Investigating Students' Inability to Speak in English in the Classroom

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Abstract

Teaching English as a Foreign Language successfully requires an interaction between the teacher and learners in the target language but that was lacking in my classroom. This paper investigates strategies that I can use to get my students to interact with me in English, ways in which students can develop appropriate vocabulary they need to interact and methods which I can support shy students to use English in class. Through a qualitative design made up of teacher's journals, interviews, group discussions, and observation, some useful details provided by the students enabled us to design action steps that are gradually developing new classroom atmospheres. Students identified the lack of encouragements when they make efforts, the absence of revision on their part, and the lack of vocabulary to express themselves. With such information, strategies like constant motivation, group exercises and the use of topics of interest were put in place. These have significantly changed classroom interactions, as students now make efforts to construct simple sentences in English and they also have the support of their peers when in difficulty. This research is helpful for the community of practitioners to understand the importance of considering learners' needs in the teaching-learning process.

Introduction

Currently, with the world becoming a global village, communicating in English is very important as it is widely spoken by many people from different countries. In EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classrooms, interaction in the target language, English, cannot be avoided as it permits learners to meet the demands of the evolving world. Seddiki (2022) defines classroom interaction as the taking and giving of information between the teacher and learners as a productive act, and Yu (2008) goes further to say that interaction must be seriously meaningful about matters of serious concern to the participants and, therefore, conducive to a major attempt to communicate and not merely to simulate communication. So, effective communication occurs when messages are not distorted during the communication process and communication serves the purpose for which it was planned or designed (Pal et al., 2016). This paper explores some factors that cause students not to speak using English in class and identifies some solutions which are helpful for the community of practitioners to understand the importance of considering learners' needs in the teaching-learning process.

This paper begins by presenting the background of the learners under study in Kousseri, Cameroon, the realities of the teaching context, the classroom challenge and reflective questions which inspired the choice of data collection tools: interviews, group discussions, teacher's in- class written notes from observation and notes from informal conversations with colleagues. After a qualitative data analysis, the findings are presented on which the action steps are built. The aim of this paper is to investigate strategies that I can use to get my students to interact with me using the target language.

Learners' Background

I work in Lycée d'Amchédire (Government High School Amchedire) found in the Subdivision of Kousseri in the Far North Region of Cameroon (see maps in Figure 1).
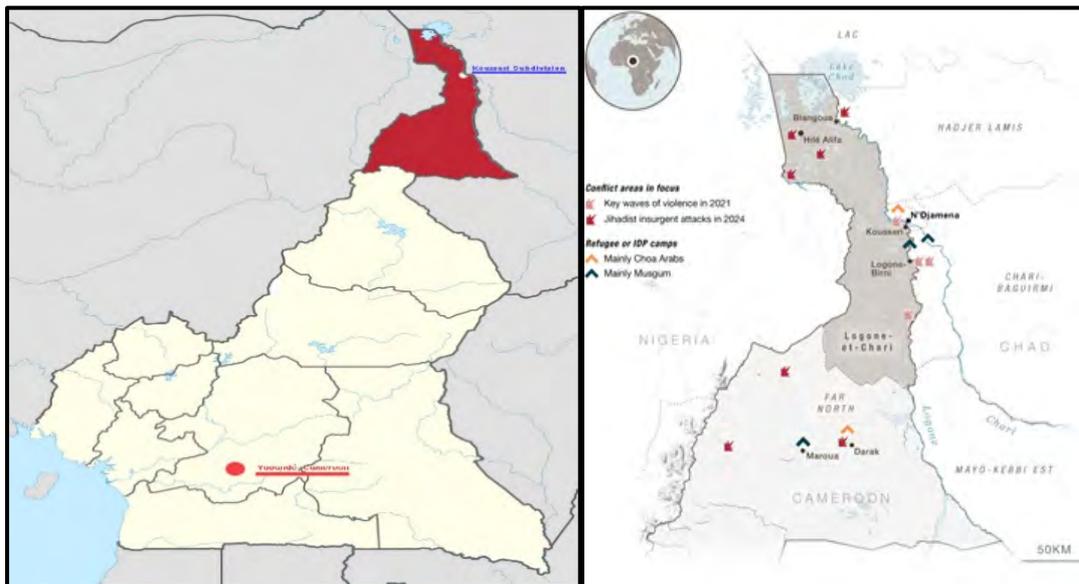

