de fournir aux enseignants les matériels nécessaires, pour une éducation de qualité.

Mots clés : travail en groupe, communication orale, compétence orale, apprentissage de la langue.

General Introduction

The teaching of foreign language is an interactive process, which requires active participation of both the teacher and the learner. Many researchers focus their investigations on the importance of interaction in building knowledge and improving learners' skills. From the results of those investigations, a great opportunity of classroom interaction is being truly demanded to improve learners' oral production. Through my investigations, it is remarked that English Teachers use variety of techniques to encourage interaction and full participation among their learners. I have also noticed that it is through interaction in the class which is considered as social group that the language is used and learned. The most important thing here is to help learners practice the language and use it among them to communicate.

Let us try to understand that one of the foreign language students' skills is oral production, according to Cotter (2007), all the interaction skills are so essential for students who need to be aware of how to start a topic, how to include others, how to change topics, how to repair communication breakdowns, how to deal with those who dominate the conversation, how to use language to solve problems, and how to end a discussion.

As far as Group Work also known as Cooperative Language Learning (CLL) is concerned, my research work intends to explore its impacts on the learners' oral proficiency. The main objective of learning a foreign language is to be able to use it for oral communication purposes. Considering the problems of lack of interaction among students; lack of participation in the classroom and poor student-teacher relationship in learning foreign language and its components; teachers have the major role to provide learners with a method of increasing language practice opportunities. One of the most successful paths to provide learners with extensive oral practice is the organization of the class into groups. The present study is focused on investigating the impact of group work as tool of interaction on learners' oral proficiency. To draw teachers' attention

on the relevance of adopting group work strategy in their classes to fully improve their learners' speaking skills, I have undertaken this research work entitled: "Sustaining Interaction through Group Work for Oral Communication in Beninese EFL Intermediate classes: Case Study of CEG2 Adjarra".

This research work therefore comprises five chapters.

- The first chapter deals with the introduction of my study. It includes the statement of the problem, the main purposes of my study, the research questions, the significance of the study and the scope of the study.
- The second chapter deals with the literature review which treats of the related works of some scholars that I have discovered in order to expand my knowledge.
- The third chapter concerns the methodology that I used for the data collection of my research work.
- The fourth chapter exposes the results of the research work.
- The fifth chapter gives some suggestions and the general conclusion.

Chapter One: Identification of the Study

The first chapter includes the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the significance and the limitation of the study.

1.1 Problem Statement

The main objective of learning a foreign language is to be able to communicate in that language. But unfortunately, it is observed that EFL learners have difficulties to communicate in English. Since the classroom is the primary situation, in which learners have an opportunity to use the target language, the kind of methodology followed has a great influence on language development. Not only is the writing skill used to communicate today but the speaking skill too is used as an important, even the very first tool of communication in various ways. Normally it must be mastered by EFL students in order to perform well in communicative activities as well in the real life situations. Thus to improve learners' oral proficiency and help them to interact, to participate in class activities, I choose this topic which deals with the group work as means of interaction for oral communication. For instance, organizing the class into groups is one of the surest ways to provide learners with extensive oral production and communication.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

This study aims at investigating how cooperative group work could foster the oral communication. My main objective in undertaking this research work is to expose how the group work as means of interaction among students can help them to improve their oral proficiency. This research work will help to implement group work activities; to reduce anxiety in the EFL classroom; to promote oral production, especially by increasing opportunities for student talking time; and to create a friendly and relaxed learning environment.

1.3 Research Questions

Here are the questions which have guided me throughout my research:

- 1- What are the impacts of group work technique on the development of students' oral skill?
- 2- What is the importance of group work in EFL classes?
- 3- What are EFL students' positive and negative attitudes of group work?

1.4 Significance of the Study

The topic undertaken is important in the case of helping teachers to acquire more knowledge about Cooperative Language Learning activities to foster their students' oral proficiency, some strategies to solve the problem of oral communication in EFL classes, what to take into account while teaching in a large class, how to encourage the learners to practice English language.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The investigation is limited to Benin secondary schools where English is taught as Foreign Language. This topic is interested in the importance of sustaining interaction through group work for oral communication. Obviously, I cannot cover all Benin's secondary schools, so my work is limited to EFL learners and teachers of the secondary school of CEG2 Adjarra mainly in intermediates' classes.

The following chapter deals with the literature review.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter deals with the studies that have already been carried out about my topic. Some writers opinions, some journals writers have been consulted in order to enrich my work

2.1 Communicative Approach

English language is very important in today's world and teachers look for a significant method to meet the demand of learners to use this language for communication. The communicative approach or (CLT) is considered as the best approach for such purpose. Harmer (2001:70) says that "*Language learning will take care of itself*". A deep understanding of CLT theory and its implication for classroom practice is very important for both learners and teachers, since it aims at helping learners to use the target language for communication. Lindsay and Knigh (2006:75) say that:

CLT appeared by the end of 1960s and continued to evolve. Today, it is not considered as a method but as an approach for teaching based on the idea that language learning means learning how to use the language to achieve a better communication outside the classroom.

CLT developed because of the limitations of the previous methods, it mainly focuses on the ability to communicate and interact which was absent in the other methods. Harmer (2001:68) also makes the important point that: *learners are always in need to be exposed to language and be given opportunities to use this language in order to develop their knowledge and skills*. So, among the characteristics of CLT approach is that it was created around the individual learner, taking his needs and objectives as starting points in teaching and learning a second language.

