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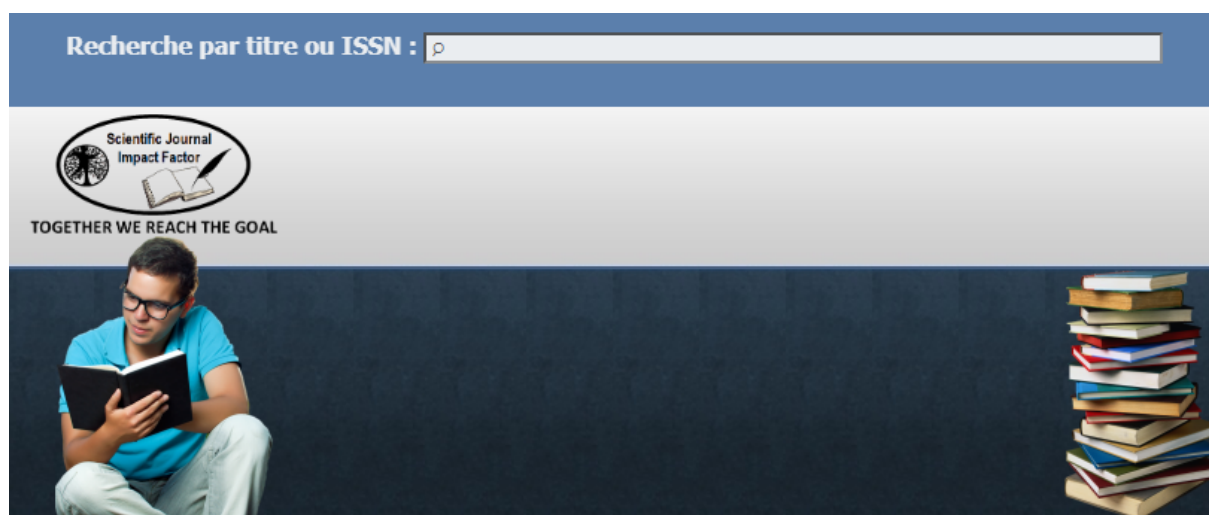
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Learners' oral fluency problems in Burkina Faso: the rationale

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Abstract

In Burkina Faso and in other French speaking countries, English is taught as a subject in universities, high schools, and even in some private primary schools. Yet pupils have serious problems using the language of Shakespeare. This study aims at exploring the factors which prevent students in Burkina Faso (with a focus on pupils from Koudougou) from speaking English fluently. It is obvious that the linguistic profile of Burkina Faso is one important factor, but it cannot alone account for the pupils' lack of fluency in English. Our investigation was carried out in six schools, involving 90 students of "Seconde A" and "Première A", 10 teachers, and 5 supervisors as informants. Questionnaires, interviews with teachers and supervisors, observations in class and informal discussions with students were instruments used to investigate on the motivation of learners, their difficulties to express themselves in English, and the teaching practices of teachers. Findings of the study show that the motivation of learners is limited. Their fluency problem is confirmed and teaching practices do not develop fluency. Communicative activities are then necessary to boost learners' fluency.

Keywords: communicative activities, factors, foreign language, fluency, motivation,

Résumé

Au Burkina Faso et dans d'autres pays francophones, l'anglais est enseigné comme matière dans les universités, les lycées et même dans certaines écoles primaires privées. Cependant, les apprenants éprouvent de sérieuses difficultés à utiliser la langue de Shakespeare. Cette étude vise à explorer les facteurs qui empêchent les élèves du Burkina Faso (en particulier les élèves de Koudougou) de parler couramment l'anglais. Il est évident que le profil linguistique du Burkina Faso est un facteur important, mais il ne peut à lui seul expliquer le manque de maîtrise de l'anglais par les élèves. Notre enquête a été menée dans six établissements secondaires, impliquant 90 élèves de Seconde A et de Première A, 10 enseignants et 5 encadreurs pédagogiques. Des questionnaires, des entretiens avec les enseignants et les encadreurs pédagogiques, des observations en classe et des discussions informelles avec les élèves ont été utilisés pour enquêter sur la motivation des apprenants, leurs difficultés à s'exprimer en anglais et les pratiques pédagogiques des enseignants. Les résultats de l'étude montrent que la motivation des apprenants est limitée. Leur difficulté à parler couramment l'anglais est confirmée et les pratiques d'enseignement ne développent pas l'expression orale. Des activités communicatives sont alors nécessaires pour renforcer la facilité des apprenants de parler couramment l'anglais.