Figure 1. Image of Cameroon's Far North Region (from Wikipedia Commons)

In this school, English is taught as a foreign language (in Cameroon, it is called *Anglais*) following the dual system of education in Cameroon. In Article 15(1) of Law No. 98/004 of the 4th of April 1998 on Education in Cameroon, it is stated that "The education system is organised into two sub-systems, one English-speaking and one French-speaking, through which the option of biculturalism is reaffirmed". These systems of education follow the Anglo-Saxon and French systems given that Cameroon was under the control of Britain and France before gaining Independence. So, in the educational process, English-speaking Cameroonians learn French as a foreign language while French-speaking Cameroonians learn English as a foreign language.

The school is found in the outskirts of the town and suffers from the lack of resources. Firstly, there has been no electricity until the year 2024 when solar panels were installed, but still, only the computer laboratory is powered until the present date. Secondly, given that classrooms are not sufficient for the number of class divisions we have, some classes are held under trees on the school campus (see Figure 2). Thirdly and lastly, there is no library that students can exploit in their spare time. With insufficient resources, the teaching-learning process becomes challenging as we struggle to exploit other teaching resources that require electricity, and this limits our exposure especially in the present digital world.

Figure 2. Image of 10th grade students attending my *Anglais* class (photo by a student)

In this EFL learning context, education is not a priority for all learners. According to Ruth (2023), in some families, education for girls is not seen as necessary or desirable. If the family has both sons and daughters, the sons will be prioritized for schooling as it is believed that they will become wage-earners, but the daughters will become wives and mothers, and so the culture says that education is not necessary. Similarly, statistics (UNESCO reports, 2015, as cited in Ngong, 2015) show that 31% of girls get married before age 15, in rural communities. Equally, data from the Far North Region of Cameroon show that fewer than 18% of girls attend school. This is the reason why classrooms are made up of 75% male and just 25% female. These statistics are markedly different from UNESCO's goals where gender equality in education is a priority (UNESCO, 2013). My students sometimes say attending school is a means of leaving the home. Most students are from poor backgrounds which accounts for the learners' inability to purchase textbooks or other learning materials which help them read while at home and carry out tasks that consolidate lessons taught.

The dominant language of communication of my learners is "*Arabe Shua*" also known as "*Chadian Arabic*", a language of wider communication that originated in Chad, Cameroon, Niger and Nigeria (Chadian Arabic, Ethnologue). There are other languages that coexist with the latter like Kotoko, Borno, Fufulde, Mundang, Hausa, and Gambaye, which learners with corresponding origins speak but these can be heard mostly back at home, in the quarters (local neighbourhoods) or at the market though not as significantly as the "*Chadian Arabic*". The latter can, therefore, be considered both an L1 and a Lingua Franca for learners who are not locals from Kousseri. The French language, one of the official languages in Cameroon, is only partially spoken. It is expected that Cameroonians of the French-speaking regions speak or at least understand French, but it turns out that most of the locals cannot communicate in the said language. Equally, it is the language of instruction from primary through secondary school in the French sub-system of education. The language used on signposts and billboards is French mostly, and Arabic (the classic or standard form) can be seen in some places like mosques, Islamic schools, and some businesses. Conversely, most of the inhabitants of the Islamic religion can read standard Arabic because they attend Koranic schools from childhood before starting school and continue attending these alongside their formal education from the primary to the secondary schools. Moreover, Koranic schools are not formal, and are attended in the local neighbourhoods where the teachers known as "marabouts" live.