2.2 Communicative Competence

The communicative approach is mainly based on the theory of communicative competence that includes grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competence. According to Hedge (2000:56) who has been

explaining these competences or abilities needed to create a coherent conversation, grammatical or linguistic competence refers to the different aspects of the language; syntax, phonology and lexicology, i.e. it is related to the knowledge of spelling, pronunciation and grammatical structure. Sociolinguistic competence or pragmatic competence refers to the social rules of language use which includes a better understanding of the social context where communication takes place like the shared knowledge of the participants; it is also called the illocutionary competence. Discourse competence deals with the ability to understand individual messages and to recognize all the discourse features. Strategic competence consists of the strategies involved for a successful communication; such strategies take place when learners cannot express what they want to say because they lack the resources to do so. In the communicative approach, most researchers agree on the need for the communicative competence to support learning and make the classroom interaction successful. Johnson (1995:161) claims that *“classroom communicative competence is essential in order for the second language students to participate in and learn from their classroom experience.”*

2.3 Teachers’ Roles and Responsibilities

Most students will not engage in an interaction by themselves unless the teachers start first. Obviously, the role of the teacher is very crucial in motivating and creating interest in the topics. The basis of the communicative approach is this capacity of the teacher to adapt him, to change roles. Hedge Tricia (2000:26) identifies important roles the teachers can play:

“As controller in eliciting nationality words; as assessor of accuracy as students try to pronounce the words; as corrector of pronunciation; as organizer in giving instructions of the pair work, initiating it, monitoring it, and organizing feedback; as promoter while students are working together and as resource if students need help with words and structures during the pair work.”

- Controller: within a classroom interaction and especially learner-teacher interaction, the teacher is the responsible for the teaching and learning processes. Harmer (2001:65) asserts that: *the teacher job here is to transmit knowledge from himself to his students.*
- Assessor: the most expected act from the teacher is to show the learners that their accuracy is being developed; Harmer (2001:65) says that: *this is done through giving correction or by praising them.* The students have to know how they are being assessed; the teacher should tell them their strengths and weaknesses, the students, then can have a clear idea about their levels and what they need to concentrate on. The assessor teacher should pay attention also to the learners' reactions and how to deal with them.
- Corrector: the teacher has to decide when and where to correct students' production. Another important point is that the teacher should be careful when correcting pronunciation mistakes or errors the learners commit during classroom interaction, i.e. he works seriously to give the correct pronunciation, form or meaning because the learners very often acquire these issues from their teachers.
- Organizer: it is the most important role according to Harmer (2001:65). The teacher acts in a classroom where many things must be set up such as organizing pair/ group work, giving learners instructions about how well they interact, and finally stopping everything when the time is over. The teacher in such a role spends much time in engaging all the class in the interaction and ensures its participation. Once the students are involved in the interaction, the teacher can stop interacting and let the learners speak and listen to each other, exchange views and why not correct each other's too.
- Prompter: sometimes the learners do not find the words when they talk to each other's or with the teacher, the role then of the latter is to encourage the learners to think creatively so that to be independent from the teacher. In such

role, the teacher must prevent himself to help the students even if he wants so that they will be creative in their learning.

- Resource: the job of the teacher here is to answer students' questions. For example, when they want to know how to say something or when they look for the meaning of a given word or phrase, they go back to their teacher as a resource of information. In turn, the teacher should be able to offer such needed information.

Another role the teacher needs to adopt in a classroom interaction is the observer. Harmer (2001:68) points out that: *the teacher here should distract the students' attention so that they can interact naturally and spontaneously.* Moreover, he has to take notes about his learners in their use of actual language. Teachers do not use observation only to give feedback, but also to evaluate the success of the classroom interaction in developing the speaking skill of the learners. If there is failure in achieving fluency, then the teacher tries to bring changes for the classroom in the future.

2.4 Teaching Technique for Oral Proficiency

Effective teachers should use group work, which encourage students to take communicative initiatives. Thus, it can provide them with a wide and richer experience of using the language as much as possible.

2.4.1 Group Work

Despite the need for whole-class teaching and individual work, or “seat work” in language classroom, the use of group work has been emphasized as another interactional dynamics of language classroom. A group work is a classroom situation where students are working within smaller units or groups. Through interacting with each other in groups, students can be given the opportunity to oral exchange. The aim is to get the students involved in oral interaction.

To conclude, group work involving communicative tasks is essential to develop oral proficiency because it demands maximum students' participation in an orally purposeful activity.

2.4.1.1 Designing Pairs and Groups

In an interactive activity, the teacher may divide the whole class into pairs and groups. In some cases, it is possible to let learners find their own partners. However, it is also better for learners who do not know each other well to interact together, since one of the goals of interaction is to establish social relationships between the learners so that the learning process is facilitated. Lindsay and Knight (2006:85) make the important point that it is a good idea to gather students and let them work in pairs and groups in order to practice the speaking skill effectively. Richards and Lockhart (1996:152) support this view saying,

“Through interacting with other students in pairs or groups, students can be given the opportunity to draw on their linguistic resources in a nonthreatening situation and use them to complete different kinds of talks. Indeed, it is through this kind of interaction that researchers believe many aspects of both linguistic and communicative competence are developed.”

So, learner-learner interaction occurs through designing groups and pairs where learners can enhance their competence in using communication and language. In pair work the learner finds himself in an obligation to practice the language because he must peak with the other learners who is with him.

2.4.1.2 Criteria for Designing Pairs and Groups

Teachers should decide how to put individual students into pairs and groups because it is very essential in varying the interactive learning. Harmer (2001:75) sets up a set of principles that teachers can be based on when creating pairs and groups.

- Friendship: when grouping learners, the teachers should consider putting friends with friends, rather than taking risks of putting learners with others whom they find it difficult to interact with them. In such cases, the learners would choose and go towards other students they like, admire or want to be liked by.
- Streaming: refers to the act of arranging students into pairs or groups according to their abilities. For example, the teachers may stream a group of less able learners and ask them to interact and from time to time they give them the special help they need. However, when the teachers stream a group of more able learners, their goal is to create a challenge, competition and a high level of negotiation among them. Participation is another basis that the teachers might focus on during streaming. If they see that some students participate less than others they might then make a group or pair of weak participators to ensure that those learners will not hide behind the more talking classmates.
- Chance: the teachers can group the learners by chance without any reason of friendship, ability or level of participation, and this is the easiest way of creating groups or pairs because it does not require pre-planning from the teachers. One way of grouping the learners under this basis of chance is sitting; the learners who sit next or near each other will interact together.
- Changing groups: when the teachers create the groups or pairs according to the previous principles, it does not mean that the members should stay until the end in their groups. The pair or group may change while the interactive activity continues. For example one member from other groups can interact with the actual group and share information with them, and then he may come back to his original group.