Mots clés : activités communicatives, facteur, langue étrangère, maîtrise, motivation,

Introduction

Nowadays, people yearn for the mastery of English. J.C. Richards (2006, p. 1) echoes this strong desire to learn English in the following terms: "*millions of people today want to improve their command of English or to ensure that their children achieve a good command of English*". Motivation for learning English may vary from an individual to another. Some people are willing to do so because they want to get a good position in an enterprise; some other people learn English because they are businessmen and English is at the core of

transactions. Another group of people (mainly students) learn the language of Shakespeare because it is a subject taught in class. No matter the reason, the ultimate goal of learning a language is to communicate.

In Burkina Faso, English is taught as a subject from junior secondary schools up to university, even in some private primary schools. It is taught from form 1 to upper sixth in secondary schools. The government even want it to be taught in public primary schools. However, students learning English in Burkina Faso encounter serious difficulties to express themselves. At the oral examinations of BEPC (GCSE) or Baccalaureate, one can notice these difficulties. Students can hardly introduce themselves or answer questions appropriately. Most of them “fight” to find their words when they are asked to speak. Their oral skill is a great concern. S.Biyen (1991), quoting Damiba, considers that more pupils succeed in writing (63.90%) than in speaking (21.48%). It means that students are generally more proficient in writing than in speaking. P. Somé (1990), R. Kima (1998), and J. Ilboudo (2012), all allude to the low oral proficiency of students in Burkina. Many students hardly express themselves in English in class. Even when they manage to speak, they do not speak English fluently. Why is that so?

1- Methodology

This study explores the reasons why many learners in Burkina Faso encounter difficulties to express themselves. For this purpose, I adopt a mixed method, that is, the combination of quantitative and qualitative research. For J. Creswell (2006), with the mixed method, researchers are permitted to use all of the tools of data collection available. Furthermore, Creswell thinks that the mixed method can allow us to use both numbers and words and can permit us to vary the tools of data collection, and to analyze subjective and objective views.

The study takes place in the “Centre-Ouest” region (Mid-West), precisely in the city of Koudougou during the school year 2022-2023. Six (6) Public secondary and private schools were concerned with the study. Participants were students (90), teachers (10) and ELT supervisors (05). Student participants are advanced learners, that is, students in form 5, and lower 6 being in literary classes. These forms are chosen because the students from these classes are the ones who have been learning English for 5 years at least. A questionnaire was addressed to students; an interview protocol was addressed to teachers and supervisors. Observation grids were used to observe 4 teachers (nicknamed) in order to record their teaching practices.

2- Theoretical framework

The paper is grounded on communicative competence and sociocultural theories. Communicative competence is said to be coined by Hyme, (M. Celce-Murcia, 2007) in response to Chomsky' linguistic competence. Canale and Swain refer to Chomsky to differentiate competence from performance. According to Chomsky's weak version, “competence refers to knowledge of grammar and other aspects of language while performance refers to actual use”, (Canale & Swain (1980, p. 3)). Chomsky's strong version claims that competence is related to grammar that a good native speaker has “internalized”, while performance alludes to the psychological factors which are included in the production of speech.

After analyzing Chomsky's strong version which states that competence has to be linked to knowledge of grammar rules, M. Canale and M. Swain (1980) referred to the authors D. Hymes (1972), Campbell and Wales (1970) who gave a broad definition of competence. For these authors, competence means communicative competence. For them, this notion entails grammatical and contextual or sociolinguistic competence. According to these

authors, the difference between communicative competence and performance is that performance alludes to “actual use”.

M. Canale and M. Swain (1980, p. 6) came to the conclusion that communicative competence alludes “*to the relationship and interaction between grammatical competence, or knowledge of the rules of grammar, and sociolinguistic competence, or knowledge of the rules of language use*”. They consider communicative competence to be different from communicative performance, for the latter is the realization of the former and in terms of testing, performance can be directly measured or observed, not competence.

In addition to Canale and Swain conception of communication competence, M. Celce-Murcia (2007, p. 42) brought actional competence to be a new component of communicative competence. For her, actional competence is “*the ability to comprehend and produce all significant speech acts and speech act sets and discourse competence*”. We can then see that the concept of Communicative competence has evolved through time.