Learners' attrition rate is very significant in this context as the number of students enrolled at the primary level drops as they go further in studies. This is justified with the reason that education becomes more demanding as they go further. Also, learners weigh the benefits of engaging in business to be more important compared to attending school and others get married very young (it is common to see girls marry at the age of 14). Learners who sail through high school and who wish to further their studies are obliged to move to other towns for better learning opportunities in universities and professional institutions. Consequently, with the influence of such an environment coupled with the influence of their local language, lack of interest in education and cultural barriers, the English language proficiency level of my learners is very low. As El Metmari et al. (2022) report,

> Environment plays an important role in determining second language acquisition for language learners. It includes everything the language learner hears and sees in the new language. Environment can be varied in terms of the situations, such as conversation with friends or parents, watching television, billboards, reading street signs and magazines, as well as classroom activities".
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> (pp. 4-5)

Learners in this context start formal education at age 3 and others later. The bilingual system of education in Cameroon warrants that English language is taught as a required subject. Therefore, it is learned from the primary to the tertiary levels in the educational system.

The teaching and learning of English, *Anglais* is challenging because there are little or no external stimuli to the learning of English. Learners can use English mostly only in the classroom. Students who have televisions in their homes can encounter English through certain documentaries and the news on national television channels. Some learners are exposed to English via the internet on their mobile phones, but they exploit the latter mostly for entertainment, that is, playing music, watching videos and using applications that permit them to take pictures and videos of themselves. However, only a few who own smartphones use the internet for research when they are given homework at school.

Teaching Context

During this research, my classroom sizes ranged from 3 to 80 students. We have difficult learning situations: few benches for students to sit and comfortably write on, no library for students to exploit, and no staff room for teachers to work in. I teach all examination classes, 9th, 11th and 12th grades, that is, classes of students preparing for end of year certificate exams which determine their promotion to the next class: secondary to high school and from high school to university. I also teach an intermediary class – 10th grade (9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grades corresponding to *3e*, *2nde*, *1ere*, and *Tle*[1] in Cameroon). Their ages range between 13 and 25 years. This wide age range is because learners repeat classes and others, we notice, must have started school late probably because they come from other villages which do not have learning opportunities like the town of Kousseri and the absence of a means to attend school because of insufficient finances.

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[1] *3e – troisième, 2nde – seconde, 1ere – première, Tle - Terminale*

Classroom Challenge

I chose to do this exploratory action research based on some challenges I faced in my classrooms. When I teach (using French partly), my students have comprehension difficulties. Some who do understand face difficulties responding to my questions. They mostly resort to the use of French or give up trying. Others do not put in efforts given that almost nothing outside their classroom context encourages them to learn English. Faced with these challenges, I set as objective to investigate strategies that can encourage students to respond to questions and interact in English.

Research Questions

The challenges identified from my classroom pushed me to reflect on the following questions:
- What accounts for the inability of students to speak and respond to questions in English in the classroom?
- What strategies can I use to build up learners' vocabulary?
- What can I do to encourage students from shying away from using English in the classroom?

Methodology

The participants in this study are Arts students in the 9th to the 12th grades (*3e*-70, *1e* A-40, *2nde* A-20, *Tle* A-20), 150 students in total. These classes are Arts classes and have more time in the teaching-learning process contrarily to science classes. The 9th grade has a weekly load of 3 hours while the 10th, 11th and 12th have 4 hours. Science students, in the high school (10th,11th and 12th grades), have 3 hours weekly for their *Anglais* lessons. This study follows the exploratory action research (EAR) model proposed by Smith and Rebolledo (2018). They define EAR as, a way to explore, understand and improve our practice as teachers. According to this model, there is a stage of 'exploring' which involves planning questions and how to get data, gathering data and answering questions based on data. Then, the 'acting' phase that involves planning to change, implementing the change, observing to see what happens with data and reflections. The exploratory phase of this research took place over a period of about six months and the action phase, over a period of two months. To answer the research questions, I used four data collection tools: teacher's written notes from observation, notes from informal conversations with colleagues, interviews with students and focus group discussions.

Lesson Observation

During my lessons, I observed and noted students' behaviour when it comes to speaking in English. These notes were done mostly after lessons to avoid distractions and so that learners did not get rigid or did not react to being observed.