2.4.2 Benefits of Using Role-play and Simulation in the Classroom

According to Celce-Murcia, M. and Hilles, S. (1988:78), using role-play and simulation in the classroom has many benefits. It helps to build empathy

among learners since they are likely to accept their partners by putting themselves in situations which they get different perspectives and points of view, creating an atmosphere in which they support each other. Similarly, role-play activities increase students' confidence when practice communicating in authentic ways and real-life situations beyond the classroom.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

There has been a numerous contributions made by educational experts on the communication process through the years. The theoretical framework of this research work focused on investigating factual information concerning communicative language competence, interactional competence, socio-constructivism, communication skill and oral communication.

The communicative language competence includes several components such as linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences; aptitudes, knowledge and skills are important parts of these. The linguistic competence refers to the learners' ability to manage the language features such as lexis, phonology and syntax. This competence refers about not only the quality of knowledge but also cognitive organization and how knowledge is stored in memory. Many researchers have attempted to define and clarify the concept of interactional competence, with varying levels of overlapping ideas.

May (2009:398) says that:

“Interactional competence focuses on co-construction, an incorporation of a range of interactional processes, including collaboration, cooperation, and coordination and considers how individual competence is connected to, and partially constructed by both those with whom a language learner’ is interacting and the larger socio historical forces”.

Furthermore, Masuda (2011:520) says that: *“interactional competence is “necessary for sustaining social interaction and relies upon the speakers’ ability to use resources drawn from interactive practices”.* Hellermann (2007:85)

defines interactional competence as *“the ability to develop and manage topic issues in practice-relevant ways”*.

For this research work, in the context of Competence-Based Approach, Socio-Constructivism appears as the main theory, as it takes into account the interactional aspect of students through group work. Socio-Constructivism is a theory of knowledge and learning which contends that categories of knowledge and reality are actively created by social relationships and interactions. Also, Socio-Constructivism is an educational theory of acquiring knowledge which emphasizes the importance of culture and context in and constructing knowledge. It suggests that learners add to and reshape their mental models of reality through social collaboration, building new understandings as they actively engage in learning experiences. Scaffolding, or guidance, is provided by teachers or more experienced peers in the learner’s zone of proximal development, that is, the zone between what a learner can achieve independently and what s/he may achieve with support.

Socio-Constructivism suggests that learners learn concepts or construct meaning about ideas through their interaction with others, with their world, and through interpretations of that world by actively constructing meaning. Learners construct knowledge or understanding as a result of active learning, thinking and doing in social contexts. According to this theory reality is constructed through human activity, knowledge is a human product and is socially and culturally constructed, individuals create meaning through their interactions with each other and with the environment they live. As a theory of learning, Socio-Constructivism emphasizes the role of culture and socialization in the cognitive development of individuals. Growing up within a human group, the family or a professional community of practice such as professional translators, individuals acquire the cognitive tools and knowledge shared by the community. The cognitive tools individuals get from the community should allow them to

construct new knowledge on the basis of knowledge previously acquired. Socio-Constructivism emphasizes the importance of culture and context in the process of knowledge construction. Learning is meant to be a social process that occurs when individuals take part in social activities. Instructional models based on this perspective stress the need for collaboration among learners and with practitioners in society. Learning activities in constructivist settings are characterized by active engagement, inquiry, problem solving, and collaboration with others. Rather than a dispenser of knowledge, the teacher is a guide, facilitator, and co-explorer who encourages learners to question, challenge, and formulate their own ideas, opinions, and conclusions. Socio-Constructivism is considered as a theory of knowledge that argues that humans generate knowledge and meaning from an interaction between their experiences and their ideas.

2.6 Concluding Remarks

The previous literature review focused on the use of group work as means of interaction for oral communication. This chapter provided different language experts' and researchers' perspectives and contributions on different purposes and advantages of using group work for oral communication in EFL classrooms. Effective communication in a foreign language depends much on the speakers' verbal and non-verbal abilities which includes not only the use of words but also symbols to communicate and to be understood in the foreign language. As much as 70 percent of work time is spent communicating with others, it is imperative for teachers to develop effective and efficient oral communication skills in learners through recreated situations based on real-life experiences. Group work, role-play and simulations are techniques which enhance the use of the language (vocabulary, expressions, slangs, etc.) in real-life situations and forces the learners to think "on other's feet". Additionally, it trains students to work together as a team or group, and to communicate in order to understand each other. Role-play and simulation give learners more responsibility in their

learning process. Also, they encourage interaction and offer students the chance to evaluate their learning progress and their level of English. Even though, this is not a new educational technique, some Beninese English teachers tend to guide their lessons to more traditional activities focused on reinforcing isolated structures. It is imperative then, to emphasize on the importance of this review to consolidate the effectiveness of these techniques to sustain interaction among students, and help them to improve their oral proficiency.

The following chapter deals with the methodology of the research.

Chapter Three: **Methodology of the Research**

Data collection is the most important task of any research. For this purpose, I firstly submitted the teachers and students to questionnaires, secondly I addressed the teachers some interviews and finally I did a classroom observation.

3.1 Target Population and Sampling

This investigation has taken into account both EFL learners and teachers. English is taught as a foreign language in Benin secondary schools. Then, to have clear and reliable information about my topic, I have decided to carry it out by choosing the secondary school of CEG2 Adjarra.

3.1.1 EFL Teachers

The present research work was carried out in CEG2 Adjarra located in the city of Adjarra. The subjects of study included 10 English teachers. It has been addressed to them ten (10) questionnaires.

3.1.2 EFL Students

The research work takes into account 100 students: 65 boys and 35 girls between 14, 15 and 16 years old in CEG2 Adjarra. Like the research was conducted during regular English classes because students could not miss classes, the research counts with an “intact group”. It has been addressed to them one hundred (100) questionnaires.

3.2 Research Instruments

The main instruments that I have used to carry out my research are:

- Questionnaire to EFL Teachers,
- Questionnaires to EFL Learners,
- Interviews with EFL Teachers,
- Classroom Observations.

To have a clear understanding of this investigation, it is worth describing each of those instruments.