From a sociocultural perspective, the ultimate goal of language learning is to communicate. As in real life, interaction is very important. P. Lightbown and N. Spada (2006, p. 204) in their glossary define socio-cultural theory as follows:

an explanation for knowledge and learning that is based on the assumption that all learning is first social, then individual. Learning is viewed as a process that is socially mediated, that is, it is dependent on dialogue in face-to-face interaction. The claim is that during communication, learners jointly construct knowledge which is internalized by the individual”.

The sociocultural theory is based on the belief that cultural context and mediation play key role in learning. This is echoed by R. Donato and D. McCormick (1994) who think that social interaction and cultural institutions are important elements in an individual cognitive growth and development.

For L.Vygotsky (1978), dialogue is essential; learning is not something an individual does alone. Interactions and corrective feedbacks are practices which boost communication. Effective error correction can lead to learning. The ultimate goal of language learning is communication competence and communicative competence is the use of language that is linguistically accurate and socially appropriate. In Burkina, during class visits as a supervisor, I noticed this lack of interactions through pair work or group work. Even when it is tried, it is not efficient. Very few teachers make students interact.

These two theories can help us account for some causes of learners’ lack of fluency in this study. They can also help identify some ways and means to develop learners’ fluency.

3- Literature review

3-1- What is fluency?

What is meant by fluency? The definition of the word “fluency” is as vast as the ocean. Several authors tried to clarify it.

According to S. Zhang (2009), fluency encompasses the four main skills. One can be fluent in writing, reading, speaking or listening. Oral fluency is the one related to speaking. S. Zhang (2009, p. 3) is more concerned with oral fluency (which is my concern) and defines it as “*the ability to communicate an intended message; (...) to produce coherent utterances; to respond and speak with continuity and to use strategies to aid communication when the appropriate vocabulary or grammar is not available*”. To be fluent is not only the fact to speak without hesitations, it is also the fact of being understood by others, it means to be able to adapt oneself in conversation.

As for P. Lennon (1990), he thinks that the term is used in two dimensions: fluency in its broad sense and narrow sense. In its broad sense, fluency refers to oral performance. Fluency is used to measure the spoken command of a foreign language. That is why the words

“fair”, “good”, “fluent” are used to level it. The three words are the ones use to qualify proficiency. P. Lennon (1990, p. 389) asserts that “there is rarely, if ever, anything beyond ‘fluent’”. For him, this broad meaning of fluency is also the one used in forms for academic references.

In the narrow sense, fluency “refers to one, presumably isolatable, component of oral proficiency” (P. Lennon 1990, p. 389). For him, a learner may be fluent but may not have a huge and varied vocabulary. A learner may also speak correctly but not fluently. He distinguishes like C. Fillmore (1979, p. 93), four types of native-like fluency:

- The capacity to fill time with talk, or “disk-jockey fluency”;
- The capacity to talk in coherent, reasoned and meaningfully dense sentences;
- The fact to have appropriate things to say in various contexts;
- The capacity to be creative and imaginative.

P. Lennon (1990, p. 392) develops variables to assess a learner's fluency. These include the speech rate (words or syllables articulated per minute), the length and the positioning of silent pauses, the length of fluent speech runs between pauses, frequency and distribution of filled pauses, repetitions and self-corrections.

F. Chambers (1997, p. 135) acknowledges the difficulty to define fluency. He first equates fluency to oral proficiency. For him, when people say in ordinary language that someone is fluent in a language, it is to “describe the spoken production of a person who can use the language effectively usually in reference to someone speaking a foreign language”. Chambers distinguishes two main characteristics of a fluent performance: speed and effortlessness. These represent the quantitative and qualitative aspects of fluency. Speed can be measured, whereas effortlessness is about qualitative judgment. So, a fluent speaker is someone who can speak like a native speaker.

F. Chambers then defines fluency in a CLT context as contrasted to “accuracy”. He refers to Brumfit who considers fluency in the context of CLT as the natural language use whether or not it has native-like comprehension or production. The notion of fluency is used to evaluate the capacity of learners to communicate.

In trying to make a quantitative analysis of fluency in spoken production, Chambers quoted Schmidt (1992) whose definition of fluency is automaticity. For Schmidt, fluency is dependent on automaticity, and fluency develops when more production processes are automatic. Chambers thinks that speech rate (the number of syllables uttered per second) and pause are important elements to be considered.