I observed that my learners sought to speak only in their L2, French. They would most often ask and say in French, "*Madame, est-ce que je peux répondre en français? Si c'est en anglais, je ne peux pas.*" Translated in English we have, "Madam, can I answer in French? If it is in English, I cannot do it".

My learners gave incomplete responses during class. When responding to a question, they usually stop and tell me they cannot continue in English. When I ask what the reason is, they tell me that the "Answers come and go" ("*les réponses viennent et disparaissent*"). Others tell me, they get discouraged when they are mocked by their classmates.

My learners had no *Anglais* teacher before my arrival. During lessons, the learners constantly reminded me that they have not had a teacher the previous years, consequently, their English vocabulary is very poor. Although this was true, they said this so that they will be given the opportunity to answer questions in French.

Community of Practice

Wenger and Wenger (2015) define communities of practice as groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it as they interact regularly. In this study, the community of practice included language instructors and instructors of other subjects who share a common concern about their students' welfare and performances and so, exchange their worries so that possible solutions can be identified.

In conversations with colleagues both in my school and schools in the same locality, I took some notes which were helpful in this study (see Figure 3). These helped me understand better the learners' background and why they are less motivated to speak in English. The conversations were beneficial as they informed some of the strategies used during the action phase to curb communication breakdown.
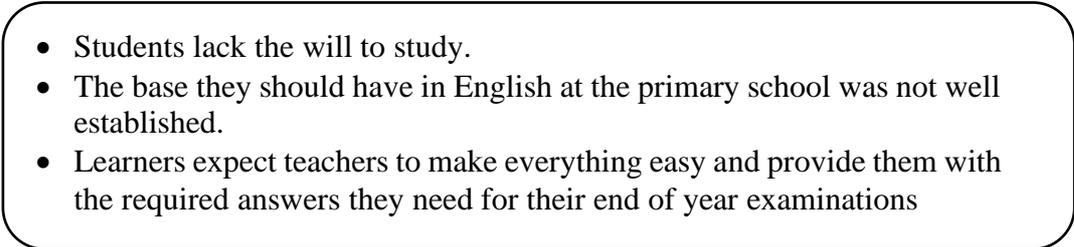
- Students lack the will to study.
- The base they should have in English at the primary school was not well established.
- Learners expect teachers to make everything easy and provide them with the required answers they need for their end of year examinations

Figure 3. Summary notes from conversations with colleagues

Interviews

Interviews with some of the participants (20, a sample of convenience) focused on what hinders them from responding to questions in English during lessons, what they can do to get better and what I can do to help them speak. The questions used in this interview are included in the Appendix. Both interviews and focus group discussions were done in the students' L2 (French) to ease comprehension and let them express themselves freely. According to Kalanzadeh et al. (2013, p. 34), a teacher said "…I think in certain cases using L1 will help me provide a non-threatening environment which is of crucial importance for my English students". For the fact that all students are expected to speak French since it is their language of instruction from the primary to the secondary levels of education and even up to university, the interview interactions between the teacher and the learners happened in French. Students were not informed beforehand about the interview; they were done after a class when the students had free time, and they were told it was for my research.

Focus Group Discussions

Group discussions were done with students after lessons without any form of requirement to attend. The classes do not have the same number of students: the 9th grade has about 50 students, the 10th grade has 20 students, the 11th grade has about 40 students and the 12th grade 20 students (these numbers correspond to the students who attend classes regularly). Learners were not selected for the group discussions; each class made up a group. Data was analysed qualitatively from which the findings were drawn.

Results and Findings from Data Collected

This section discusses the outcomes from the interviews and focus group discussions carried out with the learners and the reflections drawn from the teacher's in-class written notes and discussions with colleagues. Together, the data identified the following problems that students encountered when learning and speaking English.