3.2.1 Questionnaires

3.2.1.1 Questionnaire to EFL Teachers

The teacher's questionnaire includes six questions and is described as follow:

The first question wants to know the grade of teachers. The second question wants to know the techniques they use when teaching speaking skill. The third question concerns how many times they use group work in their classes. The fourth question wants to know how many students they often put in each group. The fifth question asks to know on which bases they set up the groups in their classes. The sixth question wants to know if the group work technique improves learners' oral proficiency.

3.2.1.2 Questionnaire to EFL Students

The students' questionnaire includes five questions:

The first question wants to know if the students have ever heard about Group Work Language Learning Technique. The second question concerns the strategy they prefer during speaking activities. The third question wants to know working in groups with their classmates is difficult for them. The fourth question wants to know if the Group Work technique helps to improve their oral communications skills. The fifth question wants to know if they agree or disagree with the fact that oral skill is very important in process of language learning.

3.2.2 Interviews

I got the occasion to interview some teachers, the same that I handed questionnaires to in order to collect more data. I have addressed them some questions. Firstly, I have asked to know the importance of group work to

enhance the learners' oral proficiency. Secondly, I have asked the techniques that they use to improve their students' speaking skills. Thirdly, I have asked the impacts of the techniques that they use on the learners' oral performance. Their responses helped me to get deeper and detailed information on the matter of the importance of using group work technique to enhance learners' oral proficiency. But in order to have an insight into the matter under study, I went on the field to carry out a classroom observation.

3.2.3 Classroom Observation

Classroom observation helps me to be an eye and ear witness of the way group works are organized in the classroom. During my classroom observation, I saw the kinds of activities, classroom atmosphere, the kind of teaching techniques used, the learners' reactions and I have noticed the need of students when they want to explain themselves. All the instruments that I have used help me to get information to my research work.

3.3 Data Collection Procedure

At the end of my training course and with the permission of my supervisor I have distributed questionnaires to teachers as well as learners of the target school. One hundred (100) questionnaires have been addressed to the students. All of them succeeded in filling the boxes and returned the questionnaires to me. To teachers, I have also addressed ten (10) questionnaires.

3.4 Method of Data Analysis

To support research reliability and validity during the whole process, the present study gathered information through quantitative and qualitative methods of study. The qualitative data analysis of the structured questionnaires and observations were done.

Questionnaires have been addressed in order to analyze data carefully looking for answers to the research questions stated before. Similarly,

information collected from classroom observations on teacher-student interaction, teacher's role, rapport, motivation and types of activities were done as a check list.

Two observations were done in this study before and after the application of CLT activities. Furthermore, questionnaire was addressed to the teacher and then answers were received by the researcher. Main points mentioned in the questionnaire were about teacher's experience and personality, methodology, and classroom management.

Finally, questionnaire answers are briefly explained through the tables, figures and are analyzed.

To make my research work valid and reliable, I have followed some procedures. Questionnaires were submitted to my Supervisor who agrees on administering them to students. The interview checklist and classroom checklist were also submitted to my supervisor who corrects them. All these elements make my research instruments reliable. Furthermore, the same questionnaires were administered to the same samples of EFL students in intermediates classes during my internship course. That makes my research instrument valid.

The following chapter is about the presentation of the results of the study

Chapter Four: Presentation and Discussion of the Results

This chapter presents the results or findings and analyzes the answers found on the questionnaires, which investigates on the using group work to improve oral communication.

4.1 Presentation of the Results

4.1.1 Results from the Questionnaire to EFL Teachers

4.1.1.1 Teacher's Professional Qualifications

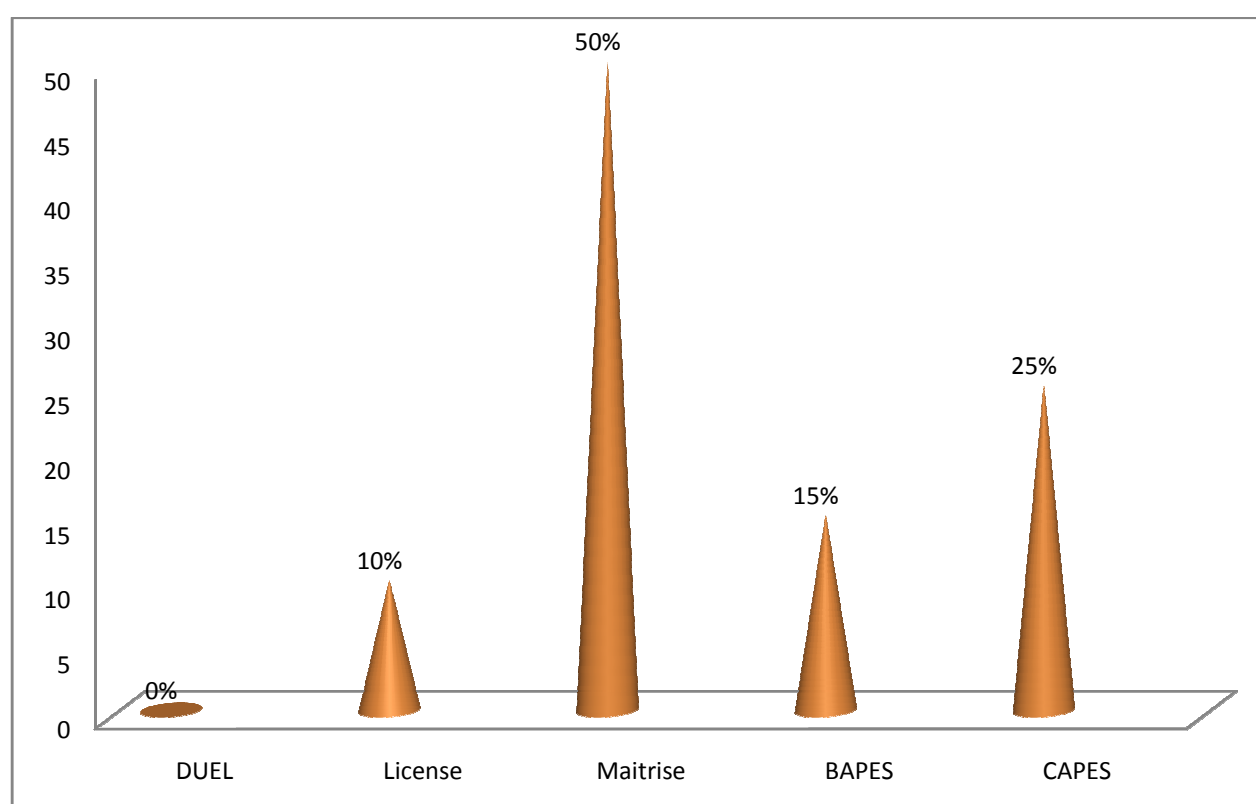


Figure 1: Teacher's Professional Qualifications

Figure 1 shows that none of the teachers is teaching with the Duel degree while ten percent (10%) are teaching with License degree, fifty percent (50%) are teaching with the Master degree, fifteen percent (15%) are doing the job with BAPES degree and twenty five percent (25%) are teaching with the CAPES degree. This means that a half of the teachers are professionally qualified for the job.