D. Byrne (1986) defines fluency as the capacity to express oneself intelligibly, reasonably, accurately and without too much hesitation. For her, spoken language requires both understanding and speaking. It means that speaking includes listening. She terms speaking as “oral ability which necessitates integrated skills.”

From all these definitions, the notions of hesitation and pause are recurrent. But to be fluent is not only the fact to speak without hesitations or irregular pauses; it is also the fact of being understood by others, speaking intelligibly and different factors can explain the state of non-fluency of the learner.

3-2- The development of oral fluency

Researchers have tried to propose ways to cope with the difficulties met by learners to be fluent speakers.

M. Celce-Murcia (1991) expressed her view on the place of grammar in a communicative approach. For her, grammar should be taught in accordance with the age of learners: “the younger you are, the less you need grammar”. It means that adult learners need more grammar lessons than children. She even considers grammar not to be an end in itself.

Still for a communicative purpose, she thinks receptive skills (listening, reading) need less attention than productive ones (speaking and writing).

D. Byrne (1986) thinks that accuracy and fluency should be introduced gradually according to the level of learners. For her, at the elementary level, much focus should be put on accuracy than fluency; at the advanced level, priority should be given to fluency. Age is also dealt by S. Zhang (2009) in referring to the critical period (before puberty) hypothesis. This hypothesis holds the view that enough input, before the age of twelve (12) makes L2 acquisition easy and complete. The best time to start learning a language is during childhood: the younger, the better. S. Zhang also points out the importance of input, interaction and output in the improvement of oral fluency. For him, the three elements are essential. In Burkina, English is generally taught in secondary school. Teaching it to primary school learners may help improve learners' proficiency. D. Minoungou (2007) is a proponent of the introduction of English in primary school. He noticed that pupils who learned English in private primary schools are more motivated to continue learning it in secondary schools. He therefore claims for the teaching of English at the lower level in order to boost motivation. However, he does not mention the role of the teacher in this motivation. If teachers are not well trained to deal with younger learners, learners' lack of interest will reach the ground at an early age.

Classroom interactions are very important in language learning. The types of interactions generally include teacher-learner, learner-learner. According to P. Ur (1996) the most popular type of classroom interaction is known as 'IRF': Initiation-Response-Feedback. The teacher is the initiator of a talk using questions, a student answers and the teacher reacts and can follow the same process.

M. Dagarin (2004) distinguishes four frequent types of interaction:

- Teacher-learner: this is when the teacher talks to the whole class;
- Teacher-learner/a group of learner: the teacher speaks to the whole class but expects a pupil or a group of students to answer;
- Learner-learner: this is also called pair work; learners complete a task in pairs
- Learners-learners: this is also known as a group work.

L. Van Lier (1988) also distinguishes four types of classroom interaction:

- The teacher has no control over the topic and the activity;
- The teacher controls the topic but not the activity;
- The teacher controls the topic and the activity;
- The teacher controls the activity but not the topic.

L. Van Lier (1984, p. 163) criticizes the teacher who generally has the monopoly of the talk in many classes and so displaying an unequal right of communication: "*the teacher decides who the next speaker is going to be, the next speaker responds to the call, and then the teacher takes over again, automatically*". D. Nunan (1991) also noticed that the teacher does most of the talking in all sorts of classrooms and this type of interaction does not develop learners' communicative competence.

N.M. Hue (2010), a Vietnamese researcher, dealt with learners' reluctance to speak in the classroom. He proposed some techniques suggested by Nation. For him, the level of task difficulty should be reduced by giving students enough time to do tasks, bringing the tasks within students' experience, permitting students to collaboratively solve communicative tasks, proving students with task guidance, attending to individual students' needs and ability. Hue also thinks that positive attitudes among students should be promoted. For him, the teacher should change students' negative beliefs and attitudes towards mistakes, boost learners' self-confidence, lower students' anxiety in the classroom. Additionally, the teacher should create a supportive learning environment in developing peer support in classroom, being careful when

grouping students, tolerate L1 use when appropriate, creating an anxiety-free atmosphere, giving opportunities to practice the new language outside the class.

J.B. Sawadogo (2004) suggests to lay emphasis on effective interaction. This will undoubtedly have an impact on students' oral performance. Moreover, he proposes the reinforcement of teachers' background through a language immersion trip for teachers. This will improve their mastery of the language. Furthermore, he advocates for the training of teachers through seminars and workshops, the equipment of teachers with pedagogic kits. Teachers should also resort to their creativity and their own development.