From the interviews carried out, all 20 participants said they lacked the vocabulary to be able to speak in English. They said when they start to speak, they suddenly get blocked and do not have the words to continue. One respondent, however, spoke up and said that their actual problem is they do not put in the necessary effort to help them get better. They mostly want the easy way out where the teacher gives them everything in class. Responding to the question regarding what they can do to get better in speaking, 10 of the participants spoke of revising their lessons before class. 5 respondents talked about working with their peers out of school. The other 5 talked about getting textbooks, that is, not depending on their friends' textbooks, and getting other English learning books which can help them improve on their speaking skills. The respondents spoke of positive reinforcements from their teacher which encourages them to try speaking more. Two of the respondents said continuous questioning in English and less correction when they interact helps them feel less awkward in class in front of their classmates.

During group discussions, carried out class by class -and following the format of questions and answers, learners spoke about the absence of an English teacher in their school for the past three years before my arrival which has resulted in their inability to understand and speak the language. Consequently, they had no form of encouragement or motivation to learn the language. The learners said they are encouraged when they are motivated after they try speaking. Some students said the English they are learning now in the secondary school seems more complicated because at the primary level, they learned by singing songs and saying rhymes and responding to multiple choice questions which was quite easy for them. They pointed out the fact that when their classmates mock them in class, they get discouraged trying even though they desire to speak.

Findings from my in-class written notes showed that the learners generally see English as a very complicated subject and language. They always say "*l'Anglais, c'est Dieu qui donne*" (English is given by God). In responding to questions in class, they do not take the necessary time to put their answers together but resort to using French. They sometimes start speaking and end up laughing because of their lack of the appropriate vocabulary. They say, "Madam, the answer is coming and going". For example, during a lesson on asking for and giving directions, students were expected to work in pairs to give directions to their homes to a classmate following a model in a dialogue. Students' behaviour and response to the activity were the following: little or no interest to participate, some who had the interest had no

vocabulary to sail through and others complained, "*Madame, on va prendre les mots en anglais où?*" ("Madam, where do we take the English words from?"). I also noted from my colleagues, both language teachers and teachers of other subjects, the lack of the will on the part of the students to put in efforts. Some colleagues also spoke of the poorly established base at the primary level which has left the students lacking.

Generally, findings reveal that a small number of students want to speak the language, but they lack the vocabulary owing to the absence of continuous follow-up from the primary to the secondary levels, lack of will on their part to work, lack of motivation from the teacher, fear of making mistakes in speaking and eventually, no home support from their parents. In this first exploratory phase of my research, my data, somehow, show that learners want the product, that is, speaking in English, but they neither take the time to learn the grammar rules nor revise adequately to retain the necessary vocabulary they are taught in each real-life situation. With very little revision, these learners are unable to use notions previously taught appropriately and it handicaps their spoken English.