4.1.1.2 Information about the Teachers' Use of Teaching Techniques

Table 1: Information about the Teachers' Use of Teaching Techniques

Techniques	Frequency	Percentage %
Group Work	10	100
Role-Play	00	00
Simulation	00	00
Others	00	00
Total	10	100

The results from table 1 show that the teaching of oral communication competence is based on several techniques and ways. Four options have been suggested to teachers. One hundred percent (100%) of teachers use Group Work as communication is a social act in which two or more people are involved to exchange of information. None of them do not use others techniques, so all of them prefer using Group Work as Teaching Technique in their classes.

4.1.1.3 Frequency of Teachers' Use of Group Work when Teaching in EFL Classes

Table 2: Frequency of Teachers' Use of Group Work when Teaching in EFL Classes

Options	Frequency	Percentage %
Always	00	00
Often	10	100
Rarely	00	00
Never	00	00
Total	10	100

From the results of table 2, one hundred percent (100%) of teachers have stated that they use often the Group Work in their classes. The others options

were left. So, Group Work has several benefits and a great impact on teaching oral communication. This implies that as an effective and interactional teaching technique, Group Work is preferred for its potentials in language teaching settings and its motivational aspects.

4.1.1.4 Number of Students Teachers use to form a Group

Table 3: Number of Students Teachers use to form a Group

Options	Frequency	Percentage%
Pairs	00	00
3-4	06	60
5-6	04	40
More than 6	00	00
Total	10	100

Table 3 shows that forty percent (40%) of teachers use groups of 5-6 students. The highest percentage (60%) of them use group of 3-4 students and no one uses pair work as well as groups of more than six students, depending on the learning situation. As reported by the respondents, the reason of using small groups would be that those types of group are manageable, and can be controlled in terms of students' participation and oral exchange among the members.

4.1.1.5 Group Formation Strategy

Table 4: Group Formation Strategy

Options	Frequency	Percentage %
Gender	02	20
Proficiency	00	00
Other	08	80
Total	10	100

Table 4 shows that twenty percent (20%) of teachers take into account students' gender in group formation. As such, some students, girls and boys as well may hate working together in so far as they would feel shy to share their ideas because of gender consideration. None of teacher do not take into account students' level of proficiency, as they believe that setting up groups of excellent students' apart from the ones' of weak students can lead to a kind of embarrassment and frustration. Eighty percent (80%) of teachers stated that they use other strategies to form groups. They advocated that their students are free to choose their group. This freedom of choice can empower the students, as it establishes a relaxed atmosphere so that members or mate would feel free and comfortable.

4.1.1.6 Teachers' Perception about the Significance of Group Work on the Improvement of Students' oral Proficiency

Table 5: Teachers' Perception about the Significance of Group Work on the Improvement of Students' oral Proficiency

Options	Frequency	Percentage %
Agree	10	100
Disagree	00	00
Total	10	100

The results of table 5 show that one hundred percent (100%) of the teachers have stated that group work improve students' oral proficiency.

4.1.2 Results from the Questionnaire to the Students

4.1.2.1 Students' Familiarity with Group Work Language Learning Technique

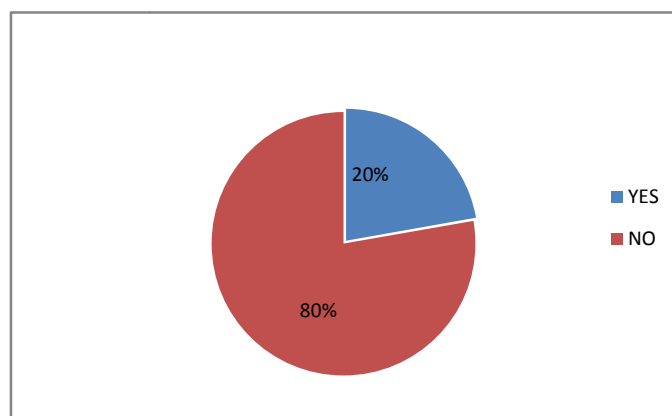


Figure 2: Students' Familiarity with Group Work Language Learning Technique

From figure 2, eighty percent (80%) of students responded positively to the question. The other twenty percent (20%) responded negatively. That is to say that some of the students are more likely to have a positive belief toward Group Work Language Learning Technique.