4- Results

4-1- *Learners' fluency*

A very important number of students (74.7%) claim to speak English without ease, that is, with hesitations, unnatural pauses, gap fillers, etc, 22.6% students think that they do not "have to stop many times to think of what to say next or how to phrase it. On the issue of students' fluency in English, all the teachers and supervisors agreed that students do not speak English fluently. The appreciations were all negative: "very poor", "not satisfactory". They do not find it acceptable for "seconde" or "première" pupils to be unable to express themselves fluently. Some supervisors even questioned the fluency of some teachers. But what kind of difficulties do students face?

Many students are aware that they have fluency problems. On the question "what kind of difficulties do you have?", the answers were the following: 48.4% of the respondents link their difficulties to pronunciation, 12.4% to intonation, 34.4% to grammar, 51.1% to vocabulary

The most important difficulties of the students include vocabulary (51.1%) and pronunciation (48.4%). It means that learners have a limited number of words in their mind and hardly know how to pronounce some words.

During class observations, we noticed the difficulties students had in expressing themselves. The difficulties included many aspects:

- students hesitated many times when expressing themselves. We could see that they were hesitantly looking for words when they spoke. Sometimes gestures or actions were used to mime what they wanted to express. For example, during the expose on the ozone layer, in the class of Mr. Tambi (nickname), some students wanted to speak with the presenters, and were looking in vain for their words. Gestures were sometimes used to complete their sentences;
- lots of pauses were made. Some students can even pause up to 7 seconds before continuing;
- there were mispronunciations. Some students did not have the right pronunciation of some words;
- grammatical mistakes abounded in their speech, for example: " I am agree, I is, He are going, I go not...".

The difficulties expressed by students and those we observed are alike. Students have problems to speak with ease. They spent their time looking for words, the right pronunciation, thinking of correct and suitable grammar rule. All these take their time and gestures are generally used as support. But what may be the causes of students' fluency problems?

4-2- *Factors impeding learners' fluency*

On the causes of students' non-fluency, student-respondents were presented many factors in the questionnaire. These factors included the linguistic situation of Burkina Faso, the fear to make mistakes, shyness, teachers' activities, teachers' use of French, motivation, absence to English classes, boring classes. Their answers show that all the mentioned factors have something to do with their difficulties, with different rates as shown in the following table:

Table 1: Causes of learners' difficulties

Causes of difficulties	%
No answer	3.8%
Because Burkina Faso is a French speaking country	64%
Because I do not want to make mistakes	35.5%
Because I am shy	22.6%
Because teachers do not develop oral activities	38.2%
Because I have no motivation	14%
Because the English teacher uses French in class	16.1%
Because I do not attend English classes	1.1%
Because English classes are boring	3.2%

Present research data

For the great majority of interviewed teachers (8/10), students are responsible for their fluency problems because they have no will to speak, they are not regular in classes, they do not participate, they do not do classroom activities. Two of the teachers incriminated the practices of teachers because they did not get any training or adequate training to make students become fluent. As for interviewed supervisors, the recurrent factors are:

- routine;
- poor resources;
- large size of classes;
- focus on accuracy, not on fluency;
- lack of interest;
- lack of practice of English from students;
- teachers' training.

Learner's fluency problems are linked to many factors. The most incriminated factor according to students is the environment, for some teachers, the blame is to be put on students, but other teachers questioned their own teaching practices. Our focus in the next section will be on the practices of the person who should make learning take place, the teacher; because the teacher seems to be at the beginning and at the end of the learning process.

4-3- Activities developed by teachers in classrooms

Students were asked to name activities carried out by their teachers. According them, the most favorite lessons taught by teachers are reading-comprehension (78.5%), grammar (72%) and vocabulary (65.6%). Activities which gain less attention are dialogues 31.2%, role-plays 5.9%, and games 2.2%. Activities pointed out by students do not differ a lot from those given by teachers themselves. All the ten teachers interviewed said that they cherished reading-comprehension in the second cycle and written activities in general. Some of the reasons given are:

- "I was taught how to teach reading-comprehension in ENS-UK",
- "With reading-comprehension, we can introduce other elements",
- "This is what is given at the exam",
- "Reading-comprehension helps discover new words".