Action Phase

Based on the findings above, strategies proposed both by the learners and me, as the teacher, were put in place and the action phase happened over a period of two months. I kept a journal in which I noted students' responses after implementing each strategy (see Figure 4). Learners expressed excitement, discouragement, interest, disinterest and sadness. This permitted me to draw the conclusions discussed in the paragraphs below alongside the strategies implemented.
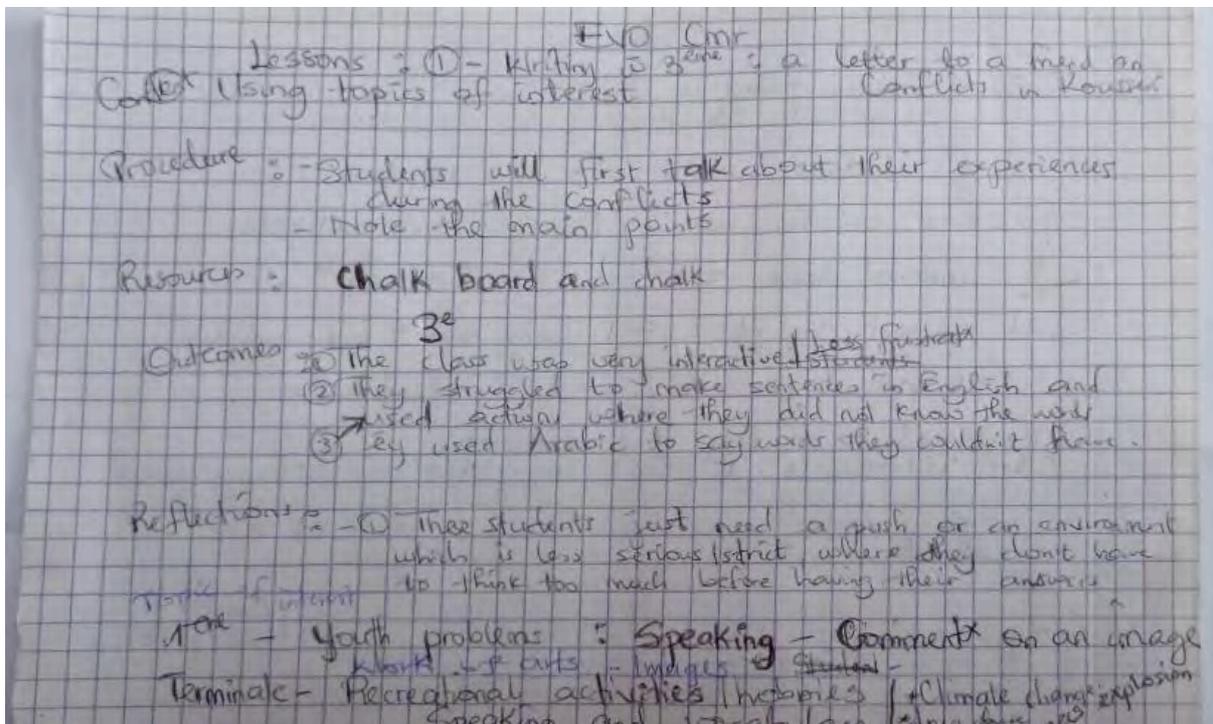

Figure 4. Image of teacher's written notes (sample) after implementation of findings

Strategy One

I implemented group activities. Group work is beneficial to students as they can freely express themselves among their peers. As Kasim (2015) explains, learning in the context of sharing, responding, and communicating with other students is a major teaching strategy in any teaching context. He further points out that one of the solutions to make the students learning English as a Foreign Language maximise the use of the English is by way of putting students in groups. This strategy is highly beneficial for learners as Kagan and High (2002) enumerate: cooperative learning enhances motivation, peer support, greater language use and lowered affective filters. Tamimy et al. (2022) further say cooperative learning is associated with higher achievement, positive peer relationships and empathy. My learners were grouped based on their seating positions and sometimes their strengths and weaknesses in the language were taken into consideration. The groups ranged between six and eight most often depending on what had to be achieved. They were expected to assign a secretary and one person to represent the group at the end of the exercise.

Students of the 11th and 12th grades did group exercises on youth problems and starting a business (see Figure 5). My learners in the 11th grade were challenged with specific topics that focused on giving advice to youths who have problems, for instance, a young girl of about 17 years who is being pushed by an elderly man of about 50 years to marry her. Another topic was a young boy who has been involved in drug consumption and is looking for a way out. Learners were expected to share ideas and write down their answers. I supervised the work and helped with some difficult words so that each group could understand their given tasks. At the end of the exercise, the appointed secretary read out the advice or answers in front of the class. This was done with the aim of developing student autonomy and to help them peer teach and build vocabulary. Learners were allowed to use bilingual dictionaries (paper-based dictionaries) with which they could translate difficult words from French to English. Some of them also had other English learning grammar texts which informed their choice of words and how they structured their sentences.