4.1.2.2 Students' Preference of Strategy in Oral Class

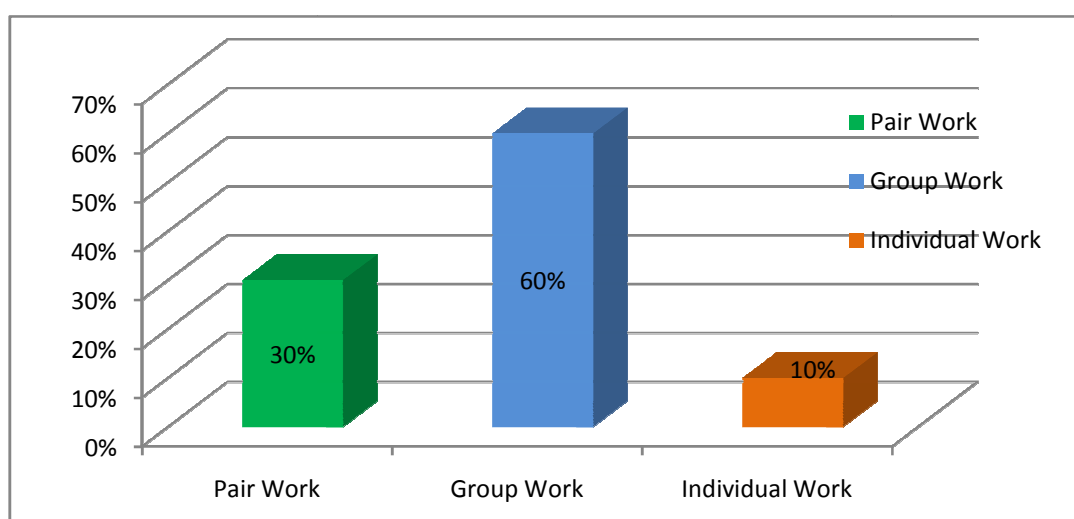


Figure 3: Students' Preference of Strategy in Oral Class

From figure 3, sixty percent (60%) of students say that they prefer Group Work to individual or pair work. Thirty (30%) of them prefer to work in pairs and only ten percent (10%) of them prefer to work individually. The results show that the participants are aware of the importance of group work strategy.

4.1.2.3 Difficulties encountered by Students when Working in Group

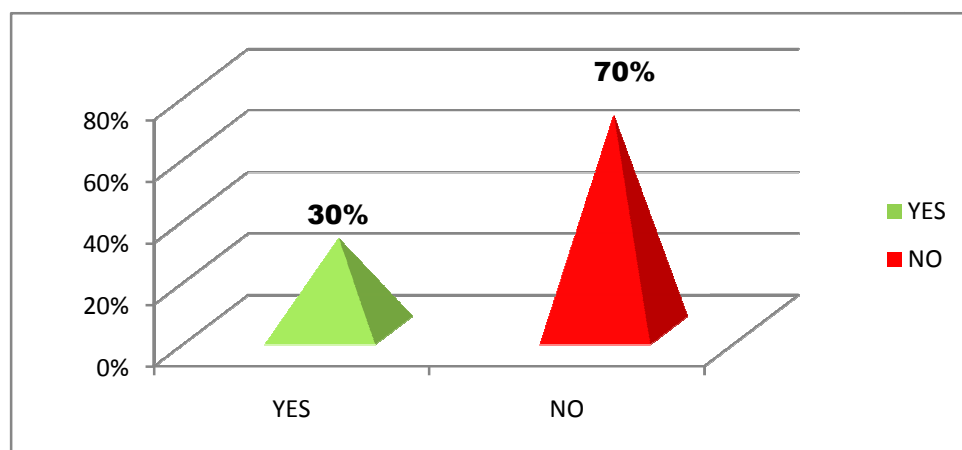


Figure 4: Difficulties encountered by Students when Working in Group

Figure 4 shows that seventy percent (70%) of the students answered that they do not have any problems or difficulties when working within the groups and with their classmates. This indicates that those participants like working collaboratively for communication purposes. Thirty percent (30%) of them have found it difficult to work in group.

4.1.2.4 Students' thought of Group Work Strategy

Table 6: Students' thought of Group Work Strategy

Options	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	70	70
No	30	30
Total	100	100

The results from table 6 show that seventy percent (70%) of students answered “yes”, which means that group work technique with its benefits can strongly improve their speaking ability and enhance their English proficiency. In contrast, thirty percent (30%) indicated that group work does not have any impact on their oral communication. Therefore, it has been noted that many students recognized the importance of group work in enhancing students’ interaction skills.

4.1.2.5 Importance of Oral Skill in the Learning of a Language

Table 7: Importance of Oral Skill in the Learning of a Language

Options	Frequency	Percentage %
Strongly Agree	70	70
Agree	30	30
Disagree	00	00
Total	100	100

Table 7 shows that seventy percent (70%) of students strongly agree that anyone who wants to learn a language must speak it fluently. This is the proof that the students are aware of the importance of oral communication. Thirty percent (30%) of them agree that mastering oral communication in the learning of language is very important.

4.1.3 Interviews Report

The interview helps me to know how teachers use group work technique to improve their students’ oral communication. During my interview with the teachers, most of them say that they implement oral communication activities to their students. The majority of them say that the best technique that they use to foster their students’ oral skill is group work. They add that the dialogue is the

kind of activities which can perform students in classes. But the lack of vocabulary is the great factor which does not allow students to increase their speaking skill.

4.1.4 Classroom Observation Report

Classroom observations were conducted to get the most valid information on teacher's role, perceptions and experience on the current situation. During the classroom observation period in the selected secondary school in the class of 4e and 3e, I remarked that just few students like to participate to the discussions in the class, but there are some who regularly take the lead and speak on behalf of their mates. The use of the mother tongue to conduct English classes, the lack of opportune oral correction on students' pronunciation, the lack of vocabulary and incorrect pronunciation affected students' pronunciation.

4.2 Discussion of the Results

4.2.1 Impact of Group Work Technique on the Development of Students' Oral Skill

The results from my questionnaires and classroom observations have shown that Group work has great impacts students' oral proficiency. This is proven by the one hundred percent (100%) of the teachers who said that group work improve their students' oral proficiency. Moreover, seventy percent (70%) of students answered that group work technique with its benefits can strongly improve their speaking ability and enhance their English proficiency. In contrast, thirty percent (30%) indicated that group work does not have any impact on their oral communication. Therefore, it has been noted that many students recognized the importance of group work in enhancing students' interaction skills.

Johnson (2009:80) defines Cooperative Learning as a *“situation where students work together in small groups to help themselves and others to learn”*. Shahamat and Namaziandost (2019:85) have stated that *“the role of teachers using Cooperative Learning shifts from transmission of knowledge to facilitators of student learning”*. This role involves facilitating, modeling and coaching. Teachers who adopt this role should maintain a safe non-threatening and learner-centered environment. This environment of teaching will help students contribute positively to the cooperative activities assigned to their group. Considering the findings of this study, Group Work Technique had a positive impact on the students' oral skill. The significant gains of the experimental group on the interaction-based task supported Brown's (2007:85) views that *“cooperative learning was actually a practice that could put the communicative approach into action”*. Such findings were in line with Woods's (2013:65) allegation that cooperative learning was regarded as the best instructional format developing learner's communicative competence. Yu (2004:64) expressed in his

study that *“one of the impediments that hamper CL in the class is the classroom size, if the classroom size is big; students may get fewer opportunities to practice English”*.