For Supervisors, when they observed classes, activities developed by teachers were not varied. They were centered on grammar, vocabulary and reading comprehension. Some supervisors think that training has to do with this monotony. They think that teachers' training has something to do with it because they sometimes fail to see the difference between a trained teacher and an untrained one. One supervisor even said that "even some of those who went through a training school are worst". In addition to the training problem, some supervisors think that teachers develop no effort to involve learners in the learning process.

They feel that some teachers do not have this motivation to teach. They just do the minimum they can and do not care about the performance of learners.

During class observations, the activities/lessons developed by teachers are not quite different from the ones mentioned by students, teachers and supervisors. Below is a table that summarizes lessons taught by teachers during observations:

Table 2: lessons presented by observed teachers

Teachers (I nicknamed them for confidentiality)	Lessons presented
Koudbi	Visit 1: speaking Visit 2: reading-comprehension Visit 3 reading-comprehension
Zoamba	Visit 1: grammar Visit 2: reading-comprehension Visit 3: reading-comprehension
Tambi	Visit 1: speaking (discussion) Visit 2: exposé Visit 3: reading-comprehension
Koudpoko	Visit 1: reading-comprehension Visit 2: reading-comprehension

Present research data

Reading-comprehension was the most recurrent lesson taught by teachers. Two teachers presented a speaking lesson and one carried out a grammar lesson. In presenting the reading comprehension lessons, Koudbi, Tambi and Koudpoko went through the three stages of a reading-comprehension lesson: pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading stages. What is common is that there is a lack of interactions among students. Students only answered teachers' questions at the while-reading stage and gave their opinion on an issue at the post-reading stage.

There is also the monopoly of the speech by the teacher. For example, Mr. Zoamba, during a grammar lesson in 1re A took 45 minutes to present the lesson and gave five minutes to students to build sentences of their own, using a gerund. In this lesson, we can notice the monopoly of the teacher as far as time is concerned. The teacher spoke for 45 minutes in a 55 minute lesson.

Mr. Koudbi in "sceonde A" class had a debate on emigration. His debate lesson was based on the following instruction: "I want you to work in groups (two tables, 4 persons) and answer the following questions"

- 1- What is African emigration?
- 2- What explains this phenomenon?
- 3- What are the consequences for the continent?
- 4- What can we do to stop it?

Students were given 15 minutes for the activity. The teacher sat on his desk while students were doing the activity. Students used French to discuss. When it was time, the teacher asked the reporters of every group to read their answers for question 1 and did the same thing till question 4. After finishing with the 4 questions, he wrote another question on the board: "can we prevent young people from emigrating?", "discuss it quickly for 5 minutes, change reporters. The teacher stayed again at his office and then started writing homework on the board: "write a paragraph where you report the youth's need in Burkina to convince the government to satisfy them (12-15 lines)". Later the reporters gave their feedback on the task and the teacher asked them to take the homework.

During class observations, we noticed that students were not engaged in discussion or a debate. Every reporter reported the view of their groups and the teacher did not ask the other students to react. The other students did not seem to be interested in the so-called debate. They were quiet and some were busy reading other papers.

In a 1re A class, Koudpoko taught a reading-comprehension lesson. The text dealt with Ebola. The lesson was in fact a continuation of the previous lesson studied the week before. After asking students to write the date on the board, the teacher asked students questions related to the text. After asking the following question “what does the following figure, 40,000,000 represent in the text?” a student said “the figure represents the people who are infected by HIV”. The teacher appreciated the answer but a student objected: “I disagree with the answer, 40,000,000 represents the number of people who will be infected”. The teacher disagreed and the student stood in his position too. Finally, the teacher fought back in saying, “so you want to debate?” the student stopped talking and the teacher moved to the next question. In the text the sentence was “by the end of this decade, the global number of HIV infections should reach 40 million”. So the figure was a projection of the people who would be infected, not the one who are infected. The learner was “oppressed” by the teacher. Koudpoko continued asking questions related to the text and students gave answers. They generally blindly copy the text when answering.

This discussion displays the nature of the relationship between teachers and learners. Teachers generally think they have the last word and deny any truth from learners. They think that the mind of the learner is a *tabula rasa* and nothing important can come out. In this situation, when the learner is denied the right to be right, that is, when the teacher wants the learner to think that his (the teacher) words are bible truth, the learner generally is resentful to get involved in discussions. He is no more willing to participate in a conversation.