Figure 5. Group activity with my 11th grade students (photo by author)

The 12th grade students were expected to listen to a passage on starting a business. They were put in two groups, boys and girls. A copy of the text was given them with missing words which they had to fill in after listening to the text read by the teacher. This was done with the aim of building their vocabulary related to business and to check their ability to spell words and pronounce them correctly. The students of the 11th grade complained at the beginning about their difficulties in the language but after some encouragements, they started working. Getting to work with their friends was very encouraging to them. Their L2 (French) helped them have answers. Though they made lots of mistakes, the aim of speaking was achieved. With the 12th grade students, I made it a game between boys and girls. They fought so hard to have the right answers to challenge their opponents. Group exercises, however, failed with learners of the 9th and 10th grades. They complained so much about how difficult the reading tasks were that only about two groups out of ten did the work despite my encouragements. It was also noticed that group activities made them wander off and talk about things other than the task at hand.

Strategy Two

I used topics of interest to the students as a strategy which had impressive outcomes. With my 9th grade students, I brought up a topic concerning an intertribal conflict and how it affected them. They were so excited to speak that they had to use actions to express themselves when they did not have the appropriate vocabulary on the topic. They helped each other complete their sentences and the aim of speaking was achieved. With my 12th grade students, we had an exchange on hobbies and recreational activities and how it could bring them financial gain. They interacted freely because these are some of the activities they do to pay for their education. My 10th grade students were also inspired to share their experiences of being involved in accidents or having witnessed one in writing about situations needing emergency help. Generally, students showed very positive attitudes towards this strategy.

Strategy Three

Motivating students was a strategy I took up for every lesson coupled with insistence on the use of English. According to Sadeghi et al. (2013), the teacher's role is to create an environment, which stimulates the desired responses and reinforces or discourages those that are supposed to be incorrect or undesirable. Given that my learners always want to use their L2 (French) as an easy option, I intentionally pushed them to speak by encouraging them to use simple words and simple sentences as much as possible. Other times, I let them support each other in building their responses which served as a booster for them to speak in English to the end. Following Gaffer et al. (2022) as reported in Fatimannisa and Jamilah (2024, 59),

> The motivation of students can be enhanced by the implementation of positive reinforcement techniques during the teaching and learning process, hence fostering a greater inclination to engage in classroom activities actively.

Together with my learners, we took out some words from "our dictionary" like *"I cannot", "English is hard", "I do not know what to say"*. At the beginning of the action phase, my students and I decided to stop using the negative words and expressions no matter how difficult a task was. We replaced them with *"I will try"*. Every time a learner used this, the others reminded him or her that they must try. Verbal reinforcement played a vital role in motivating students. As for what is meant by verbal reinforcement, it is, for example, in the form of praise such as 'good, nice, excellent, correct, awesome', and so on (Fatimannisa & Jamilah, 2024). Encouraging little efforts made by students in speaking with *"Good, very good", "Clap for*

him", "You can do better" rather than *"No"* made the students feel more confident trying. This agrees to what Rumfola (2017) says, that students want to feel confident about their work and actions in the classroom.

Strategy Four

Using topic-related images was an engaging strategy. I realized that when students are presented with images, they can easily pick out the words in English to be able to describe or talk about what they see. Communication was better, the class more interactive and lesson more attractive. In my 9th grade class, using images on climate change and its effects, and hygiene and sanitation helped students answer questions related to the topic.

My 12th grade learners commented on images related to the ability of women doing the types of jobs considered in their community as work meant only for the men. In the 10th grade class, images on signs to be respected at the workplace helped students understand why some signs are found in some places and they could easily share their experiences.

During a speaking lesson on youth problems, my 11th grade students commented on images that showed what is plaguing students nowadays such drug and alcohol consumption and they proposed solutions.

In class, since the images were not big enough for all the students to see from every angle, I held them up and moved around the class for the students to have a better view. As Pateşan, et al. (2018) say, "Visual materials can make a lesson more attractive, and the experts agree that they help both the teachers and students in the teaching – learning process" (p. 357). The learning process was smoother, and students could keep these images in mind all through the lesson and use them in communicating their ideas.

During this action phase, I also realized that learners want a fun teaching – learning process. They like activities that will make them relax and not an all-serious classroom. Tongue twister exercises were usually avoided in class as they were thought to be very complicated for my learners until I tried them. With my 10th grade students, I used the tongue twister "*John generally likes jam ginger and garlic*". It was impressive how they responded to this very positively. They had fun and at the end we could identify some consonant sounds and how they are pronounced in different words.