4.2.2 Importance of Group Work in EFL Classes

The results from my questionnaires and interviews show that the teaching of oral communication competence is based on several techniques and ways. Then, it has been suggested to teachers “four options”. One hundred percent (100%) of them select the option “Group Work”. They explain that when using group work during class activities, their students are motivated, and participate to the activities. They feel ease to collaborate with their fellow students, to exchange ideas within themselves. None of the teachers do not use others techniques, so all of them prefer using Group Work as Teaching Technique in their classes. That means both of teachers and students know the importance of Group Work. Moreover, sixty percent (60%) of students that they prefer Group Work to individual or pair work. Thirty (30%) of them prefer to work in pairs and only ten percent (10%) of them prefer to work individually. The results show that the participants are aware of the importance of group work strategy.

An important aim of group work (GW) is to encourage fluency in language. In language classes, GW is a strategy that enables students to discuss issues or to engage in joint activities with other students in a less threatening environment. Particularly in EFL classrooms, grouping is said to be an effective method of teaching for several reasons; for instance, it maximizes the time that students can speak the target language. In addition, it minimizes the time that students spend listening to other students interacting with the teacher; furthermore, it avoids the anxiety that hinders some language learners from speaking and interacting with the teacher in front of the whole class; and it gives the teacher more opportunities to discuss with students the structure of the task. Group Work allows students to be more independent, because they are

encouraged to teach others and also to learn from others, get help from their peers. Learners explained that it was not easy to ask the teacher to clarify ambiguities or questions they had. Thus, it appeared that, perhaps due to a rather formal relationship between language learners and their teachers, language learners seemed to prefer to ask other group members to clarify specific issues for them. Further, learners explained that they understood an explanation better when their group members answered their questions.

Garrett and Shortall (2002:92) have stated that:

“GW could achieve the following: increase the shared help between students; allow them to practice the language more; increase concentration in learners and their engagement with the interaction sitting; and reduce anxiety in language learners”.

According to a study by McDonough (2004), which investigated “learner-learner interaction” through pair and group work in EFL context, several students said that talking to others was helpful for them in learning English. The reasons they gave were varied: some indicated that talking to others would help them because their friends could explain what the teacher said; others indicated that it was good to practice oral English; yet another group said that GW was useful for learning vocabulary and grammar.

4.2.3 EFL Students’ Positive and Negative Attitudes of Group Work

The results from my questionnaires and classroom observations show that twenty percent (20%) of teachers take into account students’ gender in group formation. As such, some students, girls and boys as well may hate working together in so far as they would feel shy to share their ideas because of gender consideration. None of teacher do not take into consideration students’ level of proficiency, as they believe that setting up groups of excellent students’ apart from the ones’ of weak students can lead to a kind of embarrassment and frustration. Eighty percent (80%) of teachers stated that they use other strategies to form groups. They advocated that their students are free to choose their

group. This freedom of choice can empower the students, as it establishes a relaxed atmosphere so that members or mate would feel free and comfortable. Students demonstrate positive attitudes towards Group Work technique in class as they have also the opportunity to talk among themselves, exchanging ideas, giving their opinions and more.

Moreover, it has been asked some questions to students to see how they were familiar with Group Work Language Learning Technique. From the results, eighty percent (80%) of students responded positively to the question, stating that they were familiar to the Group Work Technique as their teachers use it regularly during class activities. The other twenty percent (20%) responded negatively. That is to say that some of the students are more likely to have a positive belief toward Group Work.

As for the positive attitudes, the majority of the students' responses fell into "group work is mutual interest", "group members clarify difficult things to each other", and "it takes a short time to finish a task in group work". These findings corroborate previous research done by Doff (1989). In his research, Doff (1989:95) claims that "*pair work and group work encourage students to share ideas and knowledge*". Juan and Flor (2008:75) have stated that "*group work is best for providing support for each other because of the variety of levels each class and each group includes*". Harmer (2011:97) has emphasized "*students' freedom from teachers' pressure and how teachers can encourage them to help their peers talking and doing tasks within their groups*". The above items were all confirmed by the interviewees of this research work. Students seem to feel less strained when they work in groups. Nakahashi (2007:65) has stated that "*working in groups is believed to reduce students' anxiety level and provide them with the chances to produce language*".

4.3 List of Findings

4.3.1 EFL Teachers' Findings

The findings of my study reveal that many teachers use group work technique to foster interaction among students. Also, most of them use the group work technique for oral communication activities. However, some teachers are confronted to many difficulties such as the time available for communicative activities, and the availability of materials. Then, some of them bring their own materials from home to teach their students.

4.3.2 EFL Students' Findings

The results of this research work show up that most of students really like to work in group work. The fact that they interact with their peers help them to not be anxious, and not be fear of making errors. There is a kind of freedom of speech, a freedom of expression of ideas and good collaboration among students when they are working in group. Therefore, it is obvious that the EFL intermediate students need more effectiveness from the teachers; they need to be guided and orientated during speaking activities. As EFL learners, they must have a solid background to use the speaking skill, not only for the academic year but also for a possible career planned in their mind.

Chapter Five: Suggestions and General Conclusion

5.1 Suggestions

5.1.1 Suggestions to EFL Teachers

English teachers should use materials and carry out appropriate activities for oral communication. They should practice the technique of group work in particular to reach the objectives of the students' expectations. In addition teachers should speak acceptable English. They are expected to have a very good accent and pronunciation. They need to use appropriate materials which match students' level and expectations and which can facilitate oral communication in English. They should play their roles as mentioned in the literature review. English teachers must involve their learners in classes' activities which can foster fluency acquisition. Teachers should maintain students' interests throughout their English lessons or activities by involving all the students.

5.1.2 Suggestions to EFL Learners

In the process of English language learning, students are the most concerned. So they must adopt attitudes and behaviors that favor a successful learning of English. They must be very polite and obedient in order to create a good learning atmosphere they will benefit from. They must do their homework regularly and always learn their lessons before going to school. Moreover they have to communicate in English in classroom even outside from the classroom. They should be very active when during activities in group and help each other.