In a “seconde A” class, Tambi started asking the date to students. A student answered and he was asked to write it on the board. He told students that he was absent the previous week and the students as well because of a strike. He then asked them a question: “when people go on strike, how do they behave? Are they violent or non-violent?” Some said yes, others said no. The teacher then introduced the lesson of the day: “today, we are going to have a discussion on strikes. But you need to have a vocabulary first”. The teacher wrote the following words on the board:

- To go on strike
- A striker
- To pillage
- A pillage
- Exorbitant price of fuel

He pronounced and explained the words and then asked students to read them to their neighbors. After that, he asked students to work in groups of three and answer the following question: “what should people do or avoid doing during strikes? Discuss for 10 minutes, do not write. Give at least 3 arguments.” Students exchanged using French most of the time. After the 10 minutes were gone, Mr. Tambi asked students to give their arguments. 9 students did the task and a volunteer was asked to write the arguments on the board.

In another class of Tambi I attended, a group of six students made a presentation on “the ozone layer: why and how to protect it?” A member of the group introduced himself and the other members of the group. Then, another member read the introduction and gave the floor to another who dealt with a part and so on. When they finished presenting their different parts (in 16 minutes), the teacher went to the board and wrote the following instruction: “with your neighbor, try to get the right pronunciation of these words”. He wrote 10 words which were mispronounced by the presenters. Students pronounced the words to their neighbors and then the teacher had student repeat the words correctly. After, he asked presenters to proceed with

the second aspect of their presentation, the step of questions. 12 students asked questions of clarification or justification which lasted 20 minutes. Afterwards, Mr. Tambi gave another activity to the class: "work with your neighbor to correct the underlined mistakes" (the sentences with mistakes were produced by both presenters and other students who asked questions). Here are the sentences or bits of sentences:

- 1- The totally protection of the ozone layer
- 2- The ultraviolet rays who are dangerous
- 3- I am optimist because.....
- 4- Some organizations who fight.....
- 5- I would want to know if.....
- 6- The ozone layer is not protect.

Students were given 5 minutes for the task and then a "secretary" was sent to the board to record the good propositions.

We can notice that speaking activities are not developed by all the teachers. When interviewed on how often supervisors observe speaking activities the answers sound the same: "very rarely", "over 10 years of supervision, I count less than 5", "rarely", "quite rare" "over ten years, once". The explanations they give to the lack of development of speaking activities are varied:

- Teachers do not know how to conduct speaking activities;
- The pre-service training has something to do with it;
- Speaking requires preparation and material;
- Teachers are not motivated;
- Teachers forget the little they learned at school.

Supervisors confessed they rarely visit teachers because of the lack of resources. The most visited are trainee teachers who are preparing their certifications. According to supervisors, during their rare observations, teachers develop unvaried activities, activities which are not oriented towards communication and this cannot help develop fluency.

5- Discussions

This section expatiates upon the findings of the research discussed in relation with the communicative competence and sociocultural perspectives and other literature. Three themes are central: motivation, fluency and interactions.

5-1- Motivation

Although learner-respondent in the questionnaires said that they are motivated to learn English (only 14% only link their difficulties to the lack of motivation), the data collected during classroom observations proved otherwise. Learners often did other things not related to what they want them to do. They did not seem to be interested in classes and this disinterest might be due to the lack of real intrinsic or extrinsic motivation, for as P. Ur (1996. p. 274) puts it "the motivated learner is the one who is willing to or even eager to invest effort in learning activities". She thinks that motivation has something to do with achievement in language learning. Additionally, teachers play a great responsibility in this situation. They do not motivate learners and do not develop activities that can boost students' motivation. In the sociocultural perspective as T.Y.Kim (2005, p. 53) puts it, "motivation is generated, maintained and decreased". The teacher has to be aware of this and consider it in his teaching practices.

The lack of motivation equates the lack of action and for M. Celce-Murcia (2007) the new component of communicative competence is the production of meaningful speech, that is, actional competence. Motivation is very important for action to take place.

S. Aydin (2012), referring to Sakai and Kikuchi (2009), identified five factors that may hinder EFL learners' motivation: course content and material, teacher competence and teaching style, inadequate school facilities, lack of intrinsic motivation and test scores. These factors are really important in our context: the course content in our classes does not help develop fluency and does not attract learners because of the monotony; the lack of training of teachers affects learners' performance; the syllabus is questionable; teachers' teaching practices do not favor learning; when observing classes, we noticed how poor our schools are because of the limited numbers of tables (students sitting on a table), the physical appearance of the buildings, the lack of comfort.