Reflections

At the end of this research, I learned several things. Classroom research helps the teacher solve problems. As identified by Stremmel (2017), teacher research is designed by practitioners to seek practical solutions to issues and problems in their professional and community lives. For practitioners and educators, it is worth noting that the learners' needs are very vital in the teaching – learning process. Sadeghi et al. (2013) say learners' needs are an umbrella term which refers to a wide variety of information about the learner, the teacher, the language being learned or the context of language learning, and, citing Brindley (1989), there are even more types of needs including demands, wants, desires, expectations, motivations, constraints, lacks, and requirements, just to name a few. These call for dynamic strategies because success in one strategy does not imply that the same be used in every situation. Every classroom and set of

learners will always be different, so, learners' needs must be considered for better classroom practices to be implemented.

Impact of Research on the Teacher and Learners

During this investigation, I realized that when my learners have support from their peers, they interact more and better. That is why activities like group work and pair work are used more now in my classroom since they build students' confidence in carrying out tasks. I learned that my students need lots of attention and encouragement in the teaching-learning process. When they are mocked, they easily develop a lack of interest in interacting or in learning the language. From these insights, it was noted that students do not like facing challenges alone. Also, my learners tend to interact better in a less tense environment and on topics that concern them. Learners are now more positive during lessons and are more productive.

When I started teaching in my school, I always thought that my students were not interested in learning English and were just here to make it through the examinations. But getting to interact with my students presently has made me understand that they are in a difficult context, and their needs must be considered in learning English. Some of them always express their wish to travel to one of the English-speaking regions of Cameroon to learn and speak the language. I stopped making assumptions that hindered me from seeing what my learners can achieve. After starting my action plan, I see that my learners have a lot of hidden potential in interactions in English. They can construct sentences in English they did not know they could use and feel very happy and more fulfilled doing so. They are now able to bring me some difficult words they came across outside the classroom and difficult tasks that we tackle together. On the school campus, some of the students make efforts to interact more in English when they meet me and have fun doing so.

When I shared my research with some English language practitioners from another school in the same community, they were pleased and saw this as a means of professional development. They were encouraged not to keep on complaining about their students' poor performances but to investigate problems in their class and identify possible solutions. Some action steps from my research like that on the insistence on the use of English when interacting and motivating students was helpful in their classes. They developed other strategies that addressed their classroom challenges specifically.

For the community of practitioners, it is worth noting that listening to our students is very important as it guides classroom practices. Learners may shy away from classroom interactions just because they are not motivated by their teacher to do better. Classrooms must be a place where students can learn while having fun, where the teaching-learning process is not burdensome and where they can identify with the lessons being taught.

Conclusion

This paper investigated my students' interaction in English in class and the strategies that I implemented. Analysis of the careful observations, interviews with the learners and conversations with colleagues showed clearly that learners had limited vocabulary with which to interact, little encouragement from the teacher, fear of making mistakes and little will on their part to try to use English. Group activities were used as a strategy which encouraged peer support, greater language use and empathy. Teacher motivation through positive

reinforcements greatly boosted students' confidence to speak more in the target language. Topics of interest to the students had impressive outcomes as learners were able to identify with the context related topics they had to talk about. Topic-related images made lessons more attractive and helped learners communicate their ideas better. Even though these strategies were a success, they do not limit the use of other strategies as learners and classroom realities change. So, other strategies like the use of digitalised visual aids and cooperative learning strategies proposed by Kagan and High (2002) are being envisaged for future use.

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Declaration of Possible Conflict of Interest

I write in my honour to declare that there is no conflict of interest with this paper.

APPENDIX

Interview questions
- What makes you unable to use English when answering questions/ what accounts for your inability to use English when responding to questions?
- Are you shy when you stand to answer a question?
- What can I do to help you speak in English?
- What do you think you can do to speak or respond to questions in English?
- What are some strategies we can implement to help you increase your vocabulary?