General Conclusion

This research work explored the importance of group work as means of interaction for oral communication in Beninese EFL intermediates' classes. The main goal of this study is to determine advantages and effectiveness of the use of group as technique to improve students' oral communication skills. To achieve this aim, I have tried to expand my knowledge about the topic by reading some authors. To collect relevant information, I have questioned 10 teachers, 100 students of CEG2 Adjarra. Also, I proceed by interview and the classroom observation.

To sum up, the implementation of group work technique has positive impact on improving students' oral skills since it adds variety and interest to English classes, at the same time that motivates students to learn the language, increasing their vocabulary, intonation, fluency and pronunciation. Group work provides them with the opportunity to practice the language in different real-life situations at the same time they promote confidence among learners by reducing the anxiety and fear of speak in public.

The implementation of group works' strategies and techniques on the field of oral communication is very important and useful for the promotion of students' participation in the EFL class. The analysis of the results shows that the majority of the students express their willingness to interact with peers so as to develop their communicative skill. Also, the obtained data confirmed that there is a close relationship between group work technique and the development of students' speaking ability. Furthermore, it was revealed that students should interact with their peers in group in order to master the art of talking fluently.

The present study reveals that both teachers and learners know about classroom interaction, they consider that promoting it can have a positive impact on students' speaking capacities. The positive findings revealed in this study show that well planned and organized cooperative group work is an effective technique for improving EFL learners' oral proficiency.

This research work would be beneficial for other researchers in this fact that it shows how group work technique impact the oral communication skill of the students, how it creates interaction among students. This research work takes into consideration many other aspects of language teaching technique.

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14. Abedi, P., Namaziandost, E., & Akbari, S. (2019). The impact of flipped classroom instruction on Iranian upper-intermediate EFL learners’ writing skill. *English Literature and Language Review*, 5(9), 164–172. doi: <https://10.32861/ellr.59.164.172>

E-Dictionaries

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Annex Pages

A-Questionnaire to EFL Teachers

Dear teachers, I'm making an investigation based on the topic ***“Sustaining Interaction through Group Work for Oral Communication in Beninese EFL Intermediate Classes”*** and to succeed in collecting valid and reliable results, I need your cooperation and your answers to my questionnaire. Your answers will be used as illustration in this research work but your identity will be kept secret.

1. What is your highest professional qualifications
 - a- DUEL
 - b- License
 - c- Maitrise
 - d- BAPES
 - e- CAPES

2. Which of the following Techniques do you use most in your classrooms?
 - a- Group work
 - b- Role-play
 - c- Simulation
 - d- Others

3. How often do you use group work when teaching in your EFL Classes?
 - a- Always
 - b- Often
 - c- Rarely
 - d- Never

4. How many students do you often put in each group?
 - a- Pairs
 - b- 3 – 4

c- 5 – 6

d- More than 6

5. On which bases do you set up the groups in your classes?

a- Gender

b- Proficiency

c- Other

6. Do you agree that group work technique improves learners' oral proficiency?

a- Agree

b- Disagree

Thank you for your collaboration!

B-Questionnaire to Students

Dear students, I would like to gather some information from you which will be very useful for my research work based on the importance of feedback on your copies. Please, complete this in circling the letter corresponding to your responses.

1- Have you ever heard about Group Work Language Learning Technique?

a- Yes

b- No

2- Which strategy do you prefer during speaking activities?

a- Individual Work

b- Pair Work

c- Group Work

3- Do you find it difficult to work with your classmates in groups?

a- Yes

b- No

4- Do you think that Group Work Technique helps to improve your Oral communication skills?

a- Yes

b- No

5-Do you agree that Oral Skill is very important in the Process of Language Learning?

a- Strongly agree

a- Agree

c- Disagree

Thank you for your collaboration!

B – Questionnaire aux Apprenants

Chers apprenants, je m'occupe d'un travail de recherche sur « *la valeur du travail de groupe en tant que moyen d'interaction, pour améliorer la production orale des apprenants de classes intermédiaires de l'Anglais, langue étrangère du Bénin au CEG2 Adjarra* », et votre contribution est vivement sollicitée.

Votre identité n'est pas nécessaire et vos réponses seront utilisées comme des données fiables. Veuillez cocher la case qui illustre le mieux votre opinion/ réponse.

1- As-tu une fois entendu parler de la technique d'apprentissage de la langue via le travail de groupe ?

a- Oui

b- Non

2- Quelle stratégie préfères-tu durant les activités en lien avec la communication orale ?

a- Travail Individuel

b- Travail par Pair

c- Travail en Groupe

3- Trouves-tu cela difficile de travailler avec tes camarades en groupe ?

a- Oui

b- Non

4- Penses-tu que la technique du travail en groupe t'aide à améliorer tes capacités en communication orale ?

a- Oui

b-Non

5- Es-tu d'accord que les aptitudes en communication orale sont très importantes dans le processus d'apprentissage de la langue ?

a- Parfaitement d'accord

b- D'accord

c- Pas d'accord

Merci pour votre collaboration !

Interview Checklist

1- What is the importance of group work to enhance the learners' oral proficiency?

.....
.....
.....

2- What are the techniques that they use to improve their students' speaking skills?

.....
.....
.....

3- What are the impacts of the techniques that they use on the learners' oral performance?

.....
.....
.....

Classroom Observation Checklist

School: CEG2 Adjarra

Form.....

Class size.....

Name of the teacher.....

Example of Group work activity.....

.....

.....

The atmosphere in the class.....

.....

The duration of the lesson.....

The Learners' reactions.....

General Note.....

.....

.....

.....

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Commentaires :
Date de création : 12/12/2020 11:27:00
N° de révision : 2
Dernier enregistr. le : 12/12/2020 11:27:00
Dernier enregistrement par : ACER
Temps total d'édition : 4 Minutes
Dernière impression sur : 12/12/2020 11:27:00
Tel qu'à la dernière impression
Nombre de pages : 61
Nombre de mots : 10 529 (approx.)
Nombre de caractères : 57 915 (approx.)