5-2- Fluency

Learners and teachers' answers, observations display the lack of fluency of learners. They have difficulties to express themselves. They speak with hesitations and always look for words and many times produce unmeaningful speech, or suffer to pronounce some words. The difficulties encountered by students tally with those mentioned by Riggensbach (quoted by F. Chambers (1997, p. 540)) in the following terms:

Non-fluency (...) can arise from a deficiency in any one of these areas: the inability to produce a given grammatical structure may be the first link in a chain of dysfluencies that may as easily have begun with a comprehension lapse, a pronunciation problem, or a motivation for precision in word choice.

Indeed, teachers rarely teach grammar communicatively. Activities are generally not contextualized so that learners only know structures out of context. Additionally, pronunciation problem are recurrent even at the level of some teachers.

For J. C. Richards (2006, p.14) "fluency is developed by creating classrooms activities in which students must negotiate meaning, use communication strategies, correct misunderstanding, and work to avoid communication breakdowns". Unfortunately, such activities are not developed in classes. According to findings, the activities carried out by teachers are: reading-comprehension (78.5%), grammar (72%) and vocabulary (65.6%). Activities which gain less attention are dialogues 31.2%, role-plays 5.9%, and games 2.2%. The routine is to teach grammar, vocabulary, reading-comprehension without trying to include the activities mentioned by Richards.

5-3- Interactions

For P. Lightbown and N. Spada (2006), it is only when an individual interacts with another one within his or her zone of proximal development (ZPD) that learning is said to occur. ZPD was coined by Vygotsky and is defined as the distance between what a child can learn alone and what he can learn with help. Help is very important, hence the necessity to interact. Kimberly and McClendon (2002) expatiate upon this as follows: "the sociocultural theory emphasizes the important role of social interaction in the construction of knowledge" (p.136). Learning takes place through social interaction.

In the sociocultural perspective, interactions are of paramount importance. Our observations showed that teachers interact with students but this interaction is not an interaction *per se*, for teachers do most of the talk. L. Van Lier (1984) speaks about the monopoly of the speech. Even when students want to increase their talking time, teachers take back their "power" (Mrs. Koudpoko and her students, I nickname her for confidentiality). This monopoly of the talk is depicted by Z.Wang (2014) when dealing with the situation in China: "English speaking is greatly ignored in Chinese EFL classrooms, for most teachers tend to talk a lot in class, while giving few chances for students to speak English. Consequently, those learners are underdeveloped in their spoken English". This quotation displays teachers' attitude in China. It underlines the monopoly of the talk by teachers and

this is also what we hinted to in the point related to participation. Teachers do most of the talking. Even when students are given the opportunity to exchange, they do not do it. Interacting increases the exposure to the language and as M.N. Guillot (1999, p.57) puts it "extensive exposure produces an increase in the communicative efficiency of foreign language learners". Peer interaction also is not efficient because teachers do not monitor activities and students do other things or just use French in the so-called group work. This is why Z. Dornyei (2001) suggests to explicitly formulate the norms of the group and try to observe these norms consistently.

From the sociocultural perspective, learning takes place through interactions but unfortunately interactions in our classes are not common, or are inefficient

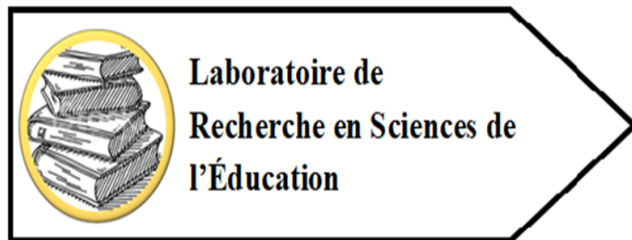
Conclusion

The ultimate goal of language learning is communication. When a language learner is able to communicate, to make himself understood, he can but feel full satisfaction. In learning a language, we expect to be fluent in this language. Fluency in foreign language teaching has always been a concern for foreign language teachers and researchers. In this study, I tried to investigate on the fluency of English learners of the city of Koudougou. Learners have been learning English for a long time, yet their oral performance is poor. Findings of the study revealed that students' fluency problems have something to do with their motivation and teachers' teaching practices. The motivation of students has been proved limited and teachers' teaching practices happened to be an obstacle to the development of fluency. Teachers have to motivate learners, develop communicative activities. Additionally, the syllabus has to be reviewed and teachers have to be well trained.

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